



Dear Educator,

Students who engage in bullying behaviours are driven by internal and unconscious biases that begin, for all of us, at birth. Research has shown that babies as young as three months old show an obvious preference for individuals who look like themselves. (Bargh, 2017).

We are gifted these biases as a survival mechanism. They are not something we choose. Our culture, however, plays a significant role in shaping and expanding many of our unconscious biases, and these become ingrained during our formative years. For example, cultural influences affect our perceptions of beauty standards and language accents and these biases shape how we assess others.

While biases are not necessarily our fault, they are our personal responsibility to manage. Left unchecked, these biases can negatively influence our interactions with others, particularly during the fragile stages of adolescent identity development. One of the most personally devastating examples of bias playing out among students is bullying.

The Problem: Understanding the Types of Bullying

Research identifies three types of bullying:

1. **Generalised Bullying:** This form of bullying is based on surface-level differences, such as being new at school or making unconventional fashion choices.
 2. **Bias-Based Bullying:** This more harmful form of bullying targets individuals based on aspects of their cultural or social identity, such as race, gender, or physical disability.
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3. **Multiple Bias-Based Bullying:** This occurs when a student is targeted for multiple aspects of their identity.

Studies indicate that the outcomes of bias-based bullying are far worse than generalised bullying. Additionally, societal support from teachers, friends, family, and community members is shown to be ineffective in alleviating its harmful effects (Mulvey et al., 2018). Such support systems show partial effectiveness in cases of generalised bullying only.

The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Awareness

A key difference between those who act on their biases negatively (e.g., through bullying) and those who do not, lies in their levels of self-awareness and emotional intelligence (Rueda et al., 2021).

Additionally, research highlights differences in how genders engage in bullying, attributing these variations mostly to societal and cultural influences.

Our Solution: Leadership Literacy for Life

Leadership Literacy for Life is a practical, affordable, and effective programme designed to address bullying at its root, at a key time in adolescent identity development. These courses were developed based on my doctoral research into preparing future leaders.

Our programme equips students with tools to:

- Develop emotional awareness
- Understand their communication styles
- Recognise their personal values and how these affect their reactions and choices
- Make informed subject choices
- Identify their own unconscious biases and their effects on others
- Foster healthy peer integration
- Build self-esteem

While many schools introduce leadership initiatives in the later years of high school, we encourage you to initiate this journey for your students in their first two years. Studies show that bullying tends to peak during these first two years of high school, and over 50% of students participate in bullying behaviour (Wang et al., 2009).

An early intervention to create a foundation for personal leadership development, prepares students to navigate challenges and positively influence others, in place of participating in negative behaviours towards others.

About the Leadership Fundamentals Course

The Leadership Fundamentals course is an online, self-paced programme that can be integrated into existing school curriculum subjects such as Life Orientation or completed independently at home or after school lessons for deep learning. Teacher preparation is minimal, as all necessary support and planning materials are provided.

There is some overview information of our courses, the resources, guides and reports available on our "For Teachers Page" [here](#).

Key features include:

- **Duration:** 2-3 hours in total to complete the course and gain their certificate
- **Assessments:** There are compulsory quizzes to be passed with 80% that can be used as formal assessments by the subject teachers
- **Cost:** Less than the price of one high school textbook in core subjects like mathematics or science.

I am aware of this cost comparison as an educational publisher myself. As valuable as these academic subjects are, the internal preparation of our students as individuals and future leaders, and the development of their emotional intelligence, is equally critical. Leadership Fundamentals provides the tools necessary to nurture well-rounded, emotionally intelligent students who are prepared to lead themselves and positively influence others.

Take the Next Step

Interested in empowering your students and addressing bullying at its roots? Contact us today to learn more about Leadership Fundamentals and how it can transform your school environment. Together, we can create a future of emotionally intelligent, self-aware leaders. You can reply to this email to contact me directly or send an enquiry to engsupportnz@engpractice.com.

Yours in Leadership,



www.engpractice.com

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