



Smart School Councils

DEBATE PACK

Are you passionate about sharpening your critical thinking and speaking skills?

**WHICH IS BETTER BULLYING PREVENTION:
PUNISHMENT OR LEARNING?**



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How to Use this Debate Pack

Whether you have just a few minutes or a full lesson, this Debate Pack has got you covered. Check out the Certificates at the end too.

How to find the debate video and send to teachers

1. Log in to the [Smart School Councils platform](#) using your school details.
2. Click on the blue Class Meeting Tool button in the dashboard.
3. Click on 'Next Meeting' at the top of the page.
4. To get started, click on 'click here' to browse existing questions and options.
5. If the debate topic is part of this week's question, it will appear there. Otherwise, click 'Search All' and type in the debate topic you're looking for.

Got five minutes?

Play the debate video straight through and dive right into the debate. No need to pause at the prompts. It's a quick, engaging way to get your students thinking.

Got 10/15 minutes?

Pause at the prompts in the video to explore additional ideas your class might have. Use the additional points or Power Facts if you'd like.

Want to extend to 30 minutes or a full lesson?

Check out the lesson plan and writing tasks below. There is also a full Fact Sheet with amazing further reading if your students want to go deeper on the topic.

What do the icons in the pack mean?



This is what the presenter says on the video



This is a Power Fact to explain or prompt debate that's not in the video



This is an additional debate point that's not in the video

Introduction and Brain Gym Question

Introduction



Welcome to Big Debate Club!

My name is Becky and today we are debating the question...

Which is better bullying prevention: punishment or learning?

Happy Anti-Bullying Week to our lovely community! It is such an important topic for your school and our community to come together to raise awareness so we can be open about how it affects us and how to stop it.

So whether it is physical bullying, insulting someone, leaving someone out or cyberbullying, it is wrong and we need to prevent it from happening - but which is the best approach? Will punishments mean there is a consequence that puts people off doing it? Or is learning before the fact the best way to prevent bullying, learning the impacts it can cause as well as why they might want to bully to fix any issues. You decide.

Brain Gym Question

Before we get started with the debate, I have a question for you...

Which of the following is a common factor for someone becoming a bully?

- a) Having a lot of friends and popularity
- b) Experiencing bullying themselves
- c) Being the youngest in their class
- d) Spending too much time on homework

In England and Wales, in the year ending March 2023, 34.9% of children aged 10-15 experienced *in-person bullying behaviours*, and 19.1% experienced *online bullying behaviours* in the last year. (Source: ONS, [LINK](#))



FOR: Better bullying prevention is punishment

We're going to share reasons for both sides of the debate, then it's up to you to think of the rest!

The punishment can act as a deterrent

You might be thinking that a punishment can act as a deterrent. If students know they'll be punished for bullying, they're more likely to avoid doing it - they'll understand it's not allowed and that there are real consequences for their actions.

Punishments establish clear boundaries

You could say that punishments establish clear boundaries. For a punishment to happen, there has to be a clear rule or behaviour that was broken. This helps set clear expectations, so everyone knows the rules and feels safer knowing what will happen if someone breaks them.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that better bullying prevention is punishment?

Immediate consequence means preventing further harm

Punishment (e.g. suspension, removal) can offer an immediate consequence which may protect the victim from further harm, especially in severe or repeated cases. Some studies suggest punitive discipline is associated with lower bullying and victimisation when it's "authoritative" (i.e. fair, consistent). (Source: Education Policy Institute, [LINK](#))

Punishments can be structured

Using punishments such as detention in a structured way - for reflection, counselling, or tasks that make students think about their actions - has potential both to punish and to teach. Schools used a "reflection room" instead of more severe punishments. It emphasises how this helps behaviour change *outside* of just being punished. (Source: Edutopia, [LINK](#))



AGAINST: Better bullying prevention is learning

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that better bullying prevention is through learning.



Learning can change their behaviour in the long term

You might think that learning can teach all students to change their behaviour in the long term. Teaching students why their actions hurt others can help them change for good, not just avoid punishment.

Learning can build empathy

Or you could also say learning can build empathy. Learning programmes help students understand how others feel or why they might act meanly towards others and how to resolve it which can create a kinder school culture.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that a better way for bullying prevention is through learning instead of punishment? 

Strict punishment creates fear of consequences



Strict punishment creates fear of consequences and discourages bullying. However, studies show zero-tolerance policies alone are less effective, with schools that did not use restorative approaches only 58% successful in preventing bullying compared to 79% for schools that used restorative approaches. (Source: Education Policy Institute, [LINK](#))

Learning programmes reduce bullying incidents

When schools have anti-bullying learning programmes in their curriculum to teach their young people ideas like restorative justice, it reduces bullying incidents happening by 18–19% and people becoming or feeling victimised by 15–16% showing these programmes have real success. (Source: PubMed Central, [LINK](#))



FactSheet: Which is better bullying prevention: punishment or learning?



Here's six key facts - three on each side - if you'd like to go a little deeper.

Punishment

Immediate consequence means preventing further harm

Punishment (e.g. suspension, removal) can offer an immediate consequence which may protect the victim from further harm, especially in severe or repeated cases. Some studies suggest punitive discipline is associated with lower bullying and victimization when it's "authoritative" (i.e. fair, consistent). (Source: Education Policy Institute, [LINK](#))

Punishments can be structured

Using punishments such as detention can be structured - using it for reflection, counselling, or tasks that make students think about what they have done - has potential both to punish and to teach. Schools used a "reflection room" instead of more severe punishments. Students reflect on their actions, talk with teachers/administrators about root causes, think about how they could act differently in the future. It emphasises how this helps behaviour change *outside* of just being punished. (Source: Edutopia, [LINK](#))

It gives a clear message

Detention still sends a signal that bullying is unacceptable, acting as a deterrent, but usually without the harsher effects of suspension, such as social exclusion, disruption of family routines, or association with more serious discipline. Therefore, it may help maintain school climate without escalating a student's negative behaviours or alienation.

Learning

Learning programmes reduce bullying incidents

When schools have anti-bullying learning programmes in their curriculum to teach their young people ideas like restorative justice, it reduces bullying incidents happening by 18–19% and people becoming or feeling victimised by 15–16% showing they have real success. (Source: PubMed Central, [LINK](#))

It can mean cultural change rather than behaviour

With learning based interventions such as learning why bullying happens and talking through issues through restorative justice, it reduced attitudes that *support* bullying and increased those that *oppose* it, showing cultural change rather than just behaviour suppression. (Source: JAMA Pediatrics, [LINK](#))

Punishment creates a fear of the consequences

Strict punishment creates fear of consequences and discourages bullying. However, studies show zero-tolerance policies alone are less effective, with schools that did not use restorative approaches only 58% successful in preventing bullying compared to 79% for schools that used restorative approaches. (Source: Education Policy Institute, [LINK](#))

Sentence Starters

POINT

LEMON & HERB: One reason why I (agree/disagree) with this debate is because...

MEDIUM: One point I have for this debate is...

HOT: You could say that...

EVIDENCE

LEMON & HERB: One way I can prove my point is through this example...

MEDIUM: I can show this works through the fact that...

HOT: I know this because...

EXPLANATION

LEMON & HERB: The evidence I have discussed above proves my point as...

MEDIUM: This example proves my point because...

HOT: Therefore, this proves my point as...

LINK

LEMON & HERB: All together, this answers the debate question asked by...

MEDIUM: This point answers the overall question because...

HOT: These ideas answer the debate as...





**Post your debate on
social media!**

SHARE YOUR VOICE

We shout out the best opinions each week

#BIGDEBATECUB

TWITTER @SSCCTV

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DEBATER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

For debating fairly, respectfully and persuasively. Well done!

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils

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CLASS MEETING LEADER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

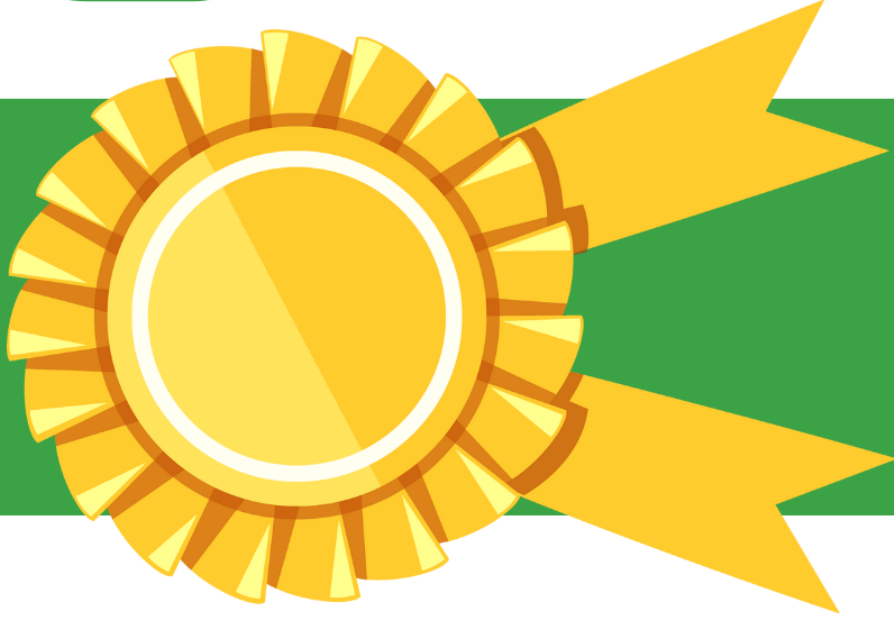
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



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BEST IDEA OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

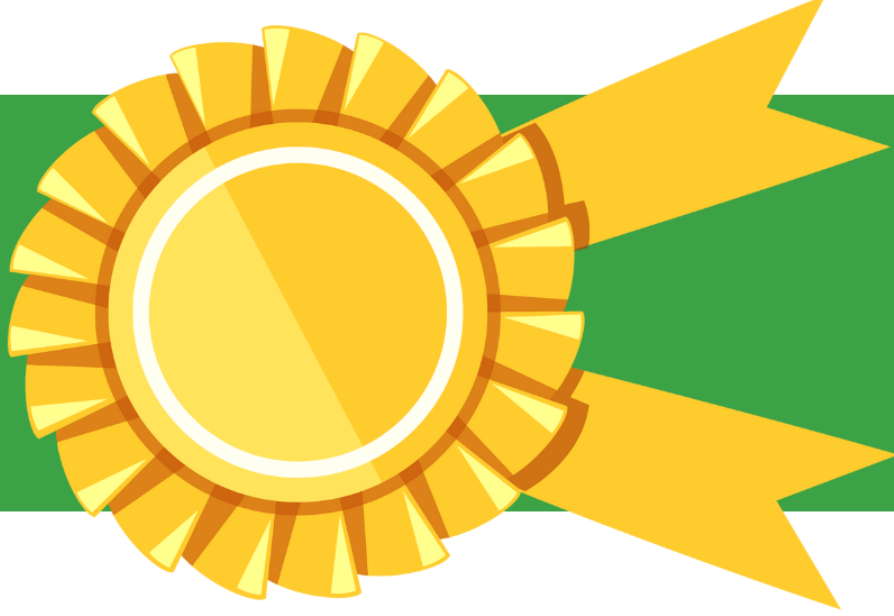
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



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