TAPROOT ✴ THEATRE
R O A D   C O M P A N Y

Future Tense
Teacher's Guide

The performance of *Future Tense*, along with the materials in this guide, is intended to supplement (not replace) current education and guidance on bullying and other related issues in the schools.

DISCUSSION ETIQUETTE
Due to the sensitive nature of the issues presented in Future Tense, it is very important for everyone to follow the standard ground rules for group discussion.

- Respect what others say without passing judgment. It is all right to disagree with one another's opinions, but respect must be maintained at all times.
- All things said within the group should remain **confidential**. An environment where hypothetical situations are not treated as confessions should be created and respected.
- Only those students who feel comfortable speaking should be asked to do so. Silence should be respected without judgment.
- Students should have the freedom to explore their opinions and to change them at whim. The process is to allow the students to find, rather than be instilled with, a set of values.

To prepare your students for the performance, please remind them about theatre etiquette. This includes:
- Please don't talk during the performance. It is distracting to the performers and other audience members.
- Please try to keep non-verbal noise to a minimum. Unwrapping hard candy, popping gum, and electronic noises steal focus from what is happening on stage.
- It's okay to laugh if something strikes you as funny. It's also okay to cry if something makes you sad. These are examples of appropriate responses. However, whistling at the actors, shouting comments, and catcalling are considered inappropriate responses.
- Live theatre is different from film and television because it is based on a relationship between the actors and the audience. Therefore, each performance of the same play is unique because it is heavily influenced by the audience's responses and interests. The best thing an audience member can do is to listen and get involved in the story.

ABOUT THE PLAY
Breakdown of Characters
   Lou- 8th Grader. Loveable, groovy, chill.
   Kai- 8th Grader. Meticulous, precise, a quintessential scientist.
   Cameron- 8th Grader. Charming, quick-witted, the one who is "good at everything".
   Adrian- 8th Grader. Sensitive, artistic, and insecure about their place in the friend group.
   Logan- High School Junior, comes from a long lineage of teachers, previously won multiple Middle School science fairs, and is shocked you haven't heard. Currently back at their old stomping ground to judge the Science Fair.

Play Summary

Adrian, Cameron, Lou, and Kai have been friends since kindergarten. The day of the school science fair has arrived, and they all meet up before school to see the banner Adrian has been working on. Kai and Lou marvel at Adrian's talent but Cameron begins making snide remarks. Logan, a high school junior, arrives announcing they are the judge of the science fair this year.

The students share what they brought for the science fair. While passing around Adrian's project, Cameron pretends to drop it on the ground and ends up dropping and destroying Adrian's work. Cameron shrugs it off by deflecting and points out a mysterious machine with a button labeled "scientific progress".

The bell rings and the group heads to class. Adrian, frustrated with Cameron's jokes pushes the button on the machine. A mysterious figure emerges that looks just like Lou. Future Lou explains to Adrian that the "vibes are off." Adrian starts to explain the events of the morning when Future Lou's time travel device begins to beep. They tell Adrian to push the button again when it starts blinking and disappear.

Logan notices the blinking button and presses it. Future Kai arrives in a moment of confusion and convinces Logan they are a secondary science fair judge. Adrian returns to check the machine only to discover Future Kai, who takes them on a journey through the past and future. Cameron returns and presses the blinking button. Future Lou appears and confronts Cameron about the way they've been treating Adrian. Cameron is in denial, so Future Lou takes them on their own journey through time.

Future Kai, Adrian, Future Lou, and Cameron, visit events from Adrian and Cameron's shared past. They witness Cameron's on-going competitive nature makes them combative towards Adrian, often putting Adrian down to make themselves feel better.

Briefly back in the present, Lou apologizes to Adrian for not standing up for them and being a good friend. Future Lou returns to take Cameron into the future. They jump ahead through time, watching the negative impact of Cameron's jokes on Adrian.

After facing the events of their shared past and examining the aftermath of their potential future, Cameron and Adrian must decide whether they are willing to reconcile or watch as their friend group dissolves. Adrian confronts Cameron, who reveals the tremendous stress of being "good all the time" and admits they have been taking their emotions out on Adrian. Cameron realizes they need to change their behavior to keep their friendship intact.

Back in the present, Logan reads the label on the mysterious machine and learns that it's creator had been Adrian all along. Logan runs off to tell a teacher. The group marvels at the prospect of time travel, and collectively agree that the future is what they make of it.

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

1. What are some examples of bullying behavior? Of harassment behavior?

2. Are harassment and bullying problems at our school? What about online?

3. If you witness or hear about harassment or bullying, what is your typical response? Why? What should it be?

4. Do you hear a lot of name-calling, gossip, or hurtful things at school?

5. Does school feel like a safe environment for people to just be themselves? If it does, what are the things that make it that way? If it doesn't, what do you perceive needs to change?

Post-Play Discussion Questions

1. What parts of the play did you like the best? Why?

2. What kinds of Bullying and Harassment did you see in the play? Are there more kinds that you didn't see?

3. Could the situation that these students were in have been avoided? How?

4. What do you think happens next in the lives of the characters from the play?

5. What is friendship? Who, in your life, has modeled true friendship to you?

6. What role should adults play in dealing with bullying and harassment?

7. If you had a problem at school which method(s) you would employ to handle the situation?

8. Do you think harassment and bullying are just part of being a teenager?

9. You have the power to choose how you treat people. What are some ways in which individuals are misusing that power in our world today?

10. If everyone you knew was asked how you treat others, what would you most like them to say?

Additional Resources
The following resources aid the prevention of bullying, harassment, violence, or suicide:

Committee for Children's Second Step Violence Prevention Program:
www.cfchildren.org/programs/ssp/ms
Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: www.clemson.edu/olweus
Suicide Awareness Voices of Education: www.save.org
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK
Crisis Clinic: www.crisisclinic.org
> *Teen Link – staffed by trained teen volunteers: www.crisisclinic.org/youth.htm or 206.461.4922 or 1.866.TEENLINK*

<u>For Teachers Only</u>

Handling Bullying Reporting with Students
From Committee for Children's *Second Step* curriculum
www.cfchildren.org

Following performances of our shows, schools often experience an increase in bullying reporting as students become aware that bullying is not acceptable and help is available. Administrators, counselors, and teachers are all seen by students as responsible adults who can help in a bullying situation.

Every school has its process for handling bullying reporting. The following guidelines are used with the permission of Committee for Children. They are taken directly from the *Second Step* curriculum and are intended to supplement (not replace) existing curriculum and guidelines already used in your school.

Handling Bullying Reports

The Four-A Response Process
Because *Steps to Respect* is a schoolwide program, it is essential that all staff know how to respond to bullying reports. Following is the process adults should use when a student reports bullying.

1. **Affirm the child's feelings.**
    a. "You were right to report/get help from an adult."
    b. "I'm glad you asked for help with this."

2. **Ask questions.**
    a. "Tell me more about what happened."
    b. "Has this happened before?"
    c. "Did anyone try to help you?"
    d. "Are you telling me this to get someone in trouble or to keep someone safe?"

3. **Assess the child's safety.**
    Determine what the child needs to feel safe now.

4. **Act.**
    Coach the child or refer the child for coaching.
    Tell the child what will happen next.

Coaching Students Involved in Bullying Situations

Second Step Coaching Models
Once bullying has been reported, both the student who was bullied and the student who did the bullying must receive coaching—it is essential that no exceptions to this rule occur. *Second Step* recommends that all classroom teachers be prepared to coach students. The following sections detail the model teachers should use when coaching students.

Coaching the Student Who Was Bullied
Children rarely report the bullying they experience to adults—in part because they believe that adults are unable or unlikely to stop the harassment. Adults can combat children's feelings of helplessness by (1) affirming children's actions in reporting (which demonstrates that adults will provide the needed support and consequences) and (2) checking back with students who report bullying to see whether the problem has stopped.

Second Step recommends the following five-step model when coaching a child who has been bullied.

1. **Affirm the child's feelings.**
   a. "You were right to report/get help from an adult."
2. **Ask questions.**
   Get information about the current situation and the history of the situation
3. **Identify what has and has not worked in the past.**
4. **Generate solutions for the future.**
   a. Discuss how the child can avoid the student who has bullied him or her. (Examples: The child could sit somewhere else, play somewhere else, or travel with a group of friends.)
   b. Coach the student in using assertive refusal skills. (If relevant to the situation, remind the student that aggression is *never* an appropriate solution.)
   c. Identify others (parents, teachers, friends) who can support the child
5. **Follow up.**
   a. See how the plan is working.
   b. Contact parents as appropriate.
   c. Refer more serious or chronic cases to an administrator or counselor.

Coaching the Student Who Bullied

Your school's bullying policy should provide the necessary framework for applying consequences for student bullying. In addition to those consequences, children who bully need more targeted help addressing their problem behavior. Children are more likely to change problem behavior if adults help them select positive alternative behaviors and provide consistent feedback on their progress.

This coaching model (for use with students who bully) has five steps.

1. **Identify the problem and diffuse reporting responsibility.**
   a. "I have been hearing that…"
   b. Many students have reported that…"

2. **Ask questions and gather information.**
   a. "I'd like to hear from you about what happened."
   b. "How would you feel if this happened to you?"

3. **Apply consequences.**
   a. Review the school policy regarding bullying.

4. **Generate solutions for the future.**
   a. "What are some ways to prevent this happening again?"

5. **Follow up.**
   a. See how the plan is working.
   b. Contact parents as appropriate.
   c. Refer students for further discipline as appropriate.
   d. Refer more serious or chronic cases to an administrator or counselor.

Note: Be sure to coach the students who have been bullied separately from those who bullied them. Children who have been bullied are often frightened, and may deny that there is any problem when face-to-face with children who have repeatedly harassed them.