

Safe Schools Reader

Berkeley Unified School District © 2004

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This reader was distributed at a district-wide staff development day on February 2, 2004. The articles include information to help address bullying and harassment in secondary schools. Use it as a resource for personal growth and a springboard for school-wide discussions to create safe, respectful schools for all students. For further information, contact Jan Goodman at [jan_goodman @ berkeley.k12.ca.us](mailto:jan_goodman@berkeley.k12.ca.us)

BUSD SAFE SCHOOLS READER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AB 537	1
BUSD Anti-slur Policy.....	1
How to Handle Harassment in the Hallways in Three Minutes or Less	2
Five Things Students and Teachers Can Do to Stop Slurs	3
Compassion and Improvisation: Learning to Stand Up for Others	4
Developing Positive Racial Attitudes	6
Growing Up Gay	8
What Can Teachers Do About Sexual Harassment?	11
Flirting vs. Sexual Harassment: Teaching the Difference	14
What Do We Say When We Hear 'Faggot'?	16
White Privilege in Schools	18
Words Can Hurt Forever	20
Your Table Group's Site Based Action Plan	24

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AB 537 Fact Sheet

California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act

What is AB 537?

AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, changed California's Education Code by adding actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity to the existing nondiscrimination policy. The state defines "gender" as "a person's actual sex or perceived sex and includes a person's perceived identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance, or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with a person's sex at birth." The nondiscrimination policy also prohibits harassment and discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability.

What does AB 537 cover?

AB 537 protects students and school employees against discrimination and harassment at all California public schools and any school receiving state funding except religious schools. Harassment is defined as "conduct based on protected status that is severe or pervasive, which unreasonably disrupts an individual's educational or work environment or that creates a hostile educational or work environment." The protections cover any program or activity in a school, including extracurricular activities and student clubs. This gives GSAs and other LGBTQ-related student clubs state protection in addition to federal protection through the Equal Access Act.

How do you file a complaint?

First, file a complaint with your school. The process for filing a complaint at your school can vary. Look for information on how to make a complaint in your student handbook or ask a teacher or an administrator. It is often the same process as filing a sexual harassment complaint. If your school's harassment report form does not specifically include sexual orientation and the expanded definition of "gender," consider working to change this as a goal of your activism.

Document everything. Write down the key details of the harassment such as who, what, when, where, and witnesses. Include details from meetings you have with administrators. Keep a copy of all reports you file and confirmation that they were received.

What is your school district obligated to do?

If your school does not adequately address your complaint, you can take your complaint to your district superintendent's office (ask for the designated complaint officer or compliance coordinator). Your school district must follow the state's "Uniform Complaint Procedures," which say that your school district must do the following:

- Have a staff member who is responsible for receiving and investigating complaints who is knowledgeable about the law.
- Every year, notify parents, employees, students, and anyone interested of the district complaint procedures, including the right to appeal the school district's decision to the California Department of Education.
- Protect you from retaliation after you make a complaint.
- Keep your complaint confidential as appropriate.
- Accept complaints from any youth, adult, public agency, or organization.
- Investigate your complaint, come up with a solution, and send you a written report no more than 60 days after they receive your complaint.

Berkeley Unified School District

5144 Student Discipline: Anti-Slur Policy

D. Cause for Suspension and/or Expulsion

3.w. Use of inappropriate language and/or slurs or insults against any person or their race, color, religion, creed, ethnicity, national origin, language, ancestry, age, sex, actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, class, physical or mental ability or appearance.

NOTE: The Office of Student Services has produced a form (6/99) that can be used when students violate this policy. The form includes a summary of the event, a student-written note to parents/guardians, and a personal apology to the target of the slur. Administrators have copies of this form.

How to Handle Harassment in the Hallways in 3 Minutes or Less!

1. Stop the Harassment

- ▽ Interrupt the comment or halt the physical harassment.
- ▽ Do not pull students aside for confidentiality unless absolutely necessary.
- ▽ Make sure all the students in the area hear your comments.

2. Identify the Harassment

- ▽ Label the form of harassment: "You just made a harassing comment based upon race" (ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, size, age, etc.).
- ▽ Do not imply the victim is a member of that identifiable group.

3. Broaden the Response

- ▽ Do not personalize your response at this stage: "We at this school do not harass people." "Our community does not appreciate hateful/thoughtless behavior."
- ▽ Re-identify the offensive behavior: "This name calling can also be hurtful to others who overhear it."

4. Ask for Change in Future Behavior

- ▽ Personalize the response: "Chris, please pause and think before you act."
- ▽ Check in with the victim at this time: "If this continues please tell me, and we can take further action to work out this problem. We want everyone to be safe at this school."

5 Things You Can Do to Stop Slurs

1. Don't use slurs. If someone calls you out when you use derogatory terms, try to learn from the experience. Rather than getting defensive, respect that they are trying to make your school safe for everyone.
2. Speak up when you hear slurs being used. Explain why hate language is offensive and how it perpetuates the oppression of historically targeted communities.
3. Get involved with an anti-slur campaign at your school. Attend meetings of the GSA or other social justice club/coalition and use activism to fight hate language.
4. Wear buttons or stickers that carry messages of tolerance and respect.
5. Encourage teachers, school staff, and other students to respond when slurs are used in classrooms and hallways.

This handout was developed by GSA Network.

Take It Back

page 53

Sample Materials

5 Things Teachers Can Do to Stop Slurs

1. Set a standard. Create an anti-slur ground rule in your classroom, and communicate this clearly to students. It may be helpful to spend some time talking about why this rule is important to you and to all students. Having a clear standard in your class will proactively prevent slurs and make it easier to respond to derogatory language when it happens. Consider posting a "No room for slurs" or similar sign in your classroom.
2. If you hear slurs during a particular class period, spend a couple of minutes reviewing your anti-slur ground rule.
3. Think about having a one-on-one conversation after class with the person who used the slur. It's usually more effective to reach people on this level than by putting them on the spot in front of others.
4. If the slur was directed against a particular student in the class, check in with the person who was targeted. Make sure you let them know that you are aware of what happened, that you want to respond effectively, and that if they feel like they are experiencing verbal harassment they always have the option of telling you and/or filing a formal complaint.
5. If you notice slurs happening frequently, set aside some time for a class discussion school, such as the GSA club, social justice coalition, or peer counseling program offers peer education training about slurs, invite them to conduct one for your class.

This handout was developed by GSA Network.

Take It Back

page 55

Sample Materials

1209

3

COMPASSION AND IMPROVISATION: LEARNING TO STAND UP FOR OTHERS

BY LINDA CHRISTENSEN

“Fatty fatty two by four can’t get through the kitchen door,” kids yelled at my sister Tina. I remember looking at the kitchen door, painted a pumpkin spice color by our father. Tina was chubby, but she did go through the kitchen door. Sometimes they called her “Tina, the two ton tuna.” We lived in a fishing community on the California coast and fishing vocabulary dotted our language.

How did Tina deal with this? She fought. She ate. Later, she smoked, drank, and cut school. She was alternatively the class clown and the best, most generous friend anyone, outside of her family, could have. Eventually, she dropped out of high school and spent years regaining what those sidewalk bullies stripped her of when she was a child.

The underlying lesson is that kids can be cruel, and their cruelty exacts a price on their victims. The targets are the weak, the overweight, the different. Sometimes the difference encompasses race, language, and gender.

But kids don’t have to be cruel; in fact, part of our role as teachers and administrators in schools is to stop children from torturing others, but more importantly, educating them so that difference doesn’t automatically mean outcast.

We can teach students about Rosa Parks, Dolores Huerta, Frederick Douglass, Lucretia Mott, and John Brown — larger than life heroes who struggled to end slavery and injustice, but how do we teach them to stand up for the overweight girl sitting next to them in Algebra? How do we get them to stand up for the Vietnamese student when others laugh at her pronunciation? How do we teach them to fight against racist stereotypes? How do we get them to accept the gay math teacher down the hall?

IMPROVISATIONS: LEARNING TO INTERCEDE

1. I want students to learn how to intervene when they observe others being ostracized or hurt by intolerant behavior. To facilitate the process, I create or co-create improvisations with my students. An improvisation is a mini play. I give students a

scene with a conflict embedded in it. Students discuss the situation, select who will play each character, and then practice the scene. They do not write out the dialogue; they create it as they rehearse their scene. They may either discover their resolution while practicing or figure it out during group discussion. Students often come to new insights about the situation as they are playing it out.

Each improvisation is written to put students in a conflict where a character’s morality is tested. Some sample improvs from our unit on compassion:

- ▶ Several students are in the hallway discussing a teacher rumored to be gay. The teacher walks past.
- ▶ A group of friends are playing ball at the park when a person of a different racial background asks if s/he can join the game.
- ▶ Several friends are at the beach during the summer when they spot an especially large person in a bathing suit.
- ▶ A group of students are in class early when a new student appears on the scene. The new student is “poorly” dressed.
- ▶ Several friends are at the food court at the mall waiting in line. The person in front of them has difficulty speaking English. The line is being held up because of the confusion.

2. Students work in small groups — three or four people per group — and choose two improvs from our list or create their own. After students look over their set of improvs, they decide who will play each character, and then run through the scene. I have to remind them that someone in the group has to step up and “do the right thing.” Sometimes students have to regroup and do their improv over because no one disrupted the crowd’s hunger for blood.

3. I spend time with each group while they are rehearsing the improvisations because they can resort to easy answers or their laughter at the homeless person or large woman in a swimsuit might overwhelm the sense of decency I try to develop. They have a hard time letting go of the laughter that is part of the social currency that

makes some "in" while the others are "out" because they fear taking the risk of being "out" too. The improvs force them to practice the role of compassion. Someone has to stand up and say, "That's not funny." Beyond mouthing the correct response, they attempt to explain why the situation isn't funny. They have to practice acting and speaking for someone's pain, but they haven't had much experience.

4. After each group of students performs, I ask students to stay in their roles "on stage," and we talk about what happened. Who defended the homeless man? Who stopped their friends from putting down a student who wears "wanna-be Nikes" or Goodwill clothes? It helps to question the characters while they are in role. "How did you feel when people made fun of you for wearing the same clothes every day? Why do you wear the same clothes? Where did you find the courage to defy your friends and stand up for the gay teacher?" Although students are willing to play most roles, often they are uncomfortable if there is an issue of homosexuality. They ask me to play the role of the gay teacher or student.

INTERIOR MONOLOGUES: STEPPING INTO FICTION

5. After all groups perform at least one improvisation, I ask students to write an interior monologue from one character's point of view. An interior monologue captures the internal thoughts and feelings of a character as they are engaged in the situation. It may have been a character they portrayed or observed.

6. As students read their monologues, they often excavate the emotional territory these pieces triggered. How do people feel when they are laughed at, left out? How do they feel when they gather the courage to stand up for someone else, when they fight back against ignorance and hate?

7. The class becomes an audience to help develop the story line. Joe Stivers piece, "Tolerance," started as an interior monologue from Derek's, his main character, point of view. He is angry that

his teacher is gay. Where does he want to go with this? Does he want to follow the improv group's narrative? No. He works in bits and pieces over time. He struggles with the ending until he makes Derek's father homophobic. It takes him most of the quarter and about fifteen revisions to get there.

8. How long does this take? Probably a week or two for the initial readings, improvs and monologues. Students choose one piece out of the three sets of fiction writing we worked on — self acceptance, tolerance, and empathy. Long fiction pieces take time. We move on, but students keep going back and reworking their pieces while we move forward with the rest of the class content. During the one day we go to the computer lab, students type, write, conference with each other and me to complete their stories or other work.

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Reprinted from Christensen, L. 1996. Writing with Attitude: Strategies for Teaching Reading and Writing, Teaching Guide for the 1995-96 Rites of Passage. Washington, DC: NECA.

DEVELOPING POSITIVE RACIAL ATTITUDES

This handout was developed by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC). It can be used in joint parent/teacher workshops. Divide the participants into small groups and give each group one or two numbered points for discussion. Ask groups to do the following.

1. *Discuss what the point means and your own experiences with that issue as a child.*
2. *Share experiences with the point in your life as a parent and/or school staff person.*
3. *Share strategies, questions and concerns.*
4. *Select one insight or question to share with the other groups.*

BY CIBC

A healthy racial/cultural identity, plus skills to aid in recognizing and combatting racism, are essential to all children's self-esteem and ability to function productively in our society. Fostering growth in this direction is therefore, a major parental and teacher responsibility. Adults need to be able to not only respond to children's concerns but also to initiate activities and discussions.

Race is a social concept, not a scientific term. But racism is a social reality, and the concept is used to categorize and oppress large groups of people. It is with this understanding in mind that we offer the following suggestions.

1. Initiate activities and discussions to build a positive racial/cultural self-identity.
 - ▶ Do not wait for the child to ask questions; initiate discussions.
 - ▶ Talk about the child's skin color, features and hair texture in positive ways.
 - ▶ Admire physical characteristics of other children and adults in the same racial group.
 - ▶ Discuss leaders or members of the child's racial group of whom you are especially proud; make books about them available and display photographs or paintings of them in the home and classroom.
 - ▶ Talk about White leaders who are anti-racist activists, not just the traditional leaders popularized at most schools.

- ▶ Offer a selection of books that depict the child's heritage and racial group in a positive way.
 - ▶ Visit museums, parades, rallies and concerts that emphasize racial/cultural heritage and pride.
 - ▶ Talk about the difference between feelings of superiority and feelings of racial pride.
2. Initiate activities and discussions to develop positive attitudes toward racial/cultural groups different from the child's.
 - ▶ Expose children to a large variety of experiences, information, and images about each cultural group in order to develop an understanding of rich cultural patterns and diversity.
 - ▶ Make clear that ALL shades of skin, types of hair and other racial features are beautiful, and are of equal value.
 - ▶ Place multicultural pictures and posters around the house and in the classroom.
 - ▶ Attend multicultural art exhibits.
 - ▶ Involve children in your own anti-racist activities.
 - ▶ Provide opportunities for children to interact with a mixed racial/cultural group of people.
 - ▶ Seek out the services of adults of color (i.e., doctors, dentists, instructors.)
 - ▶ Remember, "Action speaks louder than words." Children are quick to recognize contradictions in adult behaviors. White adults, for example, who talk about appreciation of other groups but live in a totally White environment teach double message regardless of their intent.
 3. Always answer a child's questions about race when the questions are asked.
 - ▶ Don't sidestep the issue by saying, "We'll talk about it later," or "It's not polite to ask about that."
 - ▶ Don't over-respond. Do offer information and feedback appropriate to what the child is asking at the moment.
 - ▶ Acknowledge and appreciate differences. Don't deny them.
 - ▶ Practice possible answers with family, colleagues and friends.

- ▶ Don't worry if you don't say everything there is to say on the subject at once. It will come up again.
4. Listen carefully (in a relaxed manner) to questions and comments. Be sure you understand what a child means and wants to know.
 - ▶ Distinguish between children's curious, age-relevant questions and comments about race and color from questions that indicate children are learning negative attitudes about themselves or others. A curious question meant to gather information should be treated as such. e.g. Young White children may associate dark skin with dirt, and commonly ask, "Will the black wash off in the tub?" An appropriate answer might be, "Skin comes in a range of beautiful colors, just like the color of our hair, and thankfully it does not wash off. We all take baths to wash off dirt."
 - ▶ Be aware that children learn the practice of name-calling at age. Make very clear that this is unacceptable.
 - ▶ If a child says, "I don't want to play with Tommy because he's _____," a good first response is to say, "That is not a good reason." Further investigation may reveal that there is another reason, unrelated to race, having to do with the interaction which can then be addressed.
 5. Pay attention to feelings.
 - ▶ It is important for children to get effective, informational feedback which includes expressions of support and positive reinforcement for who they are.
 - ▶ Openly express disapproval of children's racist (sexist, heterosexist, etc.) remarks and behavior, but the child should not be made to feel rejected. Express your approval of anti-racist behavior.
 6. Provide truthful explanations appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
 - ▶ Be aware that children will be exposed to materials that are insulting to children of color and/or misinforming to all children. Help children identify inaccuracies. e.g. "Columbus discovered America." Columbus was a European explorer, but this continent had already been discovered and occupied by Native Americans. -or- "People thought of slaves as possessions. like dogs, cattle or furniture." Adults can help children see that the ethnocentric phrasing of that sentence implies that all "people" are White. The adult might say, "Some ignorant or greedy White people treated enslaved Blacks as less than human, which was unfair, but the enslaved people, free Blacks, and some Whites always fought for justice and equality."
 - ▶ It is natural to want to shield children of color from the truth about racism, but avoidance does not give children tools they can use to effectively deal with the realities they will face.
 7. Help children recognize racial stereotypes.
 - ▶ With your help, children quickly grow adept at spotting racial (and sex-role) stereotypes in books, TV programs, greeting cards, etc.
 - ▶ As children get older, they can be helped to see how stereotypes are used to justify oppression.
 - ▶ Encourage children to write letters protesting stereotypes to authors, publishers and TV stations.
 8. Encourage children to challenge racism by your own example.
 - ▶ It is important that adults provide children with anti-racist behavioral models, by responding to racist jokes, for example.
 - ▶ When a child has been hurt by a racial slur, the adult must always support the child and show disapproval of the perpetrator. Don't deny the racism.
 - ▶ Racial incidents involving a child should be thoroughly discussed within the family or classroom. A range of appropriate responses can be suggested to the child for future use.
 9. Cultivate the understanding that racism does not have to be a permanent condition — that people are working together for a change.
 - ▶ Adult role models are critical here. The benefits are great. In one study, children of activist families showed greater self-identification and pride and were better able to withstand societal stereotyping.
 10. Keep in mind that learning about racial identity and racism is a lifelong process.

Adapted from "Suggestions for Developing Positive Racial Attitudes" Bulletin. 11:3-4.

GROWING UP GAY

BY KATHERINE WHITLOCK

“A child’s personality cannot grow without self-esteem, without feelings of emotional security, without faith in the world’s willingness to make room for him [or her] to live as a human being.” These are the words of Lillian Smith, a civil rights activist in the 1940s. Smith urged her audiences to become aware of the ways in which behaviors and attitudes directed against particular groups (in this instance African Americans) placed so many children in jeopardy.

Basic elements necessary to our children’s emotional well-being and development are denied, Smith said, when dominant groups single out others for separate and less-than-equal treatment. Healthy development, for both individuals and societies, is not possible in settings where certain children learn that they are fair game for mistreatment while others learn that it is permissible to mistreat them.

Today, homophobia — defined as the fear or hatred of lesbians and gay men — is so interwo-

ven in our society that lesbian and gay youth face especially difficult struggles for self-esteem, emotional security and a sense of caring community. Most gay and lesbian young people are not open: they are in the closet, which is to say that they hide an important part of themselves from others (perhaps even from themselves) because they are afraid of what will happen to them if they tell the truth.

Even today it is not unusual for lesbian or gay young people never to have heard of homosexuality, to be unable to put a name to their feelings. They know only that they are “different,” and that their difference is unacceptable.

A small number of young people do acknowledge their sexual orientation, at least to some important people in their lives, or are labeled by others as lesbian or gay. These identifiable youth face many of the same fears as their sisters and brothers in the closet, and they also become more obvious targets for homophobic mistreatment.

Whether in hiding or not, gay and lesbian youth know they live in a society which, in large mea-

EYE-OPENING STATISTICS

Have students respond to the following statistics. Discuss the facts and statistics, student reactions, reasons, implications and possible responses or courses of action.

- a) As many as 7.2 million Americans under age 20 are lesbian or gay.
- b) Half of all lesbian and gay youths interviewed in a 1987 study reported that their parents rejected them for being gay.
- c) 97% of all students surveyed reported hearing anti-gay comments in school.
- d) Nearly half of all gay men and 1 in 5 lesbians are harassed or assaulted in secondary schools.
- e) Gay and lesbian youth account for 30% of completed youth suicides and are 2-3 times more likely than other students to commit suicide.
- f) Research at University of South Carolina showed that 8 out of 10 teachers in training harbored anti-gay attitudes.
- g) 28% of students who drop out of schools are gay or lesbian.
- h) 25% of all youth living on the streets are gay.
- i) In 1993, Massachusetts became the first and only state in the U.S. to outlaw discrimination against lesbian and gay students in public schools.
- j) Nationally, there were more than 100 gay/straight alliances in public and private high schools as of 1995.

From "Making Schools Safe for Gay and Lesbian Youth," published by the Massachusetts Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth (February 1993), and from Gay & Lesbian Stats: A Pocket Guide of Facts and Figures by Bennett Singer and David Deschamps (The New Press, 1994).

sure, condemns them solely on the basis of their sexual orientation. Once homosexual orientation is disclosed or even suspected, it is treated as the most important thing about that young person, even though it is only one aspect of self. It is as if the young person has ceased to exist as a complete human being with the same questions, doubts and needs as heterosexual peers.

Lesbian and gay youth learn that they are seen as somehow less than human; that the quickest way to safety is to lie about themselves; that if they are found out, they will have to survive in a world that often fears and despises them.

These messages are so much a part of daily life that they go unnoticed. In schools across the country, even very young children learn the codes, passed on in joking whispers: don't wear certain colors to school on a particular day, or you're "queer." Lessons are learned each time a child discovers that one of the surest ways to deliver an insult is to accuse another of being a *lezzy*, a *faggot*, a *sissy*. Children may not always know what these words mean, but they know the pejorative power of this language; they know it is meant to belittle others.

Lessons are learned each time a homophobic joke is told and tolerated; each time adults speak and act as if everyone in the world is heterosexual, or should be.

Such manifestations of homophobia may seem inconsequential. Yet each time they go unchallenged, hostility and fear grow in their power to dominate our lives and those of our children. Possibilities for human understanding are diminished. Worse, adult acquiescence in homophobia places lesbian and gay youth at great emotional and sometimes physical risk....

Perhaps one of the most bitter examples of recent years occurred in 1984, when a group of teenagers in Bangor, Maine taunted and harassed a young gay man named Charlie Howard, finally pitching him over a bridge to his death. A group of high school students in central Maine, together with one of their teachers, responded by planning a Tolerance Day program intended to spotlight the special concerns of groups who had been persecuted as minorities and to increase awareness of the human costs of intolerance. The program, including a lesbian speaker along with representatives of the Jewish, Black, Native American and other minority communities, was cancelled by the school board on the grounds that presence of a lesbian might provoke violence. The board's move was later up-

held by the state Supreme Court.

School environments are not unique. Damien Martin, executive director of the Hetrick-Martin Institute, observes: "[We] have to deal every day with teenagers who have been kicked out of their homes because they are gay. We have to find a bed for the 'sissy kid' who has been raped or beaten up in the last few shelters he has gone to and who would rather risk being killed by a kinky john than going back. We have to deal with the sixteen-year-old with a temperature of 104 who would rather take his chances on disease than risk the humiliation he is used to getting from social service agencies." Martin knows of one case where a sixteen-year-old gay youth was gang-raped in a youth shelter and then thrown out of the shelter because the staff said "it wouldn't have happened if he wasn't gay."

Not every gay or lesbian young person experiences homophobia so violently, but all live with the risks. Moreover, such outright expressions of hostility are only the most obvious indicators of an entire atmosphere permeated with fear. Violence comes in many forms, some less tangible than physical brutality. It can be inflicted with words and actions or through silence, indifference and neglect, wounding a young person's heart and spirit...

Today, there is an increase in reports of harassment of gay/lesbian students on college campuses. The incidence of verbal or physical abuse in high schools has been and remains high. Notes the Hetrick-Martin Institute: "Much of the violence is carried out by groups of fourteen to nineteen-year-olds and such violence is escalating sharply. Attacks by young people represent a clear failure of our schools and other social institutions to educate against violence and against homophobia."

Each time adults in positions of responsibility remain silent or look the other way when homophobic harassment occurs, children are learning that it is acceptable to tolerate violence, even to participate in it. The damage is all the worse when adults in authority actively participate in homophobic behavior.

Indifference to the destructiveness of homophobia can have another deadly, but preventable, consequence. Suicide, or attempted suicide, is one all-too-frequent choice for many lesbian/gay-identified young people who experience pain and isolation as unending; whose despair of being accepted for who they really are is almost absolute; who anticipate nothing but harm or loss — loss of family, friends — if they are honest about themselves... Many young gays and lesbians who have attempted sui-

cide say they were afraid to tell anyone about the attempt, or about subsequent suicidal thoughts, fearing that disclosure would be met only with more rejection.

As parents, youth service providers, educators and community leaders, it is our job to ensure a safe and humane environment for all young people and to say, through our work, that each of them matters. There are obstacles ahead, and so we must be prepared to confront the fears and stereotypes that stand in the way of constructive change.

RESPECTING DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCES

In learning about lesbian and gay youth, it is vital to recognize that they are by no means a monolithic population, distinguished only by sexual orientation. Though they are stigmatized on that basis, there are other important facets to their lives and experiences. We are far better able to address their needs when we acknowledge and pay attention to their diversity.

For example, though there are many Black, Latino, Asian/Pacific and Native American gay and lesbian youth, the myth persists that homosexuals are predominantly White. Lesbian and gay youth of color must contend with the ways in which homophobia and racism reinforce one another. They face discriminatory treatment not only because of sexual stereotyping but also on the basis of race and culture. Few environments provide safe spaces that support healing from the pains of both forms of oppression.

Young lesbians and gays of color know that racism is as prevalent within White-dominated les-

bian/gay circles as it is in the larger society. Forms of expression may be subtle or overt; one common experience is that gays and lesbians of color are admonished not to be "divisive" in predominantly White gay/lesbian settings by bringing up racial concerns. This push for "color-blindness" obscures the experiences and histories of people of color, establishing a context in which the meaning of those experiences is diminished or simply ignored.

Similarly, it is not uncommon for gay and lesbian youth of color to feel pressured to conceal or downplay their sexual orientation in families and groups that offer support for resisting the harms of racism. In our society, no racial or ethnic group is immune to homophobia.

In either case, lesbian/gay youth are pressured to choose which community they will identify with. This dichotomy is absolutely untenable for young people who need support for claiming both sexual and racial/cultural identities.

Reprinted with permission from chapters one and three of Whitlock, K. 1989. Bridges of Respect: Creating Support for Lesbian and Gay Youth. Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee. © American Friends Service Committee, Philadelphia, PA.

The "Eye Opening Statistics" were included in a teaching guide for Bennett, S.L. 1994. Growing Up Gay/Growing Up Lesbian. New York: New Press. The book contains more than fifty coming-of-age stories by established writers and teenagers. An excellent classroom resource.

For more information about resources and advocacy for gay and lesbian youth and teachers, contact the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), 121 West 27th Street, Suite 804, New York, NY 10001, 212-727-0135, <http://www.glsen.org>

What Can Teachers Do About Sexual Harassment?

By Ellen Bravo and Larry Miller

Theresa was the only girl in the metalworking class. When a teacher asked her how things were going with the boys, Theresa replied, "Oh, it's much better. They don't grab my breasts and butt anymore. They just call me all those names."

Paula hated walking past Leon and his friends. They would grab themselves and say things like, "Come on, now, you know you want it." Some of her friends yelled comments back, but Paula never knew what to say.

Anton took the long way to class. He didn't want to pass a certain group of girls who always made fun of him for being a virgin.

The eighth grade girls didn't like the way the teacher would fondle their hair and then let his hand skim across their bodies. But because this had been going on for awhile, they were afraid to tell their parents. And they didn't know who to tell at school.

These are just a few of the types of sexual harassment problems in our schools. Despite the headlines and well-publicized court cases, most administrators have focused little attention on the problem. But teachers don't have to wait for a directive that may be years in coming; we can take action right now in our classrooms.

Sexual harassment isn't the only problem kids face in school and for many, it's not the worst problem. But it's an area where a lot of confusion exists — confusion that's been cultivated by many people in authority who have trivialized the issue, criticized those who have raised it, and distorted proposed solutions.



RICK FEINHARD

Flirting should not be confused with harassment.

For high school students, the situation is further complicated by adolescence. If being preoccupied with sex makes someone a harasser, most teenagers would have to plead guilty. Where's the line between appropriate and inappropriate behavior — and who's drawing it?

Last year, when Larry Miller did a seven-day unit on sexual harassment, students afterward remarked that it was one of the highlights of the school year. He found that developing a unit on sexual harassment has several advantages:

- **The students love it.** Students repeatedly said throughout the year, "Why can't class always be as interesting?" Sexual harassment is also a subject on which students are eager to talk and have a great deal to say. What adolescent hasn't spent an inordinate amount of time contemplating the complexities of intimate relations?

- **The students need it.** Most students don't understand the issue of sexual harassment and have lots of mis-

conceptions. They need guidance and support to help figure out what is and isn't appropriate behavior.

- **The students benefit from it.** The benefits occur on a number of different levels. First, a sexual harassment unit empowers those individual girls and boys who may have been harassed. (For boys, it's almost always for being gay or not "manly" enough.) Such students urgently need validation that harassment is wrong, that they're not crazy, and that they're not at fault. They need to hear that someone in authority cares about the problem and isn't blaming them or dismissing their pain.

Second, it makes clear that harassment is unacceptable behavior — thus helping to create a classroom culture in which students will have a stronger understanding that their rights will be respected and defended, regardless of whether they have ever been harassed. While it is essential to go beyond dealing with harassment on a classroom-by-classroom basis, individual discussions of the issue are often an essential first

step (see article p. 106).

Third, it helps clear up confusion among boys who think they'll be in trouble for flirting or consensual joking. Larry found that while many boys initially felt hostile and suspicious during the unit (they feared the unit would demonize all boys and portray all girls as innocent victims), such attitudes changed when they found the focus was on inappropriate behavior and not on boys in general.

Fourth, it helps raise broader relationship and gender issues that the students need to talk about. One incident underscored this point to Larry. After the unit, a 16-year-old male student came up to him one day and asked to talk privately. It turned out the student had a common but simple biological question about sex — but had no adult male he felt comfortable talking to.

A Good Curriculum

A good curriculum makes clear that while most harassers are male, most males are not harassers. It also encourages students to intervene when harassment occurs, to speak out not as champions of the "poor victims" but as people offended by such behavior.

At its minimum, the curriculum should have three goals. First, it must help the majority of students to understand why harassment is wrong. Second, it must help the harassers to stop their behavior. Third, in what is a more complex issue, it must address larger issues of gender stereotypes and power. Students need to understand that sexual harassment is part of a continuum of sexual misconduct that has to do with domination rather than sex. This takes the issue out of the battle-of-the-sexes mode and helps students better understand patterns of sexual discrimination.

It is also essential to deal with the perspective that those who challenge sexual harassment are merely whining "victims" rather than people with a legitimate anger. Some critics argue that sexual harassment awareness training contributes to a nation of "victims." Like any unit dealing with situations of oppression, the curriculum's purpose is not to create a sense of hopelessness but of understanding and power — the knowledge that each of us is important and deserves to be treated with dignity. We don't prevent or stop harassment by ignoring it any more than we do by condoning it. In fact, ignoring sexual harassment sends a powerful message that

no one cares. This "hidden curriculum" can leave girls with a sense of powerlessness and, in essence, teaches girls to accept sexual inequality.

Teaching Techniques

Obviously, good teaching is central to the unit's success. Teachers can use a variety of techniques, from videos to role plays, small-group discussions, and student essays. It is useful to begin with a "safe" lesson idea that encourages students to share their feelings, such as an anonymous survey asking students both their definition of sexual harassment and whether they have ever been harassed.

It's a good idea to include at least one lesson plan that helps students distinguish between flirting and harassment. (See sample plan, p. 106). In helping students distinguish between the two, Larry found that two questions were essential: Was the behavior unwelcome? Did the behavior make the recipient feel uncomfortable? If the answer is "yes" to the questions, the line is usually crossed between flirting and harassment.

Role plays and scenarios are a particularly useful technique. In his unit,

The Need for Districtwide Changes

Classroom lessons are the core of any sexual harassment policy. But classroom activities are not enough. To effectively combat sexual harassment, there must be school wide and district wide changes. All school and district staff should receive the training necessary to help create a school and district climate where sexual harassment is dealt with quickly and forcefully. Some of the essential components to help create such a climate include:

- **Commitment from the top.** A clear acknowledgment that sexual harassment is a problem and won't be tolerated.

- **Policy.** Procedures need to be clear and familiar. Information should be distributed to each student in a way that

will get their attention.

- **Definition.** The policy should describe, concisely and with specific examples, what sexual harassment is and what kinds of behavior are prohibited.

- **Complaint procedures.** Students and school personnel should be given several channels for reporting a complaint and a timetable for its handling. The policy should make clear that due process will be observed.

- **Discipline.** The policy should specify what the consequences are for engaging in prohibited behavior.

- **Protection.** Those reporting harassment need assurances that there will be no retaliation.

- **Confidentiality.** Every step should be taken to preserve confidentiality for

those involved. The procedures should include a telephone number students can call if they want to discuss the situation anonymously with a trained professional.

- **Investigations.** Impartial and well-trained investigators should be provided to pursue any formal complaints.

- **Education.** All students, teachers, and staff should receive training.

- **Healing.** Those who have been harassed may need access to trained professionals or a support group to help them heal.

- **Assessment.** Schools should monitor their progress and step up education and intervention if necessary. □

Larry took a male and a female student that he knew were mature enough to act out what was, from their own experiences, the difference between flirtation and harassment. For example, the young man would look the girl up and down, make comments such as, "Hey, you want some of this," or grab himself in his private parts. The girl would respond, "Go away, boy, I don't need that crap." It was clear from the class's response to the role plays that the students, whether or not they could articulate it, often knew the difference between flirting and harassment.

Scenarios, in which the teacher describes a situation and asks for students' responses, are a useful way to open up discussion. Larry developed the following activities and also used some from the resources listed on p. 105.

In one scenario, boys "rate" girls as they walk past them in the hallway. ("She's a 10"; "She's so ugly she'd be pretty if she were a dog.>"). During a discussion of such "ratings," some boys argued that rating girls can be a compliment. "It's just ugly girls who are offended," one said.

Some girls had a different view. "I don't care what I'm rated; it makes me uncomfortable," Betty replied. "I don't like it." Other girls backed her up and made the point that such ratings are degrading and make a woman feel less than a human being. Larry found that such conversations were much-needed. Whether or not every student took Betty's comments to heart, her point was made.

Another scenario focused on how boys "eye" girls. James, for instance, argued that he can look at anything he wants. "These are my eyes," he insisted. But another student responded, "If I feel disrespected, then you're out of order" —picking up on common student concern with "respect" as a key factor in determining what's right and wrong.

In doing such scenarios, it is important that at least one deal with the most evident form of harassment: the use of abusive words such as "bitch" and "whore." In the discussion following such a scenario in Larry's class, one female student reflected a common view that, "If a girl is not a 'whore' then she

should be tough enough not to be offended by these words."

Her view sparked a lively debate. A number of both young men and women shot back with comments such as, "We shouldn't have to put up with that kind of nonsense."

The power of the unit was most clear in the summary essays written by Larry's students. Many of the students came to clearly understand not only the difference between flirting and harassment, but the issue's importance.

Reflecting on flirting and harassment, Jamela wrote in her summary essay: "Flirting and sexual harassment are two different things. Flirting is when two people are joking and kidding around and none of them mind. But sexual harassment is when two people might be joking around and kidding around and one goes too far. Another form may be when two people are talking or playing and one of them touches the other in a way they don't like, or grabs the other in a way they don't like."

Jason, meanwhile, focused on the many responses to sexual harassment. Articulating a range of responses that most students were unaware of before the unit, he wrote, "Sometimes you can handle sexual harassment by ignoring it or asking the person to stop it, especially when it is name calling, rumors, light touching, or gestures. If it continues you need to go to someone in authority, either a teacher, parent, boss, or head of the department. If it still continues you need to keep taking action and not let them get away with it. Don't be afraid to talk to other students or co-workers about it. Perhaps it is happening to them too and you could build a better case against that person. Sexual harassment should be an important issue in all communities. Looking the other way and doing nothing about it is saying that sexual harassment is okay." □

Ellen Bravo is executive director of 9to5, National Association of Working Women, and co-author of The 9to5 Guide to Combating Sexual Harassment.

Larry Miller teaches social studies at Custer High School in Milwaukee.

Sexual Harassment Resources:

Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Sexual Harassment in Schools for 6th Through 12th Grade Students, by Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom, published by The National Education Association (Washington, 1994). To order, contact the Publications Department, The Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College, 106 Central St., Wellesley, MA 02181-8259. (617) 283-2510, fax (617) 283-2504, or NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06515. (800) 229-4200. Cost: \$15.95 for NEA members, \$19.95 for general public.

Sexual Harassment in Schools, a videotape produced for *Teacher TV* by NEA and The Learning Channel. Stock number A050-10119. \$15 plus \$2.50 per tape s&h. Available from the NEA Professional Library (see above).

Sexual Harassment and Teens: A Program for Positive Change, by Susan Strauss with Pamela Espeland, (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 1992). 400 First Ave. N., Suite 616, Minneapolis, MN 55401. (800) 735-7323.

"Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools." 1993, \$11.95 (\$8.95 for AAUW members) plus \$4 each s&h. AAUW Sales Office, P.O. Box 251, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701. (800) 225-9998 ext 246.

Tune In To Your Rights: A Guide for Teenagers about Turning Off Sexual Harassment (1985). Also available in Spanish, \$3 includes s&h. Make checks out to the University of Michigan. Send to PEO, 1005 School of Education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109. (313) 763-9910.

Flirting vs. Sexual Harassment: Teaching the Difference

By Nan Stein and Lisa Sjoström

Objectives:

To raise student awareness about the kinds of sexual harassment which take place all the time; to discern the fluid, subjective line between flirting and sexual harassment; to encourage open student discussion of a complicated topic.

Preparation:

- Prepare three lists with headings and subheadings either on the blackboard or on big sheets of newsprint (these sheets may provide great reference points in later lessons). The titles of the first three lists should read “Verbal or Written,” “Gestures,” and “Physical.” Under each heading write the two subheadings “Flirting” and “Harassment.” During the discussion, anticipate creating a third subheading on each of the three lists titled “Depends.” At this point, the three lists should be titled like this:

	Verbal or Written	
Flirting		Harassment
	Gestures	
Flirting		Harassment
	Physical	
Flirting		Harassment

- Decide beforehand if you will allow students to use profanity or if they should speak in euphemisms. Another alternative is for students to write their answers on paper and hand these lists to you to decide what to record on the main lists.

- If possible, ask students to arrange their chairs in a circle.

- Decide upon the ground rules; e.g.,
1. Everyone must listen when someone is speaking.

2. Don't get personal by mentioning anyone's name when telling about a specific incident.

3. Ask students to determine other rules, such as “What's said here, stays here.”

- Encourage younger students, in particular, to be in their most “mature” behavior mode.

Introduction:

“This activity is pretty simple and fun. We're going to talk about the difference between flirting and sexual harassment. Before we begin, I want to state from the outset that we're not here to demonize or blame boys. Many of us may never be either targets of harassment or perpetrators. But all of us are *witnesses and bystanders* who see harassment happening, and we need to learn to say, “Hey, cut it out, that's not funny!” or “What would you do if this were your sister, your mom, or your brother?” So, we're not just trying to change boys and men. We're trying to change *all* of us — so we'll have the courage to actively respond when we see sexual harassment go on.

“You are the best anthropologists of your own culture — and ‘subcultures’ (cliques, who you ‘hang’ with). All the time you are observing other kids' behavior in school, and seeing how behaviors differ depending on where you are and whether there are adults around or not — in classrooms, locker rooms, the cafeteria, the parking lot, the hallways. In this discussion, I want you to draw upon what *you* already know and see. You are the experts and sophisticated ‘critiquers’ of your subcultures.

“In this exercise, we're going to talk about how you all interact with each other and what you observe, how you

make sense between what is sexual harassment and what is flirting (‘hanging out,’ ‘getting to know someone’).

“First we'll focus on verbal and written exchanges, such as comments and notes. Then we'll focus on gestures like winking, waving, and other ways you communicate without speaking or touching. Lastly we'll consider physical interactions. For each category, we'll talk about examples of flirting and then instances that cross the line into sexual harassment. I don't expect everyone to agree. What's most important is that we start talking. ... Can anyone give me an example of a comment or a note that's flirting and nice? ...”

Activity:

- To avoid confusion, walk students through the lists one at a time.

- Write down student answers under the appropriate subheading.

- Encourage students to stay with specifics they know from a school setting and not stray to hypothetical or out-of-school situations.

- If one column isn't being addressed, ask students specific questions; e.g., “Can you give me examples of physical ways people flirt?”

- When students disagree upon the nature of a particular behavior or comment, ask them what they are basing their criteria upon and enter this under the heading “Depends.” For example, perhaps the nature of a comment *depends* upon whether the speaker is a friend or a stranger, or upon their tone of voice. Write these dependent variables right on the three lists.

- If one behavior falls under both headings of “Flirting” and “Harassment,” note this by drawing an arrow from one column to the other; e.g.,

Verbal or Written

Flirting

You look nice ➡

Like your hair

Harassment

nice ass

'ho

Depends on:

tone of voice

how they look at you

Gestures

Flirting

blowing kiss ➡

wave

Harassment

grab crotch

lip licking

Depends on:

friend or stranger

how old they are

who else is around

Physical

Flirting

hug ➡

holding hands

Harassment

pinch

grabbing

Depends on:

friend or stranger

where you are

Questions to Raise Afterwards:

After students have completed the activity, the following discussion questions can help them make sense of the lists.

- Why do people define sexual harassment differently?
- If sexual harassment is illegal, how come it goes on?
- Who allows sexual harassment to go on?
- What are some common forms of sexual harassment that often go unnoticed in schools?
- Do girls sexually harass other girls?
- Who harasses boys?

Troubleshooting:

Discussion often gets heated and students can raise many challenging questions. Here are some typical questions and scenarios, along with suggested responses.

1. Boys raise the argument that girls are asking to be harassed by the way they dress.

"All of our opinions about temptation are shaped by the times we live in. Did you know that in Puritanical New England in the 1600's if a woman wore a dress and her ankles or wrists showed, men would walk on the other side of the street and turn their eyes away in

horror? They believed the Devil was tempting them."

"Sometimes we — both males and females — do dress to look and feel good about ourselves. Yes, we may want attention, but that doesn't mean we want to be harassed."

2. Students ask: "But how do we know which is which? We won't be able to say anything to one another!"

"We're figuring this out all the time — silently. You don't ever go up to someone and say, 'Hi, can we flirt now?'" This is why we need to keep talking and openly discussing our intentions, feelings, and interpretations of each other's words and behaviors."

3. Students ask about other hassles which don't fall under the category of sexual harassment.

- Crank calls: "Against the law. It is a crime under both state and federal laws for anyone to make obscene or harassing phone calls. Look in the front section of the telephone book — it's spelled out there, and tells you to call the phone company if these calls persist."

- Knocking books out of someone's hands: "Someone's provoking you, but it isn't sexual in nature, so it isn't covered by federal law. Of course, the school may have its own rules about student behavior, like rules against cheating and fighting. And remember, something doesn't have to be illegal for you to say 'This is making me uncomfortable!' or 'You're acting like a jerk!'"

- Being harassed by a family member at home: "Federal laws on sex discrimination and sexual harassment only apply to two places: one law covers school and school-sponsored events, and a second law covers the workplace. Of course, sexual assault at home or in the streets is just as serious. So speak up, say 'no,' tell someone you trust and keep telling until you find someone who believes you and will help you."

4. "Can a harasser get sued?"

"Yes and no. Under federal law Title IX, you bring a complaint against the school district and ask for monetary damages. Why? Because it's the school district's responsibility to enforce the rules and explain what's legal and ille-

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gal in school. Under law, the school district has to provide you with an environment that is safe and equal for learning for both girls and boys. So, the school district is responsible for maintaining a school climate and environment that is conducive to learning and one which allows everyone to participate without fear of sexual harassment. Though an individual cannot get sued under Title IX, if the person has done something that is also criminal (like assault), then the district attorney may choose to sue the individual in criminal court."

5. A student relates an incident of teen dating violence that occurred away from the school.

"Violence is a separate category from sexual harassment. Violence in teen relationships or domestic violence is a form of assault and is covered by criminal law. For that, you need to make a complaint through the police and the district attorney." □

Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom are with the Center for Research on Women at Wellesley College, in Wellesley, MA.

The above is adapted from *Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Sexual Harassment in Schools for 6th Through 12th Grade Students*, published by the National Education Association (Washington, D.C., July 1994). [See resources p. 105]

What Do We Say When We Hear 'Faggot'?

By Lenore Gordon

Alice is eleven. She walks down the school halls with her arm around her best friend, Susan. During lunch, they sit on the floor holding hands or combing each other's hair. Lately, Alice has been called "dyke," and boys have been told not to be her friend.

Brian refuses to take part in a fight on his block. As he makes his way home, he hears cries of "faggot" and "sissy." Suddenly he begins to run, realizing that the other children may now attack him.

Carl is gifted musically; he would like to join the elementary school chorus. Although he hesitates for several weeks, the music teacher persuades him to join. One morning soon after, he enters the classroom tense and angry after chorus, muttering that several boys have called him "gay."

Some children play a "game" called "Smear the Queer," in which one child suddenly attacks another, knocking him to the ground. The attacker shouts "Fag!" and then runs away.

Homophobic name-calling is pervasive. Even first graders are now using such terms as "faggot" to ridicule others, and such name-calling is increasingly common in the older grades. Homophobic name-calling is devastating to young people experiencing homosexual feelings. For youngsters who are not gay, such name-calling creates or reinforces hostility towards the gay and lesbian population. And it forces all children to follow strict sex-role behaviors to avoid ridicule.

Because homosexuality is such a charged issue, teachers rarely confront children who use homophobic name-calling to humiliate and infuriate other children. Many teachers do not realize that this sort of name-calling can be dealt with in much the same way as other kinds of bigotry and stereotyping.

Teaching children to be critical of

oppression is teaching true morality, and teachers have the right, indeed the obligation, to alert their students to all forms of oppression. Educating children not to be homophobic is one way to show the difference between oppressive and non-oppressive behavior.

Challenging homophobic name-calling by teaching children non-judgmental facts about homosexuality and by correcting myths is also intrinsically connected to anti-sexist educational values, since homophobia is used to reinforce rigid sex roles. Furthermore, if adults criticize other forms of name-calling but ignore anti-gay remarks, children are quick to conclude that homophobia is acceptable.

Boys are far more likely to be the object of homophobic name-calling than girls, perhaps because sex roles for boys remain, to some extent, more rigidly defined. A boy involved in a traditional "female-only" activity such as sewing or cooking risks out-and-out contempt from his peers, as well as the possibility of being called "faggot" or "sissy." Girls are more able to partici-

pate in activities that have traditionally been for boys, such as sports or shop, without loss of peer approval.

At the late elementary and junior high school levels, physical affection between girls is far more acceptable than between boys, but a girl will be called a "dyke" if she does not express, by junior high, a real interest in pleasing boys or in participating with other girls in boy-centered discussions.

As an elementary school teacher, I have made an awareness of oppression and of the concept of "majority" and "minority" a focus of current events, history, and social studies. Throughout the year we discuss those who are not in the majority in this country: Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Blacks, Chicanos, disabled people, older people, and many others. We also discuss women, a generally powerless majority.

If oppression is being discussed, it is impossible to ignore lesbians and gay men as a group that faces discrimination. Children in the middle grades have a strong sense of justice, and they can understand the basic injustice of people being abused because they are different from the majority. They can also identify with the powerlessness of oppressed groups because children themselves are often a verbally and sometimes a physically abused group.

Types of Name-calling

When initiating a discussion of name-calling, teachers can explain that there are two kinds of name-calling. One kind of name-calling, unrelated to any particular group, is often scatological or sexual (i.e., the four-letter words). The other is group-biased; it uses the name of a group — "nigger," "chink," "polack," etc. — as the insult and implies that there is something wrong with

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being a member of that group.

Group-biased name-calling can be handled in a variety of ways. Sometimes children do not truly understand why a word is offensive. If a teacher simply takes the time to tell the class that a particular word insults or demeans a group of people, children will often stop using the word. (Occasionally, children do not even know what a term means. One New York City ten-year-old who frequently called others "faggot" told me that the word meant "female dog." A twelve-year-old said that a lesbian is a "Spanish Jew.")

Discussions about the meaning of homophobic words can often be quite consciousness-raising. When I hear a child use the word faggot, I explain that a "faggot," literally, is a stick used for kindling. I also explain that gay people used to be burned in medieval times simply for being gay, and they had to wear a bundle of sticks on their shirts to indicate that they were about to be burned. (At times, gay men were used as the kindling to burn women accused of witchcraft.) After the discussion that ensues from this revelation, I make it clear to my students that the word is not to be used again in my classroom, and it rarely is.

When I talk about the words "lesbian" and "gay men," there is always a stir of discomfort, so I ask what those words mean. I am also usually told that a gay man is an "effeminate" man. We discuss the stereotyping inherent in that myth, as well as the fact that "effeminate" means "behaving like a woman," and the class begins to realize that "behaving like a woman" is viewed negatively.

When asked what it really means to be called a "faggot" and why it is insulting for a boy to be called "gay," students will often respond that saying a boy is like a girl is the worst insult imaginable. At this point, girls are likely to sense that something unjust has been touched upon, and they will often take up their own defense, while simultaneously having their own consciousness raised.

Before we go on with the lesson plan, I usually attempt to reach a consensus on definitions. Here are some

that have seemed acceptable: "Someone who loves someone of the same sex, but can be close to people of the opposite sex if they want to" and "Someone who romantically loves someone of the same sex." We added the word "romantically" in one class after a boy commented in a confused tone, "But I love my father ..." When discussing definitions, it is important to tell children that gays and lesbians are as different from one another as are heterosexual men and women. There is no such thing as a "typical" lesbian or gay man.

Imagining Names

When we continue with the lesson plan and students are asked to imagine being called names as they walk with a close friend of the same sex, they describe feeling "different," "dumb," "weird," "afraid," and "embarrassed." (One very different response was, "I'd feel loved, because the main thing would be walking with someone I loved.") When asked how they would feel as one of the name-callers, children usually admit that they "would feel like part of the group."

Suggested responses to homophobic attacks have included, "It's my choice," "We like each other, and for your information, we're not homosexual," "I'm not ashamed," "I'm just as different as you are," "I don't care," and "So what!"

I have also used the music of Holly Near to teach about oppression. Songs are an effective tool in reaching children, who seem to retain information presented in this mode quite easily. Near sings about the oppression of many different groups and her songs help students make linkages between their struggles.

Another way to combat homophobia — particularly for older students — is to invite a speaker from a gay organization to talk to the class. Listening to a gay or lesbian who is also a living, breathing human being — someone who has parents, siblings, and looks a little nervous in front of a group — is often a decisive factor in breaking down homophobic stereotypes.

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oppression.**

Homophobic attitudes can also be countered in discussions about sex roles. Students can be asked, "What does a boy have to do to 'act like a girl?'" (and vice versa). The stereotypic behaviors that are mentioned can usually be quickly discounted by asking children to consider their own home lives. Many children, particularly those with single or divorced parents, have seen their mothers working and their fathers cleaning the house.

Another classroom activity is to ask students to look in any standard dictionary or thesaurus for the definitions of "male" and "female," "masculine" and "feminine," "husband," "wife," etc. The definitions are often so blatantly offensive and stereotypic that they create a small sensation when read aloud, thus challenging children to rethink their own definitions.

Discussing homophobic concepts is one thing; enduring homophobic name-calling is an entirely different matter. The pressure to conform is especially overwhelming within the school/peer structure, and it is vital that teachers try to instill the courage needed to function independently when one is the object of ridicule.

I attempt to teach my students to be willing to defend not only their own rights but the rights of others. Because name-calling is so common among children, and because it embodies the bigotry learned from adults, it is a good place for educators to begin. □

Lenore Gordon is a writer from the New York area.

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WHITE PRIVILEGE IN SCHOOLS

BY RUTH ANNE OLSON

It is important to distinguish between prejudice and privilege. Where as racial prejudice is negative action *directed against* an individual, privilege is passive advantage that *accrues to* an individual or group. Good teachers recognize and actively address prejudice. But as Peggy McIntosh (1988) points out, most White people are blind to the privileges accorded to White children and parents in schools.

I tried to identify my own family's experience of White privilege in schools and without much effort, it became clear that we have, indeed, benefited from privileges to which we have given little thought. Using McIntosh's format I could elaborate on her work and add observations from my own experience.

- ▶ Whatever topics my children choose to study, they are confident that they will find materials that link people of their race to the accomplishments in those areas.
- ▶ My children know that they will always see faces like their own liberally represented in the textbooks, posters, films and other materials in the hallways, classrooms and media centers of their schools.
- ▶ When my children talk about celebrations, holidays or family observances in show-and-tell or in other informal exchanges at school, they know that their teachers will have experienced similar events and will be able to reinforce their stories.
- ▶ My children are confident that the musical instruments, rhythms, harmonies, visual design forms and dramatic traditions of their culture will be generously recognized in the formal and informal uses of music, theater and visual arts in their schools.
- ▶ The color of my children's skin causes most adults in school offices, classrooms and hallways to have neutral or positive assumptions about them.
- ▶ My children know that the vast majority of adults in their schools will be of their same racial background, even in classrooms where many or most of their fellow students are of races different from theirs.
- ▶ My children are confident that they will never be embarrassed by being called on to tell the class about their race, culture or special ways of celebrating events.
- ▶ When I visit their schools, my children know that

school staff members will reserve judgement about my economic class, my level of education and my reason for being in the school until I make them known.

- ▶ My children take for granted that the color of any crayons, bandages, or other supplies in their classrooms labeled "flesh" will be similar to their own.
- ▶ I take for granted that the tests used to judge my children's achievement and to determine placement in special classes have been developed with groups that included significant numbers of students who share our racial history and culture.
- ▶ My children are confident that they will never be embarrassed by hearing others suggest that the problems of the school (low levels of achievement, the need for special support services, etc.) are caused by the high numbers of children of their race.
- ▶ I am confident that policy decisions that affect my children's school experience will be made by state and local bodies dominated by people who understand our racial history and culture.

This list can go on. My family never asked for these privileges; principals and teachers didn't purposely create them for us; and, frankly neither they nor we have been consciously aware these privileges exist.

But stating that no one is to blame does not erase the fact that privilege has allowed my family to take for granted things that others must spend time, energy and resources trying to earn. And while I have been blind to the existence of our privileges, people who don't share them cannot help but see them and feel resentment, puzzlement, disappointment and rage at the fact that their children are excluded from the privileged class.

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SEE DISCUSSIONS QUESTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE.

Reprinted with permission from: Olson, R.A.1992. Eliminating White privilege in schools: an awesome challenge for White parents and educators. Available from: SDS (Supporting Diversity in Schools Through Family and Community Involvement) 1120 Northwest Center, St. Paul, MN 55101.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ Can you think of other privileges that could be added to this list?
- ▶ What are the implications for children of color if Whites have these privileges?

- ▶ How can the system be changed so that these 'privileges' become rights for everyone?
- ▶ What actions can you take to help the system change?

A CLOSER LOOK AT WHITE PRIVILEGE

Helping parents, students and educators examine White privilege is a crucial step towards supporting equity in education. In addition to reviewing the lists of school privileges by Ruth Anne Olson, one can also examine statistical data about current economic realities of race, gender, wealth and ownership, labor and government spending, education, welfare, health and the environment. *The New Field Guide to the U.S. Economy* by Nancy Folbre and the Center for Popular Eco-

nomics is full of graphs, charts and statistics such as the sample below. These charts can be duplicated and distributed for review in small groups. Ask each group to share some of the facts they learned from their chart, what surprised them and what they can conclude about the ways in which Whites still have privilege in this country. (*The New Field Guide* is available from the Teaching for Change catalog. Ordering information is provided in the Resource section.)

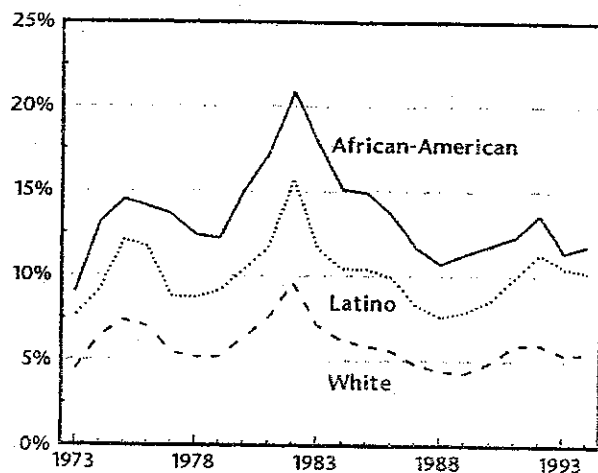
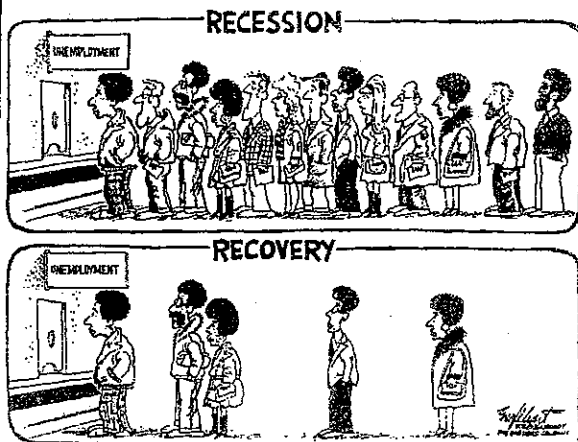
LAST HIRED

High unemployment rates afflict African Americans and Latinos more than Whites. In 1994, 11.8% of Black workers and 10.2% of Latinos could not find jobs, while only 5.4% of Whites were in the same predicament. Teenagers had an even harder time. The unemployment rate among Black youths was 36%; for Whites, it was 16%.

Persistently high unemployment rates discourage people from looking for work. Black male labor force participation rates have dropped considerably in recent years.

When people of color bear a large share of the burden of unemployment, they buffer Whites against the ups and downs of the business cycle.

Unemployment rate, by race and Latino origin (civilian workers age 16 and above)



Words Can Hurt Forever

Adults in middle and high schools must protect students from verbal harassment and emotional violence.

James Garbarino and Ellen deLara

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." It's an old rhyme from childhood, taught by parents and teachers to generations of children as a tactic for deflecting taunts and teasing. Usually the adult instructs the child to chant it back to the tormentors, like some kind of verbal amulet to ward off the evil spirits of teasing. But the essence of this childhood verse has never really convinced children—not in their hearts. They know that what other children think and say about them does matter. Sticks and stones hurt only for a while, but words can hurt forever.

As children grow into adolescence and enter middle and high school, they continue to suffer the harmful effects of bullying, harassment, and verbal violence. A survey conducted for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found that almost one-third of U.S. students in grades 6-10 were directly involved in serious, frequent bullying—10 percent as bullies, 13 percent as victims, and 6 percent as both (Nansel et al., 2001). And the U.S. Department of Education reports that 77 percent of middle and high school students surveyed have

been bullied at some point in their school career (1998).

Many students experience bullying and emotional violence, and the majority of students admit to being sexually harassed at school (American Association of University Women, 2001; Garbarino & deLara, in press). In any given specific instance of bullying, however, most students are bystanders (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Few of them spontaneously intervene on behalf of the victim. Most watch the bullying of their peers with a sense of helplessness, guiltily relieved that it's someone else's turn to be the target. They are frozen in fear and then feel ashamed for doing nothing to help. Warren, a 15-year-old in New York, expresses the bystander's feelings:

A lot of people . . . they make fun of people. Sometimes they try to push people around. You can get a nervous feeling in your stomach. There are people that it happens to every day. I see a lot of people who are picked on all of the time. I don't know if they feel unsafe. A lot of people just try to ignore it. I think it takes a really mentally strong person to just ignore it and forget it immediately. And I don't think many people do.

We heard Warren's story and many others as we conducted conversations with students throughout the United States to learn about their experiences with bullying, harassment, and school violence. These conversations were part of a research project that gathered information from hundreds of students across the country in grades 9-12, as well as recent graduates, teachers, support staff, principals, and superintendents. We used surveys, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus groups to gather information.

We learned from these students that emotional violence can create a dysfunctional social system that makes it difficult for participants to concentrate on learning. We also found that students want adults in the system to play a more active role in preventing bullying and verbal violence.

Forms of Bullying

Understanding bullying, harassment, and other forms of emotional violence starts with understanding the power of acceptance and rejection in human motivation. Anthropologist Ronald Rohner studied 118 cultures around the world in an effort to understand how the phenomenon of "rejection" works

in the lives of children and youth. He found that cultures differ in how they express rejection, but in every culture, rejected young people tend to turn out badly, sometimes by simply failing to reach their potential as a result of self-loathing, but sometimes by growing up to defy cultural norms and become lawbreakers. Rohner (1975) called rejection a "psychological malignancy."

Coopersmith and Feldman (1974) found that young people fear rejection. They crave acceptance, and will go to great lengths to get it. They will desperately try to look and act like "the popular kids." They will become addicted to smoking; shun their parents; and suffer through such painful initiation rituals as being "jumped into" a gang, getting tattooed or pierced, or breaking the law. The need for acceptance runs deep. Most human beings will pay any price to belong.

Although rejection is perhaps the most important and most fundamentally destructive form of psychological maltreatment, other forms also affect adolescents. These include *terrorizing*, *isolating*, and *corrupting*.

Terrorizing is the use of fear to torment and manipulate. Perpetrators use their victim's fear either to achieve dominance or to obtain specific payoffs, including money or other material items, status with peers, sexual gratification, or power. Bill, a 17-year-old from a large, rural high school in New Hampshire, says,

I see a fair amount of bullying at my school. There is this one small kid who always gets picked on during lunch by a couple of bullies. I think they are all juniors. One of the bullies will go up to the kid with his fist in the air until the little kid flinches and then the bully starts laughing. It's a regular thing. I'd like to do some-



Teachers and other school personnel often observe adolescent anger, but they typically don't see the profound feelings of helplessness or hopelessness that underlie much of this anger.

thing. But there is kind of like a social norm to *not* do anything. If it was anything more than verbal bullying and threats, then I would do something.

Isolating involves cutting someone off from essential relationships. As social creatures, adolescents need to be in relationships to flourish. Some students are pushed into a social "no man's land" by the exclusionary efforts of their peers. Once isolated, they can easily become disconnected from the moderating forces of mainstream society. Ironically, this state of isolation may bring together pairs of students who link up in their estrangement from the larger group and begin to develop strange and sometimes dangerous ways of thinking about themselves and their schools.

Michelle, a 10th grader, feels very isolated and lonely at school. Her words

give us a direct view into the school day of many students like her:

Do you like school? Not really. I like the classes, but not the people. If I could be home-schooled that would probably be better. The people in school pick on you all the time. Right now, I have a problem with people spreading rumors about me. I don't really like it. Most days I don't want to even come here. The teachers and guidance—they just know I'm here and that's all they really care about. People say that I'm fat, which I know I am but they don't need to pick on me about it. They spread it around that I'm pregnant and I'm not. Just dumb things. My ex-friend, she used to be my good friend but then a couple of weeks ago she started spreading rumors. So now she's not my friend no more.

Michelle's isolation and exclusion from friends and peers unfortunately reflects the experience of many

students on a typical school day. These students rarely complain to a parent or to any other adult. They suffer terribly and in silence most of the time.

Corrupting means influencing a student to learn ways of thinking, speaking, and acting that make him or her increasingly unfit for normal or healthy experiences. During the middle and high school years, negative influences are always available to set in motion the process of corrupting. Many parents are shocked when their previ-

dents say they will "take it" as long as they can, meaning they will handle difficult and disrespectful behaviors until they can stand it no longer. When they reach that point, they are likely to strike back at someone. Fifteen-year-old Sean comments,

You hear about kids who get picked on all of the time and they can't take it anymore. That's what happened at Columbine. I don't think it happens that bad at my school, but you never know.

a particular interaction among students constitutes a problem. Sometimes the adults have not even observed the upsetting situation. Other times, the delay in intervention arises deliberately from the adult premise that adolescents can work out their own problems, which the adults may consider mere teenage squabbles, scuffling, or repartee. Undoubtedly, some adults choose to remain unaware as a way to avoid doing anything about situations that they believe they can't control.

Students also spoke to us about the importance of teachers as "second parents," as supervisors in their environment, and as mentors for their social and academic growth. When given a chance to say so without the constraints of acting cool or defending a position, these adolescents expressed the need for more supervision and intervention by adults in the school:

I think if there is enough supervision in areas around and inside the school, many physical and emotional problems could be solved. (boy, age 16)

There should be more restraints on picking on people. It happens a lot here, and that is why school violence is happening. (boy, age 15)

Every public swimming pool has lifeguards because we know that swimmers need supervision in order to remain safe. Schools are no different in this respect.

Where to Start

One place to start is with concrete and grounded plans for monitoring student and adult activity in the building and on the school premises. Here are some of the essential components of appropriate supervision in middle and high schools:

- Formulate a uniform plan for when, where, why, and how to monitor and intervene on behalf of students.

- Develop the plan with the cooperation and input of all stakeholders in the school—students, teachers, parents, administrators, counselors, mental health professionals, security personnel, and concerned community members. Make sure that student input comes from every social group.



ously sweet children begin to spout angry and obscene language as they move into the world of adolescent peer groups. Formerly positive students may start to slide toward antisocial behavior when their peers mock those who work hard in school or endorse such negative activities as cutting class.

Adults' Responsibility

Why do students feel powerless sometimes? Their sense of powerlessness flows from interactions with one another, interactions with teachers and other adults in their schools, and an inability to make a positive impact on the day-to-day life of their schools. Teacher and other school personnel often observe adolescent anger, but they typically don't see the profound feelings of helplessness or hopelessness that underlie much of this anger. Stu-

Students in our study often spoke insightfully about adults' lack of awareness of events that happened in the school. We have all heard about the extreme cases of school shooters whose distress signals and hints of homicidal or suicidal intent were missed by school administrators and teachers. In our interviews, students offered many smaller examples of adult inattentiveness and its consequences. One 16-year-old girl says,

I feel unsafe in the cafeteria because people get in fights and start punching each other and the teachers don't take a strong hand. Lots of times, they don't even seem to notice.

Students believe adults should intervene long before they actually do. Sometimes those in authority delay reacting because they have not determined that

■ Through survey instruments, group discussions, and interviews, solicit students' perceptions of which places and activities are unsafe—in the school, on the grounds, and on the way to and from school. Consider recruiting outside evaluators to ensure anonymity and to capture maximum reliability of student responses.

■ Ensure that the adults who will enforce the plan feel committed to it and regard it as purposeful and useful.

■ Make it clear to everyone that adults will intervene in interpersonal disputes quickly (for most schools, this means sooner than they currently do).

■ Train every adult in state-of-the-art intervention strategies to de-escalate conflicts among students.

■ Include in the master plan a uniform policy for intervening with students who come to school under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

■ Avoid the temptation of relying on such technological quick fixes as surveillance cameras and metal detectors; in most instances, these do not help students feel safe.

■ Most important, obtain continual feedback from students on the effectiveness of the strategies for supervision that you have implemented.

In addition, schools should provide teachers with inservice training regarding the consequences of allowing bullying and harassment in the school. Any inservice program needs to define forms of bullying and recommend appropriate means of interrupting bullying interactions from student to student and between teacher and student. Several countries already have successful programs from which our schools could make adaptations (see Mattaini, 2001; Olweus, 1993; Smith et al., 1999; Stein & Sjostrom, 1996).

Consequences of Inaction

What does bullying and other disrespectful behavior mean from a systemic perspective? First, our failure to prevent such behavior indicates that the system defines bullying too narrowly, as only physical aggression and extortion. Second, failing to prevent bullying behavior suggests a lack of under-

standing of the serious and damaging nature of all forms of bullying for many students. Third, our inaction reflects an unwillingness to see bullying as the responsibility of the system. When school personnel do not prevent students from bullying other students, these educators have, in effect, delegated a portion of their authority to the bullies in the system. This situation has many negative consequences, among them the rise of gang behavior in the schools.

If adults do not provide the intervention students need, then students will take matters into their own hands.

When teachers and students participate in bullying activities or witness them and do nothing, they enable the school system to perpetuate this behavior and remain unhealthy and unsafe for all students. If adults do not provide the intervention students need, then students will take matters into their own hands—generally for worse, not better. Caring means demonstrating the will to stay aware and to act in a protective fashion, and in so doing create an emotionally safe school.

Although considered normal by school personnel and many students themselves, emotional bullying and harassment among students exact a high price in terms of the atmosphere of the school. Although student leaders can play a part in reducing bullying behavior within the school, adults must fill a crucial role. We have to ask, What is our responsibility? When it comes to bullying, sexual harassment, and emotional violence at school, the buck stops with adults. ■

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HOW TO ADDRESS BULLYING AND HARASSMENT AT OUR SCHOOL SITES

Strategies That We Have In Place:

What We Need:

GIVEN OUR CURRENT RESOURCES, WHAT ARE TWO CONCRETE STEPS WE CAN TAKE?

Step	Resources Needed	Timing	Who is responsible?

SUBMITTED BY (GROUP MEMBERS): _____

SCHOOL: KING

LONGFELLOW

WILLARD