

November 14, 2016

Dear educators-

With the recent rash of hate crimes, harassment and disrespect being reported in schools and communities in Oregon and across the nation some parents, students and school staff are feeling alarmed and concerned. It is critical during this challenging time that schools place a clear focus on Respect, school climate and the principles and practices of School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (www.pbis.org). Schools should be safe, positive, welcoming environments for all of our students regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Here are a few initial suggestions schools might take to navigate these difficult circumstances:

1. **Teach Respect**: Set a strong tone by actively teaching Respect school-wide to all students beginning right now! Teach booster lessons that specifically address concerns for disrespect, bullying or harassment you have experienced or that you see as a potential concern at your schools. Based on trends being reported across schools it may be important to teach expectations for treating ALL student with respect regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation. Provide clear examples of how to demonstrate Respect in school for all students, particularly respect for diverse students, girls and LGBTQ students. With care and discretion also consider discussing examples of Disrespectful behavior with a firm explanation that such behavior is not tolerated. The primary emphasis should be on teaching all students what is respectful behavior but it might also be helpful to briefly review with students potential consequences for harassment and bullying behavior. Dedicate time at the beginning of each school day for reviewing expectations for demonstrating Respect to all students.
2. **Acknowledge and Celebrate Respect**: Strongly encourage staff to actively look for and acknowledge students engaging in Respectful behavior with peers. If your school is implementing a school-wide system for acknowledging student behavior encourage staff to look for and hand out tickets for students engaging in respectful behavior and behaviors showing respect for all students. Schools may also want to consider acknowledging entire classes demonstrating Respect or even working toward a school-wide celebration for Respectful behavior throughout the school.
3. **Train Bystanders**: Create a school climate that supports, encourages and celebrates bystanders who act to disrupt incidents of bullying and harassment. Teach the critical role of bystanders in addressing incidents of bullying, harassment and discrimination. Teach your students specifically what they should do if they experience or witness harassment or bullying behavior. Steps commonly taught in schools are the Stop – Walk – Talk procedure. Here are links to handbooks to support implementation of [Bully Prevention program for Elementary Schools](#) and the [Expect Respect program](#)

[Bully Prevention program for Elementary Schools](#) and the [Expect Respect program for Secondary Schools](#). When teaching students to implement Stop – Walk – Talk, give students opportunities to practice through role play how to respond to specific examples of harassment or bullying remarks as appropriate to your school setting. For example if students at your school may be at risk for experiencing harassment related to sexist, racist, or anti-LGBTQ remarks and behaviors it may be helpful to include these statements in practice examples. This practice needs to be closely supervised and make sure to approach instruction in a strategic and thoughtful way considering the sensitive subject matter and your community. Have teachers and staff members play the role of the bully with great discretion when using more sensitive examples... students should not be practicing inappropriate remarks and behaviors.

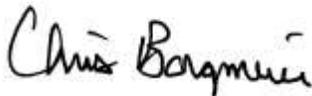
4. **Include Families and Community**: Many students may be at risk for experience bullying, harassment and hate speech outside of the school environment. Identify ways to align with families and the community. Inform parents about the specific steps you are taking at school to address bullying and harassment. Teach and encourage families and community members about the Stop – Walk – Talk process being taught at school and how they can support their children to use those skills in school and in the community should they experience bullying or if they witness another person being bullied or harassed. Parents should also learn what steps they can take as a bystander in the event that they witness bullying or harassment. The video “[5 Ways to Disrupt Racism](#)” provides suggestions for adults to intervene and support others they encounter who are the target of bullying and harassment.

Additional resources can be found at Teaching Tolerance (www.tolerance.org)

If you would like to share additional tools and strategies that might be helpful to other schools you can describe them on this shared [google document “Suggestions for addressing Harassment and Bullying in Schools”](#) and share any example materials to this shared [Google folder](#). Anyone should be able to click on these links to access any materials others have shared.

Please let me know if there are steps we can take at Portland State University to support your school district or school in this effort.

Sincerely,



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