

Advocating for All Students: A Social Justice Toolkit

How to Respond to Hate

Here are ways you can respond to incidents of hateful words, actions and images in school:

1. **Be present and available.** Bullying can occur anywhere in the school building or on the grounds. Be present during school transitions. Tell your students they can come to you.
2. **Intervene!** If you witness bullying, racist slurs or name-calling, stop the incident immediately. Separate the students. Get help from other staff if needed. Ask targeted students if they’re OK.
3. **Give clear messages.** Students who bully or commit acts of hate must hear the message that their behavior is wrong and harms others. Targeted students must hear the message that caring adults will protect them.
4. **Be calm.** Don’t require students to apologize or make amends right after you stop the incident. You may not know the full story. Keep everyone calm as you first focus on safety.
5. **Support the targeted students.** Make eye contact with the targeted students, demonstrate empathy, and reassure them that what happened was not their fault.
6. **Tell students never to ignore bullying or hateful actions.** Let bystanders who stood up for targeted students know that you admire their courage and thank them. Give other bystanders examples of how to intervene appropriately the next time (such as getting help from an adult, telling the person to stop).
7. **Investigate, document, follow up.** After the incident, question all involved individually. If appropriate, impose immediate consequences on students who bullied; provide them necessary support, such as counseling. Work with colleagues to improve your school climate to build a culture that prevents bullying.
8. **Be a caring advocate.** Make sure students are supported and have the resources they need well beyond the incident. Involve other staff who can provide guidance and emotional support.