Ensuring Students Learn in Schools Free from Bullying, Discrimination and Harassment Based on Race, Religion, National Origin, Gender, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation or Disability

Resources for Schools, Educators, Students, Families and Community Members

Events in the news locally, nationally and internationally can contribute to an environment that may expose students to disturbing or hateful messages in their everyday lives and at school. It can also result in increased bullying, harassment and discrimination of students based on their actual or perceived religion, race, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.

Preventing Bullying Based on Race, Religion or National Origin

On December 31, 2015, the U.S. Department of Education issued a Dear Colleague letter asking educational leaders throughout the nation to ensure that their schools are learning environments where students are free from discrimination and harassment based on their race, religion, or national origin.

“A focus on these protections, while always essential, is particularly important amid international and domestic events that create an urgent need for safe spaces for students,” wrote former Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Acting Education Secretary John B. King in the letter. Duncan and King also urged school leaders to “anticipate the potential challenges that may be faced by students who are especially at risk of harassment — including those who are, or are perceived to be, Syrian, Muslim, Middle Eastern, or Arab, as well as those who are Sikh, Jewish, or students of color.”

There are many resources available to help school leaders, educators, students, families and community members promote a more positive school climates and to prevent and address bullying, harassment and discrimination. A list of resources and links to resources that educators, students, families and community members may find helpful follows.

Bullying and Muslim Youth

Educators Have an Important Role to Play

In the blog “Protecting Our Muslim Youth from Bullying: The Role of the Educator” on stopbullying.gov, the authors outline what has led to an increase in bullying and harassment of Muslim students and highlight resources to help educators to: create an anti-bias learning environment; teach students about stereotypes, bias, and discrimination; use current events to help students understand real world incidents and develop students’ ability to challenge biased language, especially jokes and slurs.
Council on American-Islamic Relations Offers Guides and Help

The Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-MN) has many helpful resources and information available to educators and the public, including “An Educator’s Guide to Understanding Islamic Religious Practices” and several “Know Your Rights” guides. CAIR-MN’s pocket guides are designed specifically for Muslim students help them understand their rights at school and where to go for help if they experience bullying or harassment. For more information, visit CAIR-MN or call (612) 206-3360.

Bullying and Students with Disabilities

Research has shown that students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and students with other disabilities experience higher rates of bullying than students without disabilities. Find resources on bullying and students with disabilities on PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center website and on bullying.gov. Other resources include:

Bullying and Students with Disabilities and Special Health Needs Resource

PACER and Special Olympics Minnesota Video Spotlight on Inclusion

In this episode of PACERTalks About Bullying, PACER talks about inclusion with Nick Cedergen from Special Olympics Minnesota as he shares more about its programs and why inclusion is such an important issue.

Bullying and LGBTQ Youth

LGBTQ youth and those perceived as LGBTQ are at an increased risk of being bullied. Review resources on safe and supportive learning environments for LGBTQ students. Other resources include:

• Toolkit for Ensuring Safe and Supportive Schools for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students
  Toolkit to help school districts and charter schools create school environments where transgender and gender nonconforming students are safe, supported and fully included, and have equal access to the educational opportunities provided to all students.

• GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, a national education organization offers several resources focused on ensuring safe schools for LGBT students and all students. Resources include Ready, Set, Respect! It is a toolkit GLSEN developed in partnership with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

• “Schools In Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools” is a resource that can serve as a roadmap for educators and parents on providing safe and supportive environments for all transgender students. Produced by the National Education Association, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) and Gender Spectrum, along with HRC Foundation and the American Civil Liberties Union, the resource offers practical advice, field-tested tips and narratives of real experiences from students and educators.

• “Transgender Students in Schools: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers for Public School Boards and Staff” is a resource developed by the National School Boards Association (NSBA). NSBA says the guide
answers many of questions about what is needed to support safe learning environments for all students, including transgender students.

- “Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students in Schools: Key Recommendations for School Administrators” is a guide from the American Psychological Association.

**How to Respond to Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes**

Teaching Tolerance, which focuses on reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for children, provides resources to educators and others, including:

- **Speak Up at School: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes**, a guide for teachers, and **Responding to Hate and Bias at School**, which shows educators how to respond to a hate-related incident in their school or community, guiding them through crisis-management and post-crisis efforts. It also provides research-based strategies for reducing bullying and creating a welcoming school climate. The booklet is written primarily for school administrators but provides valuable information for counselors and teachers as well.

**Developing an Inclusive Cultural and Respectful School Climate**

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) offers a variety of training programs for PreK- through 12th-grade school communities - educators, administrators, youth and families - which focus on the development of an inclusive culture and respectful school climate by addressing issues of bias and bullying. You can find these training programs and other helpful resources on ADL’s Education and Outreach Anti-Bias Education page. In ADL’s “Current Events Classroom,” teachers can find timely and brief lesson plans that can help them teach current news and topics, including the lesson plans “Deadly Shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue” and “Terrorist Attack in Paris and Scapegoating.”