What Families Should Know and Do About Making Schools Free From Bullying and Harassment

Help your child.

Tell your child that the harassment is not their fault.

Write down everything including who did it, when, and what happened.

Help your child report the harassment to school administrators. If that person does not help, tell someone else. Keep a journal of all conversations.

Make sure that the school takes immediate action to protect your child.

Your child has the right to be safe and to have others treat him or her with respect. Your child's school is required to have a harassment policy. The policy should define harassment, tell you how to report it, and list steps the school must take if your child is a victim of harassment.

Parents can help by knowing what harassment is, knowing your child's rights, helping prevent harassment, and helping your child.

This information is provided Education Northwest. We help schools and their communities incorporate educational equity into policies, procedures, and classroom practices to ensure that all students receive what they need to succeed academically.

For more information or to request assistance, go to: http://educationnorthwest.org/equity

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Know what harassment is.

Harassment is unwanted behavior directed at a student or a group because of race, color, sex, disability, or national origin that creates a hostile learning environment. The behavior may be gestures, verbal, written, or physical forms of aggression. Harassment can be blatant or subtle, one incident or a pattern. It can happen between students, between adults, or between an adult and a student. It can happen at any age. It may happen directly between two people, indirectly through rumors, or electronically.

Sexual harassment is unwanted verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates a hostile learning environment. Flirting is different from sexual harassment. It is never okay for adults to show sexual interest in your child or for flirting to continue if your child asks for it to stop.

Examples of harassment

Providing unequal educational opportunities

Using teaching materials that contain biased curricular content

Disproportionate discipline practices for similar behaviors

Verbal and physical acts of disrespect including name calling, insults, offensive jokes, threats, and physical aggression

Ignoring or excluding someone from school activities or events

Displaying offensive graffiti, pictures, or written material

Examples of sexual harassment

Anytime an adult shows sexual interest in a student

Unwelcome touching, invading someone's personal space, or other sexual advances

Jokes, suggestive remarks, sexual innuendoes, sounds, or gestures

Unwanted comments about someone's dress or appearance

Displaying sexually suggestive pictures or written material

Threatening or using intimidation to gain sexual favors

Know your child's rights.

Your child has the right under federal law (and most state laws) to attend a school that is safe, welcoming, and does not allow harassment. If your child is a target of harassment, you have the right to ask the school to stop it immediately. Your school should take steps to stop the harassment and prevent it from happening again. The school should also help your child get counseling or other help if needed. Finally, the school must protect you and your child from retaliation for telling and asking for help.

Help prevent harassment.

Ask the school for info about your child's civil rights and responsibilities.

Learn how you can advocate for your child or others if needed.

Ask your child's teacher how they help children learn and respect others from different cultures. You should also learn how he or she prevents harassment in the classroom and how they respond to incidents that occur.

Ask teachers how you can help support their efforts to prevent harassment.

Ask the school to include information about the district or school's harassment policy in the parent newsletters.

Speak up and confront prejudice and discrimination. Deal with it directly and, if necessary, report it.