

Teacher Toolkit: HARMFUL AND DEROGATORY LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

GUIDE 3: ADDRESSING THE BEHAVIOR IN THE MOMENT



1. Stay Calm and Composed

- **Maintain Composure:** Take a deep breath and approach the situation calmly. Your demeanor sets the tone for the interaction.
- **Non-Verbal Cues:** Use body language that conveys calmness and authority, such as maintaining eye contact and standing tall.

2. Immediate Intervention

- **Stop the Behavior:** Interrupt the harmful language immediately. Use a firm but calm voice to say something like, "We do not use that kind of language here."
- **Identify the Behavior:** Clearly state what was said or done that is unacceptable. For example, "Calling someone that name is hurtful and not allowed in our classroom."
- See Sample flow chart overleaf for help staff decide the best course of action.

3. Address the Impact

- **Acknowledge Harm:** Briefly explain why the language is harmful and its impact on others.
- **Promote Empathy:** Encourage the offending student to consider how they would feel if someone spoke to them that way.
- Provide sample sentence stems or resources that provide sentence stems/scripts for students.

4. Set Clear Expectations

- **Reinforce Rules:** Remind students of the classroom rules regarding respectful communication. "Remember, our rule is to treat everyone with respect."
- **Consequences:** Explain the consequences for using harmful language if this behavior continues, according to your classroom management plan.

5. Follow-Up Actions

- **Private Conversation:** After addressing the immediate situation, speak privately with the offending student to further discuss their behavior and understand the context.
- **Support the Target:** Check in with the student who was targeted by the harmful language to offer support and ensure they feel safe and heard. Examples of staff within our district include, school counselors, social workers and RP counselors.



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Sample Script for Immediate Response:

Step 1: Interrupt the Behavior

- "Stop. That language is not acceptable here."

Step 2: Identify the Behavior

- "What you just called someone is hurtful and inappropriate."

Step 3: Explain the Impact

- "Using that word is offensive and can deeply hurt someone's feelings." We do not recommend trying to share the historical context behind the word as there are any variations of where words come from.



Step 4: Reinforce Rules

- "In our classroom, we respect everyone. That means no name-calling or hurtful language."

Step 5: Consequences

- "If this happens again, there will be consequences according to our class rules."

By responding promptly and effectively, teachers can help foster a safe, respectful, and inclusive classroom environment where all students feel valued and supported.

Things to Consider:

1. Educational Opportunity

Teach Respect: Use the incident as a teaching moment to discuss the importance of respectful language and the impact of words.

Cultural Sensitivity: Educate students about cultural sensitivity and the historical context of certain harmful terms.

2. Consistency and Fairness

Apply Consistently: Ensure that the rules and consequences are applied consistently to all students to maintain fairness and credibility.

Document Incidents: Keep a record of incidents and the actions taken to address them. This helps track patterns and ensures accountability.

3. Administrative and Parental Involvement

Inform Parents: Communicate with administrators on your campus, per FUSD policy and the parents or guardians of the offending student to inform them of the incident and the steps taken to address it.

Collaborate: Work with parents to reinforce positive behavior and respectful language at home.

4. Self-Reflection

Reflect on the Situation: After the incident, reflect on how it was handled and consider any improvements for future situations.

This document was created in collaboration with:



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