

## **WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOU HEAR OR SEE BULLYING: TIPS FOR ON-THE-SPOT INTERVENTION**

Adults play a critical role in helping students who are bullied, ensuring a healthy and safe school climate. Yet, bullying and name-calling occurs everyday in schools. Although we might hear it or see it, we don't always know how to address the bullying. This uncertainty can keep us from doing anything, which sends the message to students that it is okay to bully and/or use hurtful and damaging language in school.

### **Below are some suggestions for responding to bullying and name-calling:**

▶ *Be sure school/classroom rules and SFUSD Anti-Shur Policy are posted and reviewed with students.* Work with school colleagues to identify and support enforcement of school wide expectations

▶ Immediately intervene to stop the bullying:

▶ *Use a "matter of fact" tone and refer to the bullying behavior.*

For example: "Excuse me, that language is unacceptable." Or "Calling someone names is bullying and it's against our school rules."

▶ *If age appropriate, specifically name the bullying behavior.*

"It is not okay to use those words or call someone those names at school."  
"They are homophobic." (racist, sexist, etc.).

▶ *Teachable moment.* If students understand where the word comes from, or the history of why it is hurtful, it can often help avert further offenses.

"The word 'faggot' actually means a bundle of sticks used for creating a fire. The term originates as far back as the 15th century, when gay men were forced to collect wood for witch-burning fires during the Spanish Inquisition--and their own bodies were then used to fuel it when the flames died out."

▶ *If needed, clearly explain why you are calling the incident bullying.* Occasionally students don't realize the prejudice in what they are saying. Use those few moments to explain how what they are saying is name-calling.

"Telling someone that they are 'so gay' is offensive. Although you might mean 'stupid', you are actually saying stupid and gay are the same. It is not okay to put down gay people. Furthermore, it's not okay to call someone stupid."

▶ Refer to the Student and Parent/Guardian Handbook for Behavior Expectations, Positive Code of Conduct, Restorative Approaches and Disciplinary Guidelines regarding bullying.

▶ Follow up privately, if necessary. Check in with the student who was being bullied to make sure s/he is okay, and to let the student know that you care.

▶ It's also a good idea to check in with the student doing the bullying. Often times, students who bully are in need of positive role models, including adults and other students. Identify a caring adult for the student.

▶ See curriculum ideas on the January School Safety/Violence Prevention Month sheet.