

[HOME \(/\)](#) > [DEPARTMENTS \(/DEPARTMENTS\)](#) > [CULTURE AND STUDENT INCLUSION \(/DEPARTMENTS/CSI\)](#) > [RESOURCES](#)

RESOURCES

On this page you will find a Teacher Toolkit intended to be used to address and respond to harmful and derogatory language in the classroom and at schools.

TEACHER TOOLKIT:

Harmful and derogatory language by students in the classroom or on campus can lead to an environment where students feel unsafe, unwelcome, and unable to learn. Fresno Unified School District strives to create an environment where all students feel safe and able learn to achieve their greatest potential. The

Department of Culture and Student Inclusion has developed an educational toolkit on addressing harmful and derogatory language in schools.

Below, you will find four guides that cover the topics of understanding harmful language and addressing the harmful behavior in the moment, as well as further educational resources and materials to support ongoing learning.

Teacher Toolkit:

**HARMFUL AND DEROGATORY
LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS****GUIDE 1: UNDERSTANDING HARMFUL LANGUAGE****Understanding Harmful Language**

Definition: Harmful language refers to words, phrases, or expressions that can cause emotional, psychological, or physical harm to individuals or groups. This can include Hate Speech, Harassment, Bullying, and/or Abusive Language.

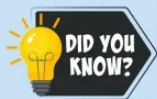
Cal. Ed. Code Section 48907: Schools cannot curtail students' speech solely to avoid discomfort or inconvenience from unpopular views. However, bullying, harassment, and threats aimed at teachers or other students are forms of expression that schools can regulate (California DoJ). For more information, please review FUSD's Anti Bullying Policy.

Impact on Overall School Culture:

- Negative School Environment:
 - Hostility and Fear
 - Lack of Safety
- Erosion of Trust
 - Distrust in Authority
 - Peer Relationships
 - Reduced School Cohesion
 - Fragmentation & Decreased Collaboration

Impact on School Reputation

- Community Perception: A school known for a negative climate can develop a poor reputation within the community, affecting enrollment and community support.



Only 46% of Black (California) 11th graders felt connected to their school/staff, compared to 59% of white 11th graders (ACLU California, 2019).

Impacts on Student Mental Health

- Anxiety & Depression
- PTSD
- Chronic Stress
- Isolation
- Difficulty Forming Relationships

Impacts on Academic Performance

- Decreased Academic Engagement
- Declining Grades
- Reduced Motivation
- Impaired Learning
- Increase in Absenteeism



22% of California students said they'd missed 3 or more days of school due to their mental health (EdSource, 2022).

Resources to Support Students:

1. "You Can't Say You Can't Play"
2. "Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls"
3. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
4. Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Education Resources
5. The Trevor Project
6. Teaching Tolerance (Learning for Justice)
7. PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center
8. StopBullying.gov

This document was created in collaboration with:



TAYLOR'd CONSULTING
HR SOLUTIONS

(<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1759768827/fresnouorg/ppbxqafeezdnddp2b4np/UpdatedDEITeachersGuide15.pdf>)

Teacher Toolkit: HARMFUL AND DEROGATORY LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

GUIDE 2: CREATING A POSITIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT THROUGH INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM RULES



A. Understand the Importance of Inclusivity

Inclusivity means creating a school environment where every student feels respected and valued, leading to improved academic performance, enhanced social skills, and greater overall well-being.

B. Identify Key Values and Principles

Determine the core values for your classroom, such as respect, empathy, kindness, and fairness. Using inclusive language and celebrating diversity are practices that support your established classroom values.

C. Engage Students in the Rule-Making Process

Involve students in creating rules to ensure they reflect on their needs and perspectives, and hold class discussions about the importance of inclusivity and what it means to each student.

D. Drafting the Rules

1. Clear and Positive Language: Write rules in clear, positive language that states what students should do rather than what they shouldn't do.
2. Specific and Actionable: Make rules clear so students know exactly what behavior is expected. Clearly outline the results of different behaviors so students understand the impact of their actions and the importance of following the rules.
3. Inclusive Examples: Use examples that reflect diverse cultures, backgrounds, and abilities to illustrate the rules.

What's Important: When school and classroom rules are not inclusive, it's crucial to address what's important - that every student's needs and perspectives are considered. This means evaluating and revising rules to promote fairness and respect, and actively engaging with students to understand their experiences and challenges.

Prioritizing inclusivity helps create a supportive environment where all students can thrive.



(<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1759768847/fresnouorg/nsnwIndxcnmshbjzhbm/UpdatedDEITeachersGuide-Guide23.pdf>)

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.



(<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1759768880/fresnouorg/yiuoickvocfgqt2rj4ag/UpdatedDEITeachersGuide-Guide32.pdf>)

Teacher Toolkit: HARMFUL AND DEROGATORY LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

GUIDE 4: EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



Lesson Plans

- Provide lesson plans on topics such as empathy, diversity, and the effects of bullying.
- Suggested activities that promote teamwork, understanding, and respect among students. See list of activities below that include Role-Playing scenarios, Empathy exercises, Diversity & Inclusion workshops, Classroom discussions and debates, Reflective journals, media analysis, interactive presentations, restorative circle discussions, art projects, literature and storytelling.
- Will provide instructions and guided notes for each activity below.

Sample Activities to Address Harmful and Derogatory Language

By incorporating these activities into the classroom, teachers can help students understand the profound impact of their words and foster a more respectful and inclusive school environment.

1. Empathy Exercises

- Objective: Develop empathy and understanding among students.
- Activity: Have students write about a time they felt hurt by words or witnessed someone being hurt. Encourage them to share their stories (anonymously if preferred) and discuss the emotions involved and the importance of being mindful of language.



(<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1759768904/fresnouorg/gd7hystlw2unogfv1xwg/UpdatedDEITeachersGuide-Guide42.pdf>)

Contact us