

Suggestions for Responding to Anti-Immigrant Taunts and Bullying in School

When anti-immigrant taunts and bullying occur, it is crucial for school staff to respond promptly and effectively to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

Recent educator surveys reveal a concerning trend in our schools: administrators report incidents of anti-immigrant bullying in approximately 60% of educational institutions. This statistic underscores a significant issue within the school environment, highlighting the prevalence of discrimination faced by immigrant students. However, despite the alarming frequency of reported incidents, teachers indicate that these occurrences are often not formally documented or addressed, suggesting a gap in the reporting process. Furthermore, research indicates that bystanders are less likely to intervene in cases of anti-immigrant bullying compared to other forms of bullying. This lack of intervention can perpetuate a culture of silence and fear, making it imperative to understand the dynamics at play and develop effective strategies to combat this pervasive issue.

Here are some specific steps you can take to respond.

Immediate Intervention:

1. Address the Behavior:

- **Confront the Bullying:** Immediately intervene when you witness or hear about anti-immigrant taunts. Use calm, firm language to stop the behavior and separate the students involved if necessary.
- **Support the Targeted Student:** Provide immediate support to the student who was targeted. Offer a safe space for them to express their feelings and reassure them that the school is committed to their safety and well-being.

2. Investigate the Incident:

- **Gather Information:** Conduct a thorough investigation to understand the context and severity of the incident. Speak with witnesses and gather all relevant information.
- **Document the Incident:** Keep detailed records of the incident, including statements from witnesses, the targeted student, and the perpetrator.
- **Report the incident:** Each community has its own reporting procedures. Ensure you know and follow yours.

Follow-Up Actions:

1. Consequences and Accountability:

- **Apply Appropriate Consequences:** Based on the school's anti-bullying policy, apply appropriate consequences to the perpetrator(s). Ensure that the consequences are educational rather than purely punitive, helping the student understand the impact of their actions.
- **Restorative Practices:** Implement restorative practices to address the harm caused by the bullying. Facilitate a restorative circle or mediation session where the perpetrator can

hear from the targeted student about the impact of their actions and work towards making amends.

2. **Educational Interventions:**

- **Classroom Discussions:** Use the incident as a teachable moment. Facilitate classroom discussions about the impact of stereotypes, bullying, and the importance of empathy and respect. Encourage students to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe and structured environment.
 - **Address Misconceptions:** Be prepared to address and correct misconceptions or biased statements that may arise during discussions. Use these moments as teaching opportunities to promote understanding and inclusivity.
 - **Promote Empathy and Understanding:** Provide historical and social context to help students understand the roots of stereotypes and how they have evolved over time. Use historical examples to illustrate the impact of prejudice and the importance of challenging misinformation.
3. **Regularly Assess Students' Sense of Belonging:** Implement a routine of using student surveys and pulse checks to measure feelings of belonging. This can help identify and possibly prevent future incidents.
 4. **Communicate Clearly:** Ensure that your school clearly communicates that anti-immigrant bullying will not be tolerated.
 5. **Re-examine School Policies:** Ensure your school bullying policies include anti-immigrant bullying.

Ongoing Support and Monitoring:

1. **Check-Ins:**

- **Regular Monitoring:** Regularly check in with the targeted student to ensure they feel safe and supported. Monitor the situation to prevent further incidents.
- **Counseling Services:** Offer counseling services to both the targeted student and the perpetrator. Counseling can help the targeted student process their experience and provide the perpetrator with tools to change their behavior.

2. **Professional Development:**

- **Cultural Competency Training:** Ensure that all staff members receive ongoing training in cultural competency, anti-bias education, and strategies for addressing bullying and discrimination.
- **Reflective Practices:** Encourage staff to reflect on their own practices and biases. Create opportunities for continuous learning about the experiences and needs of immigrant-origin youth.

Engaging Families and Communities:

1. **Family Involvement:**

- **Engage Families:** Engage the families of both the targeted student and the perpetrator. Communicate the school's commitment to a safe and inclusive environment and involve families in finding solutions.
- **Community Partnerships:** Partner with local organizations to provide additional support and resources for immigrant-origin students and their families.

2. **Community Resources:**

- **Leverage Community Resources:** Enhance students' educational experiences by leveraging community resources. Collaborate with local organizations to support immigrant-origin youth.

Resources:

- [Re-Imagining Migration](#)
- [Guide to Serving ELs and Immigrant-Origin Youth](#)
- [Belonging Checklist](#)