



An Educator's Guide To Intervening in Anti-Gay Bullying

First, stop the behavior:

- *Cut it out!*
- *Keep your hands to yourself!*
- *That's way out of line!*
- *Stop it right now!*
- *Out of the room!*
- *Whoa, that is **not** OK!*
- *Leave him alone!*
- *Hey, that was uncalled for!*
- *That is unacceptable!*
- *(Name of offender), I said knock it off.*

Then educate:

- *That was a stereotype. Stereotypes are a kind of lie and they hurt people's feelings.*
- *That was a putdown. I don't think it belongs at (name of school).*
- *You may not have meant to hurt anyone, but that was a really derogatory gesture ... It implied he was Gay in a really disrespectful way.*
- *That's bullying. It's against school rules. And besides what business is it of yours if somebody's Gay?*
- *That's mean and it's sexual harassment. It could get you suspended.*

Do you educate on the spot or take the offender aside and educate in private?

On the one hand, the target and the witnesses need to hear what you have to say. However, allowing the child who said the slur to save face *may* lead to sincere regret and changed behavior. And pursuing the issue at length in front of the target may only embarrass him or her. Use your professional judgment.

What if the offender retaliates against you for speaking up, by demanding, "Why do you care? Are you gay??!"

You have lots of choices:

- You can ask, "*Why? Do you think only gay people have the courage to stand up against bullying?*"
- You can say, "*I hope I would speak up about meanness no matter **what** my orientation was!*"
- You can answer the question honestly. For example: "*No, but what difference does my sexual orientation make?*" or "*Yes, I actually am. But the issue here is that you are harassing Chris. That's not OK in my class or in any other class in this school!*"

Again, your professional judgment must ultimately determine how you respond. The point is to think about it ahead of time and to **practice** how you will handle this kind of situation, so that your fear won't get in the way of protecting children.

What if I am not sure I have my administrator's support?

Definitely talk with your supervisor about the problem.

If your supervisor agrees that something more should be done, explain how you would like to address the problem. Try to agree on a strategy.

If your supervisor explicitly forbids you from intervening in peer-on-peer anti-gay bullying, do ***not*** become "insubordinate." Talk with your union representative. If you don't belong to a union, or if your union is unresponsive, contact: Kitsap Safe Schools Network info@kitsapsafeschools.org or The Safe Schools Coalition (1-888-3079275 or intervention@safeschoolscoalition.org).

But defying an explicit directive can jeopardize your job. We don't recommend it.

Contact Kitsap Safe Schools Network for support, training and resources:
info@kitsapsafeschools.org