

PROACTIVE STEPS

Before problems arise, schools can take concrete steps to make their communities less vulnerable to hate-promoting groups and individuals. Consider some of the following steps:





BEST PRACTICES

Before, during, and after a school encounters hate-promoting ideas or organizing, several approaches remain vital to the wellness of a school community.

» Any digital content collected from a student should be handled carefully. Thoughtful judgement should be used when deciding who to share it with to ensure the safety of all students.

» Involve law enforcement prudently. Direct threats and other situations in which a student or community member's safety is in question warrant law enforcement involvement. Often other situations are better resolved with a holistic school community approach.

» Access and search any school-owned devices used by the student. When warranted, obtain parental permission to search the student's devices.

» Focus on the values at stake, and use 'we' as the default pronoun on behalf of the school community.

» Always discuss how everyone involved can move forward in a positive way.

» Document everything. When incidents arise, gather evidence and submit all concerns in writing.

» Report all incidents to multiple people at different levels within the school community.

» Keep lines of communication open.

» Keep students central to conversations, and trust their experiences.

» Avoid an alarmist tone; keep the situation as calm as possible.

» Follow up on conversations and concerns.

1

It's about pride, not prejudice.”

This argument is often invoked when hate-promoting efforts are identified as hostile and discriminatory, sometimes going as far as equating “white pride” with Latinx pride or Pride Month in support of LGBTQ+ communities. This is a false equivalence.

Historically marginalized groups gather to celebrate as a way to stand against long histories of discrimination and violence against them; hate-promoting individuals attempt a false equivalence by claiming the same. The truth is that hateful rhetoric is never far from assertions of “white pride.”

2

This is a free speech issue.”

In addition to falling under the same category as shouting “fire” in a crowded theatre by endangering others, hate-promoting rhetoric is not protected speech in schools. A range of legally upheld policies support the rights of schools to keep hate speech out.

3

This is all just political correctness by social justice warriors.”

Here are two terms that have been co-opted by the far-right, and should be red flags. Challenge them to replace the term “political correctness” with “basic respect for others” and “social justice warriors” with “people who are against racism.”

4

What about reverse racism?”

Claims of reverse racism fly in the face of data that demonstrate systemic advantages for white people in access to education, economic opportunity, the application of criminal justice and life expectancy. While members of any group may commit acts of bias against any other, these acts do not add up to systemic, historically-rooted racism (also called institutional racism or white supremacy) that disproportionately produces negative outcomes for people of colour.

5

Racism is over.”

Unfortunately, it’s not. Recent years have seen sharp increases in hate crimes against marginalized groups, including racial, ethnic, and religious groups, as well as immigrants and members of LGBTQ+ communities. We have work to do together, and we need to listen to one another’s experiences instead of denying reality.

CONCLUSION

Strong schools foster strong communities. When we recognize and address the signs of hate-motivated organizing promptly within our schools it sets an indelible example, for teachers, students, and the community at large. Everyone has the right to embrace their identity, but hate-promoting ideas threaten the safety of the vulnerable, robbing us all of our humanity and the things that link us together. Students who are attracted to hate-motivated movements are often vulnerable themselves. They may be disillusioned, feel marginalized, or struggle with untreated trauma or mental health issues. We must show them compassion when it seems the hardest to give, because that is what hate-motivated movements cannot offer our students.

We can care for our young people while also starving hate-promoting ideologies of the oxygen they need to grow. We hope this toolkit has offered you options to this end. The threat of hate-motivated organizing is a holistic school community issue. It's more than an isolated incident, farther reaching than an anonymous flyer, and larger than the anger or alienation of a few students. We must ensure there is no room in our schools for movements that dehumanize people based on race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or nationality.

Our job is to construct a democracy where everyone has value. If we can model that for each other in our schools, it will be easier to translate to other institutions of public life. By working with all stakeholders to handle these situations thoughtfully and incrementally, we can push back hate-motivated movements and groups in all facets of our community.