

How should educators address COVID-19 related teasing and harassment?

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During times like this, it is common for people to look for something or someone to blame for their hardship. Reports suggest that **students and adults who are perceived to be of Asian descent are experiencing increased isolation and [xenophobic targeting at this time](#)**. Given the responsibility of districts to ensure that schools are safe and [free of discrimination](#) for all students, it is recommended that educational entities review anti-harassment [guidance](#) and policies, take steps to prevent instances of COVID-related teasing and harassment, ensure members of the school community are trained to respond, and offer support if bias acts are observed or reported.

Strategies to prevent xenophobia can be integrated into the school's COVID [continuity of education plan](#), and as part of the district's response and recovery activities. Specifically:

1. Efforts should be made to **educate students and staff** about the virus and the potential for certain groups to be unfairly blamed for its spread. **Teachers should be prepared to intervene [on-the-spot](#)** in any suspected incident of teasing, bias and discrimination.
 - [Countering Coronavirus Stigma and Racism](#) This resource provides fourteen (14) specific strategies for countering COVID-related bias in schools, including immediately responding to any bullying, harassment and discriminatory comments and the use of micro-affirmations with students.
 - [Film Club: Coronavirus Racism Infected my High School](#) The four-minute video and discussion questions help students reflect on the impact that coronavirus-related teasing and xenophobia has on one high school student. The video provides historic examples of xenophobia associated with other pandemics.
2. **Dedicate class time to exploring the impacts** of teasing and harassment that target people based upon their identity. This provides a context for reinforcing schoolwide expectations regarding respect, anti-bias, and anti-bullying at all grade levels.
 - [Coronavirus: Protect Yourself and Stand Against Racism](#) This teaching guide outlines known facts about COVID-19 and gives students the opportunity to explore instances of discrimination related to this novel strain of coronavirus.
 - [Building Community and Combatting Hate: Lessons for the Middle School Classroom](#) This curriculum offers a series of lessons that teach interpersonal and conflict resolution skills, while addressing the connections between hate speech and violence, bias and scapegoating in history, and other themes. It could be adapted to apply to COVID-related bias.

3. In each case, educators should be **explicit in stating their expectations** regarding COVID-related teasing and harassment, as well as **teaching skills** that will help students play a role in creating learning environments that are healthy, safe, and free from bias or discrimination
 - [*How to Respond to Coronavirus Racism*](#) The article introduces a four-step approach to speaking-up against bias. It can be taught and practiced with students or adults, and is designed to be used in face-to-face settings and online.
 - [*Show Up: Your Guide to Bystander Intervention*](#) This educational resource defines identity-based harassment and provides information about five different strategies that can be used to interrupt or intervene in bias acts. By asking students to describe or practice ways of applying each strategy, educators can teach and reinforce bystander skills.

4. In middle and high schools, educators can deepen awareness of COVID-related bias by **integrating reading and discussions of these topics into ELA and social studies lessons** tied to academic standards. The following articles and videos may be useful.
 - [*The Pandemic of Xenophobia and Scapegoating*](#)
 - [*Historic Linkages: Epidemic threat, economic risk and xenophobia*](#)
 - [*The “Chinese Flu” is Part of a Long History of Racializing Disease*](#)