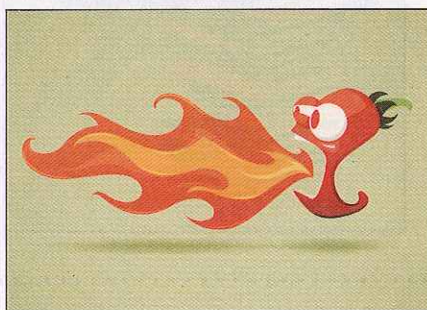


## Angry Words and Actions: Turning Down the Heat

One of the best things educators get to do is to reassure vulnerable children that the classroom is a safe haven from bigotry and bullying. That kind of reassurance can set a student free to learn and to be him or herself. To help you do that, here are some ways you can respond to incidents of hateful words, actions and images in school, suggested by the National Education Association:

- 1. Be present and available.** Bullying can occur anywhere in the school building or on the grounds. Be present during school transitions. Tell your students they can come to you.
- 2. Intervene!** If you witness bullying, racist slurs or name-calling, stop the incident immediately. Separate the students. Get help from other staff if needed. Ask targeted students if they're OK.
- 3. Give clear messages.** Students who bully or commit acts of hate must hear the message that their behavior is wrong and harms others. Targeted students must hear the message that caring adults will protect them.
- 4. Be calm.** Don't require students to apologize or make amends right after you stop the incident. You may not know the full story. Keep everyone calm as you first focus on safety.



**5. Support the targeted students.** Make eye contact with the targeted students, demonstrate empathy, and reassure them that what happened was not their fault.

**6. Tell students never to ignore bullying or hateful actions.** Let bystanders who stood up for targeted students know that you admire their courage and thank them.

Give other bystanders examples of how to intervene appropriately the next time (such as getting help from an adult, telling the person to stop).

**7. Investigate, document, follow up.** After the incident, question all involved individually. If appropriate, impose immediate consequences on students who bullied; provide them necessary support, such as counseling. Work with colleagues to improve your school climate to build a culture

that prevents bullying.

**8. Be a caring advocate.** Make sure students are supported and have the resources they need well beyond the incident. Involve other staff who can provide guidance and emotional support ■

*Hincher, a member of the Fairfax Education Association, teaches at Hybla Valley Elementary School.*

---

## Hunger Pains: They Really Hurt

A child who comes to school hungry will probably suffer more harmful effects than just the distraction of a rumbling stomach. According to studies published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Pediatrics and the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, children dealing with hunger issues:

- Have lower test scores in math and are more likely to have to repeat a grade.
- Are more likely to be hyperactive, absent and tardy, in addition

to having more behavioral and attention problems than other children.

- Are more likely to have received special education services or mental health counseling than children who do not experience hunger.

One of the most effective programs schools have to help hungry students is Breakfast in the Classroom. To learn more, visit [www.breakfastintheclassroom.org](http://www.breakfastintheclassroom.org). ■