



Hilda Graham Consulting
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Safety Tools for Schools

Anti-Foul Language Campaign Materials

- ***Taking On Foul & Demeaning Language at Your School*** Resource Article
- **Sample Campaign Posters**
- **Staff & Student “Let’s Talk” Activity Badges**

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A Hilda Graham 5 Minute Workshop

Taking On Foul and Demeaning Language At Your School

What is interesting to know?

Rudeness and disrespect are growing problems in America. *Aggravating Circumstances*, a Public Agenda survey, cites:

- 8 in 10 Americans say a lack of respect and courtesy is a serious problem
- 6 in 10 say things have become worse in recent years, and
- About 41 percent admit that they're part of the problem and sometimes behave badly themselves.

Rude behaviors of concern include the use of foul, and demeaning language; generally in public, or aimed at a specific person or group.

In *The Writings of George Washington*, the General addressed his officers and troops in the field during war-time regarding the consequences of profanity. A letter from an archive of historical documents states; "The General is sorry to be informed that the foolish, and wicked practice, of profane cursing and swearing is growing into fashion; he hopes the officers will by example, as well as in influence, endeavour to check it, and that both they and the men will reflect, that we can have little hopes of the blessing of Heaven on our Arms if we insult it by our impiety, and folly; added to this, it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense, and character, detests and despises it."

What is essential to understand?

The unchecked flow of student foul language in a school setting does not occur with out consequences. Foul and demeaning language aimed specifically at a person or group is a form of social and verbal abuse. Such language and expressions can:

- trigger physical fights.
- harass, demean, coerce, or bully.
- intimidate teachers and staff.
- interrupt the teaching and learning process.
- chip away at the overall order, discipline and dignity of the campus.
- promote an insidious campaign of intolerance and hate.
- move an on-campus dispute to an on-line environment (where language generally become more coarse and abusive).

In addition, the consequential costs for a school may come as law suits, a negative reputation, the undermining of the academic and safety missions, and the eroding confidence, respect and trust of the larger community.

Foul language at a school is not limited to students. Some staff members use foul and demeaning language to control, discipline, threaten, motivate entertain or connect with students.

Many staff members detest foul language. Some feel alone in their effort to address it. Others fear becoming the target of such language. Some teachers ignore it. Many frustrated staff members say that "the office" does not take the behavior seriously, making formal referrals a waste of time. Other staff members hold steadfast to expectations for civility and respect in their individual classrooms, and any areas or activities they have the responsibility to supervise.

Many students take the passivity of teachers, to mean that they are not responsible for the civility of their students, and use it as full permission to act. The lack of consistent intervention teaches students where, when and with whom they can "get away" with their behaviors. Offending students often use the excuse, that the behaviors are simply uncontrollable habits.

Some parents are of the mindset that foul and intimidating language is an acceptable way to communicate with administrators, teachers, the office staff, and even their own children while in the school setting.



Taking a stand against foul and demeaning language does not come without benefits. Preventing and consistently intervening on such language and expressions:

- promotes the safety of all students.
- protects the academic mission.
- advocates for the dignity of every student and staff member.
- communicates an expectation for high standards of peace, order and conduct.
- contributes to the civility and order of the larger society

What is Critical to Do?

There are a number of key steps that can be taken. These include:

- Gather data regarding offenses related to foul and demeaning language. Record your starting point data. Ask why the behaviors are happening. What circumstances, people, practices, are triggers?
- Open staff and student conversations to gather more perspectives and insights. Invite staff members to join the administrative workgroup. to help design and lead response activities.
- Determine your specific response goals. Do you want to reduce the number of incidents, improve the management of the problem or diminish harm from the behavior, one, all, or others? Determine how you will measure success. Begin to brainstorm response strategies.
- Implement the simplest strategy first, monitor its effectiveness, choose your next strategy accordingly.
- Review your referral process and reporting forms. Make needed improvements. Assess the consistency with which teachers receive feedback on their referrals, especially those issued during supervision assignments.
- Make the intentions of your code and rule books visible. Openly post your expectations throughout the hallways, lunchroom, library, classrooms—include all areas of your school.
- Clearly communicate expectations for the school environment regardless of practices at home or in the larger community.
- Launch a campaign to communicate the school-wide expectation that foul and demeaning language will not be tolerated and will be intervened upon and reported by every staff member. Design or refine a reporting process for students.
- Prepare for the initial onslaught of reporting, that will eventually give way to fewer and more significant problems with certain students, settings or teachers.
- Use the campaign as an opportunity to address unwanted staff behaviors.
- Make curricular content and instructional standards connections to your campaign.
- Celebrate your successes by sharing data or examples of how your efforts are working.
- Institutionalize what you are doing right.
- Market your expectations every way you can think of: posters, PA announcements, your school website, special classroom presentations, your parent newsletter, the student newspaper, school marquee...be sure to include student generated ideas.

What Is Your Call to Action?

Be motivated by both your school safety and academic missions. Consistently work to promote student safety alongside student achievement. Never allow the two missions to be separated. School safety is not, just one more thing on the education table—it *is* the table! School safety is not, just one more thing on an educator's plate—it *is* the plate upon which all school successes, especially academic ones will be served.

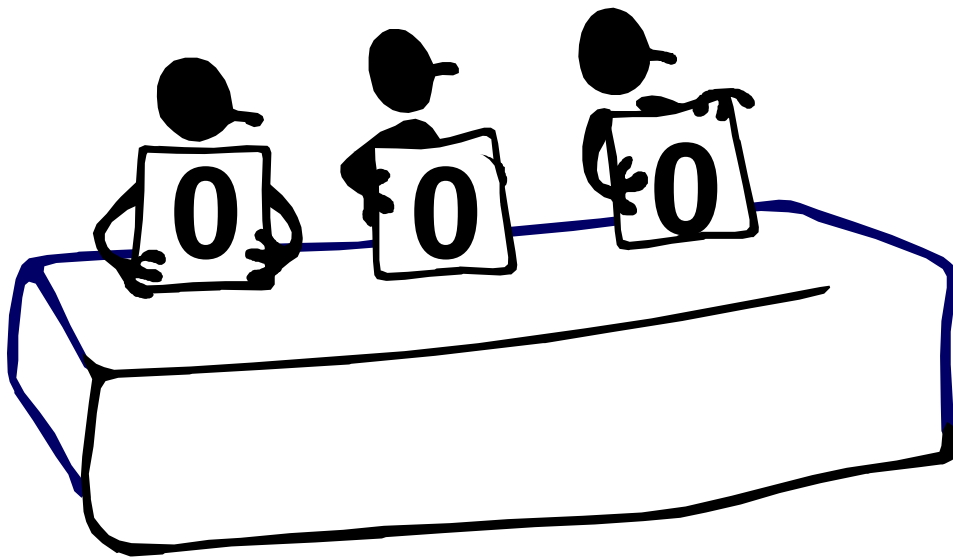
Sources

www.publicagends.org/reports/aggravating-circumstances

The Writings of George Washington, Edited by John C. Fitzpatrick



Foul Language In our school In our hallways In our classrooms



Don't Foul Out!

**Saying “*It’s a habit*”
Is no excuse!**



**Foul Language
Foul Air**

**Foul Language
In the Air
Is Just One More Kind of
Pollution**

**Saying *"It's a habit"*
Is no excuse!**



Foul Words and Names



Hurt Like A Fist

**Saying *“It’s a habit”*
Is no excuse!**



No Foul Language No Put-Downs No Sarcasm



**A Great Rule For The Kids
& Adults At Our School**

**Saying *“It’s a habit”*
Is no excuse**



How to use the student and staff discussion activity and campaign badges

1. Access the badges in the accompanying file.
2. Print the badges on sheets of adhesive name labels.
3. Use as directed below

Use the **Foul Language: Let's Talk! A Peer Problem-Solving Workshop** badges as an activity resource to promote an awareness of foul language challenges at your school. Use the badge activity during a staff meeting or as an activity for a staff development day. The questions are designed to promote a problem solving spirit as your staff addresses a common concern or problem.

Invite staff members to participate in a peer discussion regarding foul language challenges at their school by:

- ◆ Wearing the badges
- ◆ Mixing with various members of the staff and sharing their responses to the questions on the badge.
- ◆ Reflecting on their discussion experience and sharing their responses to the question.
- ◆ Identifying and taking the simplest steps possible, to begin a whole-school approach to taking on the problem.
- ◆ Use the 5-Minute Workshop resource to support the activity debrief and topic discussion.
- ◆ As the school year progresses, make a point of doing a check-in during staff meetings to recommit to your strategies or identify next steps.

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