

# THE PARTNERS AGAINST HATE PEER LEADERSHIP MODEL

## INTRODUCTION

Partners Against Hate brings together the extensive experience of the Anti-Defamation League, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, and the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence. This hate crime prevention and intervention collaboration provides educators, parent and families, law enforcement agencies, community members, and youth with the skills, resources, and support to prevent, deter, and reduce juvenile hate-related behavior.

As a part of its goal to share information about promising education and counteraction strategies for the wide range of community-based professionals who work with and interact with youth, Partners Against Hate developed a peer leadership program to provide students and educators with the training, resources, and support to take action to break the cycle of hate and fear. This program is based on the **Partners Against Hate Peer Leadership Model**.

## THE PEER LEADERSHIP MODEL AND COMPONENT PIECES

The **Partners Against Hate Peer Leadership Model** promotes school and community environments where all students are physically and emotionally safe, and is designed to address conduct, not beliefs. The **Peer Leadership Model** has three integral components: a training-of-trainers program, peer leadership training, and online resources and support.

### Training-of-Trainers Program

The Partners Against Hate **Middle School Hate Crime Prevention Training-of-Trainers** provides participants who work with educators and youth

comprehensive training and resources on preventing bias-motivated harassment and violence in schools. The program develops two-person training teams capable of conducting half-day in-service workshops for middle school faculty and staff, and full-day workshops for middle school student peer leaders at schools in their regions. Members of training teams bring a background and expertise in law enforcement, youth development, and education. Through participation in the program, Partners Against Hate trainers gain familiarity with current information about applicable state and federal hate crime laws and have opportunities to practice the *Faculty In-Service Workshop* and *Student Peer Leaders Workshop* models.

The **Faculty In-Service Workshop** is a half-day workshop for middle school faculty and staff on the prevention of bias, prejudice, and hate crimes. The workshop may be provided as an independent program, and is also strongly recommended for schools participating in the **Student Peer Leaders Workshop**, fully detailed later in this section. Faculty in-service workshops assist schools in building support for students' efforts to challenge name-calling and other bias-motivated interactions among their peers.

The **Faculty In-Service Workshop** provides participants with an understanding of the extent of bias, harassment, and hate crimes in middle schools, the impact of bias and harassment on students, an overview of federal and state hate crime laws, and practical skills for intervening at the earliest levels of harassment. The workshop also explores the emotional impact of degrading language on students and the ways bias-motivated behaviors can escalate into threats and violence. Opportunities are provided for participants to develop and practice skills and strategies for responding to verbal harassment, threats, and hate behaviors. These skills and strategies will assist teachers and other school personnel in creating civil and respectful

educational environments.

## Peer Leadership Training

In schools across the country, the use of degrading language and slurs by students targeting their peers because of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, ability, or other difference is pervasive. When name-calling and slurs are readily accepted and allowed to become commonplace, the resulting environment supports the escalation of negative behaviors from slurs to harassment, harassment to threats, and threats to violence. This pattern of escalation is present in many school-based hate crimes. Even in the absence of escalation, the use of degrading language significantly affects many students, producing feelings that range from discomfort to extreme fear. For many students who are targeted by slurs or harassment, these negative behaviors define their educational experience.

The **Student Peer Leaders Workshop** provides middle school students with an understanding of the impact of degrading language and provides opportunities for students to develop the practical skills, motivation, and confidence to intervene in effective ways. By interrupting the use of slurs and degrading language, students can be leaders, role models, and allies for other students, breaking the pattern of escalation from language to violence and, consequently, playing a key role in reducing the risk of hate crime in schools. Students' willingness to consistently challenge put-downs has the potential to change a school's climate from one where bullying, harassment, and other bias-motivated behaviors are commonplace to one where students treat one another with dignity and respect.

The **Student Peer Leaders Workshop** is a full day program for students and interested school staff. Workshops typically include 25 to 30 students and one or more program coordinators or other interested school personnel. As part of the program, participating school staff receive resources to assist them in coordinating follow-up strategies for peer leaders in their school.

Selection of peer leader participants should

include students from all groups that comprise the school community, as described earlier in this guide (see page 24). The greatest benefits to students and the school community as a whole are derived from assembling a group that includes students from both traditional and non-traditional leadership roles within the school. Program planners should consider both students who have demonstrated their leadership skills in traditional roles and those students who may have demonstrated their potential for leadership in negative ways, by engaging in bullying, teasing, taunting, or harassing other students. A positive change in the behavior of these students can often be the most effective tool to influence other students to stop engaging in these behaviors. This can lead to a shift in the climate of the school that could not have been achieved without the participation of these non-traditional leaders.

**Student Peer Leaders Workshops** provide opportunities for students to explore the emotional impact of degrading language, learn about the potential for escalation from language to violence, and develop empathy and understanding toward all students and groups within the school. Through role-playing and group problem-solving, peer leaders begin to develop skills for intervening when bullying or name-calling occurs in their presence.

The **Student Peer Leaders Workshop** is interactive, and the content is designed to create a powerful impact on students in a short period of time. The goal of the workshop is to motivate and encourage students to act as leaders and role models when they witness incidents of bias, prejudice, and teasing. Empathy development is coupled with opportunities to develop intervention skills, and peer leaders leave the training with concrete ideas about how to change the school's climate. Whether peer leaders intervene when friends engage in disrespectful or degrading conduct, change their own use of degrading language, or sit with a lonely student at lunch, students leave the workshop with their own ideas about how to increase school civility. Peer leaders develop a sense of unity as a group of diverse students within the school, who are committed to supporting one another in efforts to make their school safer for everyone.

## Online Resources and Support

Technology-based communication advances are providing individuals and organizations interested in preventing youth hate crime with the unprecedented ability to harness technology to educate and change hate-related behaviors in ways never before imagined. Partners Against Hate employs the strategic use of the Internet to build on existing hate crime prevention programs, making them more interactive, accessible, and sustainable.

Partners Against Hate blends an array of organizational resources that enhance understanding of promising practices to address hate violence in all segments of the

community. The Partners Against Hate Web site ([www.partnersagainsthate.org](http://www.partnersagainsthate.org)) provides comprehensive online support and resources for educators and students, including information on model anti-bias and peer leadership programs, access to a database that provides current data on the magnitude of hate violence in the U.S., information on federal and state hate crime laws and initiatives, guidelines for families, resources and recommendations for law enforcement personnel and community and business leaders, and links to additional online resources. Educators can obtain classroom activities and students can locate educational resources. The Web site was designed to support the many Partners Against Hate program initiatives and regional efforts to develop effective interventions built on accurate information.

### Student Peer Leaders Workshop Annotated Agenda

Module	Time	Material Covered
Introductions and Ground Rules	15 minutes	The two facilitators will introduce themselves and discuss the focus and goals of the workshop. The facilitator with a law enforcement background will describe a school hate crime case that illustrates the escalation from the routine use of degrading language and slurs to violence. The facilitators will explain the ground rules for the workshop.
Assessment	5 minutes	Students will assess the seriousness of bias, prejudice, and harassment in their school.
Stand-Ups	10 minutes	Students will participate in an exercise that focuses on the different types of harassment in the school.
Student Statements	10 minutes	Students will read statements written by other students in prior workshops describing specific incidents of bias, prejudice, and harassment which happened to them or others they know in their schools. The facilitators will lead a discussion on the impact of hearing these statements.
Dominoes Activity	20 minutes	Students will do an exercise to enhance their understanding of the extent of diversity within the group and also the extent to which they are connected to one another.
<b>BREAK</b>	10 minutes	
Civil Rights Overview	20 minutes	Facilitators describe applicable hate crime laws and explain the different types of school-based hate crimes.

Module	Time	Material Covered
Language Exercise	25 minutes	Students identify the differences between the emotional impact on targets of bias-motivated harassment and the impacts on those students who are harassed for other reasons. The exercise highlights the fear that many students from traditionally targeted groups experience as a result of bias-motivated harassment. The students are also introduced to the “Pyramid of Hate” to explore how hurtful words can escalate to physical violence.
“What If I Woke Up...”	10 minutes	Students discuss what would be different about their school if they woke up one day and found that there was no longer any harassment. The facilitators will lead a discussion that focuses on what students can do to exercise leadership skills to bring a school as close to that goal as possible.
Commercials	30 minutes	Students will work in small groups to develop ads that encourage students in their school to stand up and speak out against bias and harassment.
Writing Student Statements	10 minutes	Students write down two incidents of bias, prejudice and harassment that have occurred to them or someone they know in their school.
LUNCH	30 minutes	
Skills for Confronting Bias	60 minutes	Students create role-plays that focus on skills for intervening and interrupting harassment involving degrading language and slurs.
Postcards	15 minutes	Students plan action steps for when they get back to school. Students write several action steps on a postcard (which the facilitators will mail to the students as a reminder later).
Closing and Evaluations	25 minutes	Students are given the opportunity to volunteer to read some of the action steps on their postcards. Students complete written evaluations of the workshop. The facilitators make brief closing remarks.

## SUSTAINING THE PEER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The **Student Peer Leaders Workshop** provides a unique opportunity for students and educators to set aside the responsibilities of their daily lives and to share opportunities to explore:

- the impact of negative attitudes and behaviors on the educational experience of students in their schools;
- their own roles in making justice and equity realities for everyone.

The ultimate impact of this programming on schools and their communities is strengthened by

follow-up efforts to sustain the energy, enthusiasm, and motivation that emerges at the end of the workshop day. Students may suggest useful strategies during the workshop’s action planning module, and these suggestions should receive serious consideration as follow-up implementation projects. Additional suggestions are described below.

### Recognition and Support

Taking action to make schools safer, more respectful, and inclusive of all groups can be challenging and, at times, difficult for students. Peer leaders can be supported in this process by coming together to share their experiences and

feelings about their successes and challenges. Schools and communities can develop a variety of ways to provide recognition for the efforts of peer leaders. Special recognition events, certificates, and awards are some ways peer leaders can be recognized.

## Sharing the Experience

Schools can support peer leaders' motivation and commitment to challenge intolerance by providing opportunities for peer leaders to visit homerooms or other school or youth groups. Making brief presentations allows peer leaders to share information about their experiences at the **Student Peer Leaders Workshop** and to express their hopes for creating a civil and respectful atmosphere in the school.

## School-Wide Events

Schools may bring in speakers, either from Partners Against Hate or other organizations, to speak to the entire school about hate crimes, bias harassment, and prejudice. Educators can organize curricular interventions that align with the goals and objectives of peer leadership. Assemblies can be developed to bring these issues to a larger portion of the school community and to support peer leaders' efforts to promote respect and civility among their peers.

## ADDRESSING CONCERNS

Occasionally, members of the school community have different perspectives about the need to address the prevention of harassment and hate crimes with students. When concerns about proposed strategies are raised, both in the initial planning process and over the course of the year, it is important to explore them so that the entire school community can work together to create a safe and respectful learning environment. For example, a common "put-down" in many secondary schools is for one student to call another a name based on prejudice toward gays and lesbians. Peer leaders' intervening in such incidents of name-calling is rooted in their

interest in promoting respect among all students. Concerns can be addressed by clarifying that participation in the program does not require that students embrace particular ideologies nor will any student be criticized for their personal or family beliefs.

The **Partners Against Hate Peer Leadership Model** promotes school and community environments where all students are physically and emotionally safe, and is designed to address conduct, not beliefs. Peer leadership assists students in recognizing that individuals are entitled to their personal beliefs, and that no student should be allowed to engage in conduct that harms or imperils the safety of others. Regardless of their race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or disability, students should never have to go to school fearing for their safety. Students who are fearful cannot attend to their studies and meet the demands of school. The Partners Against Hate peer leadership program provides students and educators with the training, resources, and support to prevent the escalation of hate behaviors through the power of positive peer influence.

## ONGOING ASSISTANCE

Changing the climate of any institution or organization is a slow process. Schools that are successful in creating safe and respectful climates remain focused on preventing harassment year after year. These schools implement and maintain a variety of prevention programs.

A network of support is available to educators and students engaged in the Partners Against Hate program. As challenges or concerns arise, Partners Against Hate is available to provide assistance to students and educators involved in peer leadership programs at schools and youth organizations. Assistance, additional support, and contact information is available through the Partners Against Hate Web site at [www.partnersagainsthate.org](http://www.partnersagainsthate.org).

For more information and assistance in implementing the **Partners Against Hate Peer Leadership Model**, contact Michael Wotorson, Project Director, at (202) 452-8310.