

# Preventing Sexual Harassment in Schools

School district personnel have a responsibility to their students to know the district's sexual harassment policy, to know the procedures for reporting harassment, and to stop it when observed. Schools also have a greater responsibility to foster an environment that is conducive to learning, free from harassment. When schools fail to treat sexual harassment as inappropriate behavior, they fail to fulfill their legal obligation to provide an effective learning environment for all students.

### Identifying Harassment

#### Flirting

feels good  
is reciprocal  
is complimenting someone  
equal relationship  
wanted  
is flattering

#### Harassment

feels bad  
is one-sided  
is degrading someone  
power relationship  
unwanted  
is demeaning

### A Simple Test—Before You Act, Ask Yourself the Following:

1. Would I want my behavior to be the subject of a newspaper article or to appear on the evening news?
2. Is there equal power between me and the person with whom I am interacting?
3. Would I behave the same way if my significant other were with me?
4. Would I want someone else to act this way toward my significant other?
5. Is there equal initiation and participation between me and the person with whom I am interacting?

(Adapted from *Sexual Harassment Prevention Workshop Handout*, Minnesota Department of Education)

### Activities to Heighten Students' Awareness of Sexual Harassment

- Discuss the difference between harassment and flirting.
- Examine various scenarios to determine what constitutes harassment.
- Ask students to “brainstorm” different forms of harassment.
- Have students participate in role playing exercises.
- If appropriate, encourage students to share any personal experiences with harassment.
- Ask students to discuss myths and stereotypes about men and women that may contribute to sexual harassment in schools and workplaces.

Source: Michigan Center for Career and Technical Education, Michigan State University