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The Respectful School: How Educators and Students Can Conquer Hate and Harassment

Stephen Wessler, William Preble

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Not a school day goes by without some student facing teasing or slurs in the hallways, classrooms, or playgrounds. Left unchecked, such harassment can escalate and create an oppressive school climate where stress and fear overpower learning.

In *The Respectful School*, Stephen L. Wessler and contributing author William Preble vividly describe how words can hurt--both emotionally and physically--and how words can heal. Drawing on his experience as a former state prosecutor overseeing hate crime enforcement and as current director of the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence, Wessler discusses what educators can do to create a truly respectful environment that promotes positive interactions among staff and students. He relates the experiences of young victims and the hopeful stories of programs that have reduced harassment, showing how educators can both protect and enlighten students through coordinated efforts such as:

• Learning effective intervention skills,
• Modeling civility,
• Developing student peer leader programs,
• Working with student victims and their parents,
• Creating comprehensive antiharassment polices,
• Confronting perpetrators and their crimes, and
• Responding to the effects of terrorist acts and related prejudice.
Throughout the book, Wessler and Preble urge us to remember that we need to nurture the courage and compassion of young people to create supportive learning communities. Only then can students and educators join in speaking out for a respectful school, where tolerance and civility overcome the language of hate.

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