

Tracking Prejudice Speech in School

(Adapted from Kelly Watson, Fishers Jr. High, Fishers, IN)

Objectives: To make students aware of derogatory language at school and in their own speech patterns

Audience: Middle school or high school classes

Materials Needed: “Tracking Prejudice Speech in School” handout, writing utensils

Time Required: This is an out-of-class assignment. However, you should spend 20 minutes in class discussing students’ responses

Teacher Instructions: Distribute the “Tracking Prejudice Speech in School” handout. Instruct students to track derogatory comments that they hear at school about racial minorities, women, religious groups, people of different sexual orientation, and physically or mentally handicapped people. Be sure to stress that this activity should be done privately and that no attention should be drawn to the hateful remarks. At the end of the day, students will write a $\frac{3}{4}$ page description of their experience. They should address how they felt doing the assignment and how they felt about the comments they heard. They also should discuss whether they noticed themselves every using similar derogatory language and offer ideas about how to eliminate this kind of speech.

When they turn in their assignment the next day, take 20 minutes to discuss the following questions:

1. What kinds of comments did you hear most often?
2. Who was saying these things? Students? Adults? Do you think it makes a difference whether students say these things or adults do?
3. Why do you think these comments were made so often?
4. Were any comments that you heard particularly offensive to you? What were these comments? Why did they offend you so much?
5. Did you notice any phrases that you now realize may be offensive, but that you didn’t think were offensive prior to this exercise?
6. Did you notice any patterns in your own language that may offend someone?
7. Will you do anything differently the next time that you hear a classmate say one of these comments? Why or why not? What might you do?