

The following was submitted by District SEL Facilitator Laurie Stillman:

The topic of sexual harassment has been in the news recently and while the subject can make us feel uncomfortable, and the thought of having to speak with your children about it can be embarrassing, the best thing we can do as parents is not to avoid the topic but instead talk about it directly with your children. If you don't, they will likely hear about it from another source, which may lead to misinformation and dangerous misconceptions. Here are some steps to consider when speaking with your children about sensitive subjects, using your judgement on the most suitable language to use based on their maturity and ages:

1. First find out what they already know and what they think about the subject. Encourage them to ask you questions and to be honest with you.
2. Answer their questions truthfully, in a way that is developmentally appropriate. If you aren't forthcoming, they will likely fantasize about many of the scary possibilities that they don't understand.
3. Speak with them about what they think about the topic and how they would handle it, and then tell them what you think and what ways you believe they might handle the situation. Explore together options for addressing the issue.
4. Establish that your child has trusted adults in his her or life who they can approach about a variety of topics, and those adults --such as family, friends and teachers- should be confided in when uncomfortable situations arise