

Handout # 5 (Lesson 4): Dealing with Prejudice: A Hypothetical Case

Background

In the 1980s, a number of immigrant families from Iran moved in the area surrounding Lawson High School. Most of the students of Iranian heritage spent their time with one another. While there was limited interaction between these student and other students at the school, there were no cases of overt discrimination.

As time went on, the Iranian families settled into the community and their grown children bought homes in the same area. About one-third of Lawson High School students were of Iranian heritage. By September 11, 2001, the Iranian students were pretty much a part of the Lawson High community. They were members of all the school clubs and sports teams.

On September 11th the World Trade Center was attacked. Media coverage constantly spoke of Middle Eastern and Muslim terrorists who were responsible for the tragedy. During the course of the day, some teachers showed the coverage of the event to their classes. Some of the Iranian students expressed concern to their teachers that they might be targeted for hate crimes. On the morning of September 12th, an Iranian American student found a note on his locker that read, "Go Back to Where You Came from you Dirty Arab." The note writer assumed incorrectly that Iranians were "Arabs."

The afternoon that the note was found, the principal called an emergency meeting of the student council. There was great concern by the administrators and students that the heated atmosphere of the previous two days could lead to further incidents. The principal called on the student council to develop a plan that would prevent further ethnic conflict and create a more tolerant environment.

Task

You and the members of the Student Council are to create an overall plan to reduce tensions at the school. The plan should include school-wide action, classroom action, and student-to-student action.