Opinion: What works to stop bullying

By Steve Johnson

We've had a year of polarized debate about bullying. On one side we have those who believe the bullying that resulted in the suicide of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi is a form of anti-gay discrimination and that those who disagree are homophobes. On the other side are those who are convinced that liberals and gay rights groups are advancing some kind of "homosexual agenda" under the guise of an anti-bullying curriculum.

One thing is clear: We're not going to stop bullying in our schools until we stop bullying each other over how to address the problem. Let's make a New Year's pledge to talk about bullying the way we'd like to see our kids talk to each other. Let's focus on proven strategies that can accomplish what all people of goodwill want: an end to the harassment of vulnerable children.

Here's what we know works to reduce bullying in schools:

— Educating, not just punishing, the perpetrators

— Training bystanders to be allies of the victim

— Not allowing the isolation or taunting of any child for any reason.

Steve Johnson, a former teacher and principal, is director of character education at Santa Clara University's Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. He is the creator of the Character-Based Literacy Curriculum, which is widely used in California counties.

Read the whole story