It is not uncommon for students in upper grades (3-5), and sometimes even younger, to start engaging in what we call “roasting.” Typically, this is friendly banter rooted in fun and sarcasm, but it can also lead to hurt feelings, conflict, emotional distress, and damaged self-esteem. Adults should intervene and address any instances when “roasting” veers into harmful territory. By teaching children the importance of using kind language and respecting others’ feelings, adults can help prevent roasting from going wrong and mitigate its negative effects on children's well-being.

Here are some ways to teach kids to use banter with each other appropriately and use kind language:

- **Model Respectful Behavior:** Children learn a lot from observing adults. Show them how to joke around in a lighthearted manner without being mean-spirited. Sarcasm can also be difficult for children to understand cognitively and should generally be avoided.
- **Explain the Difference**: Help kids understand the difference between playful teasing and hurtful insults. Explain that banter should be done with everyone's consent and enthusiasm, for fun, and never at the expense of someone's feelings or self-esteem. Encourage kids to tease harmless traits or actions rather than personal characteristics or insecurities.
- **Set Ground Rules:** Establish clear guidelines for “roasting” that emphasize the importance of using kind language and avoiding topics that could be sensitive or hurtful. It’s important to have children set their own boundaries about which topics are “off-limits” for them.
- **Teach Intention v. Impact:** Encourage children to think about the impact of their words before speaking and to apologize if they unintentionally hurt someone's feelings. Just because we didn’t mean to hurt someone’s feelings doesn’t mean that wasn’t how it was received.
- **Watch for Bullying:** Keep an eye out for any signs of bullying disguised as roasting. There is a clear difference that we as adults can recognize! Teach kids to recognize when teasing crosses the line into harmful, repeated behavior, and to speak up if they see someone being targeted or hurt.

By teaching kids to roast each other appropriately and use kind language, we can help them develop important social skills while fostering a culture of kindness and respect among peers. When approached with kindness, respect, and sensitivity to others' feelings, roasting can be a positive and enjoyable aspect of social interaction for children, helping them develop important life skills and fostering a sense of connection with others.