



Safe Schools Manual

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SAINT PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOLS OUT FOR EQUITY**



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Credits

This manual was originally compiled by Mary Tinucci, Out for Equity Program Specialist from 1994-1999, and Geoffrey Blanton, Out4Good (Minneapolis Public Schools) Program Coordinator from 1996-2000. Over the years editing, design, revisions and production of the original manual were completed by Julie Miller, a former Out for Equity intern; Grant Loehnig, former Out for Equity intern, and Alan Horowitz, the former Out for Equity Program Specialist; and Tiffany Lane, current Program Coordinator, and Billy Navarro Jr., current Program Assistant.

Much of the content in this manual was compiled from the works of others, including various professional organizations and both local and national gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and/or queer advocacy organizations. Whenever possible, materials targeting specific groups have been adapted to ensure inclusion. In a few instances, however, it was necessary to reproduce materials in their original format for purposes of accuracy.

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The top of the page features a decorative border of colorful squares in shades of red, yellow, blue, green, and purple. On the left side, there is a logo consisting of a blue swoosh that curves around a stylized globe, with a yellow star at the end of the swoosh.

Introduction

- »Out for Equity Program History
- »Out for Equity Program and Services
 - »Local Policies
 - »National Policies

The school environment is often a stressful and hostile place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people. They are often targets of verbal and physical harassment and violence. Feelings of fear and isolation are all too common for these students, staff, and families.

As a result of this hostile environment, lack of accurate information about sexual orientation, and lack of support, LGBTQ youth are at an increased risk for suicide, dropping out of school, drug and alcohol use/abuse, contracting HIV, running away, and homelessness.

LGBTQ staff and families face these same stressful environments and lack of support, and have few places to turn for support. All of these realities interfere with academic suc-

cess, effective teaching, and parent involvement.

The Out for Equity program is working to improve the school climate for all students, staff, and families in the Saint Paul Public School District. This manual will provide resources and materials that address such issues by combating homophobia in schools, providing support for LGBTQ students, teaching LGBTQ issues in the classroom, and fostering diversity and tolerance among all students and staff.

Our Mission:

Out For Equity's mission is to create safe, respectful school environments where all parents, staff and students can work together to promote self-esteem, respect for others, and academic success.



OUT FOR EQUITY PROGRAM HISTORY

Out for Equity is one of only five school-based programs nationally serving GLBTQ students, families, and staff. Developed in 1993, then later adopted into the Saint Paul Public School district in 1997, Out for Equity has grown from a direct support agency for GLBTQ youth, to a fully integrated program that not only supplies direct support to GLBTQ students, but provides services to all students, families and staff in order to foster respect for all in Saint Paul.

The Program has its roots in The “Consultation Project on Homophobia in Saint Paul Schools” which was created in 1987 by a partnership Wingspan Ministries and a group of educators and community members. Another program was then started by the Youth and AIDS Project in Minneapolis, the Minnesota Department of Education, and the Health and Wellness Department in Saint Paul Public Schools to increase understanding about prevention of HIV/AIDS and concerns of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youth at increased risk for infection, self-destructive behavior, and violence. High schools in Saint Paul, beginning with Saint Paul Central High School in 1990, began forming support groups to further address the growing concerns of GLBTQ students.

In 1991, Mary Tinucci, a school social worker and a member of the Consultation Project since its inception, began planning a more comprehensive and institutionalized effort within the Saint Paul Public School district regarding GLBTQ individuals. In the fall of 1993 Tinucci and others within SPPS drafted a proposal to present to district administrators calling for a new department to address the needs of GLBTQ students, staff, and families district-wide. In November 1993, the department of Guidance, Counseling, and Related Services pursued the proposed idea. A proposal to the school board was prepared, and in early March 1994, the school board voted (6-1) to allow the Guidance, Counseling, and Related Services department to seek and accept funding for the new program.

Modeling the program after the Los Angeles Unified School District’s Project 10, Mary Tinucci began forming a clearer picture of Saint Paul’s new program, named Out for Equity, and its goals: to maintain a safe and welcoming school environment that fosters positive self esteem, respect for others, and academic success for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning students, staff members and families.

OUT FOR EQUITY PROGRAM AND SERVICES

for students

An Evening Out

Our Friday night event is a recreational program for lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) and ally youth ages 14-20 that meets every Friday night during the school year. Youth have the opportunity to hang out, socialize with friends and enjoy various programming in a safe space monitored by Out For Equity and City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation staff.

Under the Rainbow Drop-in Hours

Out for Equity offers drop-in hours for lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) youth & ally students ages 14-20 every Tuesday after school from 2:15pm-5pm. In this safe space, students have the opportunity to work on homework, watch movies and check out books from the Out For Equity library while in the company of their peers.

Gay Straight Alliance

A GSA is an extracurricular club for students to build support systems, socialize with other youth and organize educational programs to raise awareness and promote inclusive school environments.

Support Group

A network of peer support for lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) youth facilitated by a social worker or counselor. Groups can be open or closed; Youth have the ability to provide and receive advice from their peers or just socialize among a shared-interest group.

Trans*Support Group

Trans* Support Group to discuss topics of gender fluidity and transition. Open to current Saint Paul Public School students ages 14-20. This group is only open to those who self identify as transgender, gender queer, gender non-conforming, questioning and/or some where beyond the binary gender system.

for families

Parent Network

A monthly gathering for LGBTQ identified parents and parents of LGBTQ students to connect, socialize, and build a support network with other families in Saint Paul and surrounding areas.

for staff

Our program provides trainings and presentations on various topics including: Creating Safe Spaces for LGBTQ Youth in schools, Bullying, Gender Identity, etc.

other services

Out for Equity provides:

One on one consultation, distribution of materials, resources, referrals to local organizations, and resource library located in our drop-in space.

LOCAL POLICIES

Saint Paul Public Schools

Nondiscrimination Policy

Saint Paul Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sex, marital status, national origin, age, color, religion, ancestry, status with regard to public assistance, sexual or affectional orientation, familial status, or disability. Saint Paul Public Schools also makes reasonable accommodation to the known disabilities of qualified disabled individuals. This policy applies to all areas of education, employment, programs and services operated by the school district.

Saint Paul City Ordinance Sec. 183.01

The council finds that discrimination in employment, education, real property, public accommodations, public services, contract, and franchise based on race, creed, religion, sex, sexual or affectional orientation, color, national origin, ancestry, familial status, age, disability, marital status or status with regard to public assistance adversely affects the health, welfare, peace and safety of the community. The public policy of Saint Paul is to foster equal opportunity for all to obtain employment, education, real property, public accommodations, public services, contract and franchise without regard to their race, creed, religion, sex, sexual or affectional orientation, color, national origin, ancestry, familial status, age, disability, marital status or status with regard to public assistance, and strictly in accord with their individual merits as human beings.



Minneapolis Public Schools

Nondiscrimination Policy

The Minneapolis Public Schools Nondiscrimination Policy prohibits discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, disability or age in its programs and activities.

Minneapolis City Ordinance Sec. 139.10

The council finds that discrimination in employment, labor union membership, housing accommodations, property rights, education, public accommodations and public services based on race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, including sexual harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, marital status, or status with regard to public assistance or familial status.

Minnesota Human Rights Act Statue 363A.02

It is the public policy of this state to secure for persons freedom from discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, public services and education based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, and age.

NATIONAL POLICIES

EQUAL PROTECTION CLAUSE OF THE 14TH AMENDMENT

All students have a federal constitutional right to equal protection under the law. This means that schools have a duty to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students from harassment on an equal basis with all other students.

TITLE IX

Title IX of the Education Amendment Acts of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Title IX also prohibits gender-based harassment, including harassment on the basis of a student's failure to conform to stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity.

FIRST AMENDMENT, EQUAL PROTECTION & DUE PROCESS CLAUSES

The First Amendment limits the right of school officials to censor a student's speech or expression. Students also have a protected liberty interest (under the Due Process Clause) in their personal appearance.



EQUAL ACCESS ACT (EAA)

The EAA is a federal law that applies to all public secondary schools that receive federal funding. This law protects students' rights to form and attend gay-straight alliances as long as there are other extracurricular clubs on campus. If a school does not permit other extracurricular clubs to meet, however, it does not have to permit a GSA.

MATTHEW SHEPARD AND JAMES BYRD, JR. HATE CRIMES PREVENTION ACT

The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act gives the Justice Department the power to investigate and prosecute bias-motivated violence by providing the department with jurisdiction over crimes of violence where the perpetrator has selected the victim because of the person's actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.



Learning About LGBTQ Issues

terms and definitions

- » LGBTQ Glossary
- » Types of Homophobia/Transphobia
- » 14 Ways Homophobia and Transphobia Affect Everyone
- » Pride Symbols
- » LGBTQ History: The Stonewall Uprising

myths and facts

- » Myths and Facts
- » Risk Factors that LGBTQ Youth Face
- » Risk Factors that Heterosexual People Face
- » Facts about Reparative Therapy and Sexual Orientation Conversion
- » Terms and Definitions Quiz
- » Myths and Facts Quiz

This section introduces important information and terminology that will help you toward understanding and talking about LGBTQ issues more constructively.

Use this material as a foundation for understanding LGBTQ issues that are based on truth and knowledge. There are two parts to this section; the first titled Terms and Definitions, the second titled Myths and Facts.

The first section provides concrete information on words that may be encountered when dealing with issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Following the informational verbage, the Myths and Facts section highlights commonly held stereotypes about LGBTQ people and presents facts to dispel them.

LGBTQ GLOSSARY

Language is dynamic; it grows, changes, and develops. This is particularly true with the language of diversity and terms (“labels”) used to identify one’s self. Language must not demean, exclude, or offend. Others must be allowed to self identify, for definitions of terms vary for everyone. The following definitions are given to provide a starting point for discussion and understanding.

Ableism: Discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities.

Ableist: A person who upholds and believes in Ableism.

Ageism: Discrimination or prejudice against individuals based on their age.

Ageist: A person who upholds and believes in Ageism.

Androgyny: Combining assumed male and female characteristics.

Anti-gay violence: Bias-related violence and crimes committed against lesbians, gay, bisexual and queer people; includes physical assault, abuse, rape, vandalism and murder.

Bisexual: A person attracted to both men and women or attracted to people of any gender identity or to a person irrespective of that person's biological sex or gender, which is sometimes termed pansexuality.

Biphobia: Hatred or discrimination against bisexuals from both the straight and gay community.

Cisgender: An individual’s self-perception of their gender matches their gender assigned at birth.

Cissexism: A belief that transgender identified individuals are inferior to, or less authentic than, those who are cisgender.

Cissupremacy: System of oppressing trans people and privileging cis people.

Cissupremacist/Cisist: A person who upholds cissupremacy.

Coming out (of the closet): The process of first recognizing and acknowledging one’s non-heterosexual orientation or non-assigned gender and disclosing it to others.

Crossdressers: People who wear the clothes of and appear as a gender different than the one they were assigned at birth and generally want to relate to as and be accepted as, a person of the gender they are presenting. While many are heterosexual, the use of crossdressing in the gay “drag” culture is long standing.

Domestic Partners: Adults who are not legally married, that share resources and responsibility for decisions and have commitments to one another over a period of time. Definitions may vary among city ordinances, corporate policies, and even among those who identify themselves as domestic partners.

Drag: Dressing in clothing different than the gender assigned at birth or in a manner different than how one usually dresses. Drag is often “theatrical,” and presents a stereotyped image. Individuals who dress in drag may or may not be crossdressers or transgender.

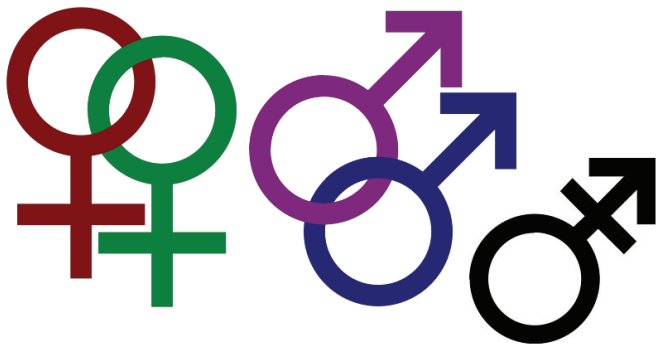
Family: “Two or more persons who share resources, responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitments to one another over a period of time. The family is that climate that one comes home to; and it is that network of

(Family continued) sharing and commitments that most accurately describes the family unit, regardless of blood, or adoption, or marriage” (American Home Economics Association).

Female Assigned At Birth (FAAB): A person who was assigned female when they were born.

Gay: Person who has an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to members of the same gender identity. Has been used as an informal way of referring to LB-GTQ community.

Gender Binary: Artificial division of the world into things that are “masculine” or “for men” and things that are “feminine” or “for women.”



Gender: A complex system of behaviors, dress, mannerisms, expectations and roles. It is not limited to sex, nor the two groups of “men” and “women.”

Gender Assigned At Birth (GAAB): A term referring to the combination of genes, gonads, and genitals a person has. Most people fall into either the XX sex (“women”) or the XY sex (“Men”), but some do not. The people who do not fall into either are intersex. Intersex people are not necessarily transgender.

Gender Bending/Blending/Gender Queer: When someone dresses outside the tradi-

tional feminine or masculine qualities assigned to articles of clothing or adornment. Gender bending may be part of “fashion,” or possibly a political statement and often has no correlation to issues of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Gender Dysphoria: According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, gender dysphoria is emotional distress that can result from “a marked incongruence between one’s experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender.” In 2012 this definition replaced Gender Identity Disorder and reclassified the transgender people as not having a mental disorder.

Gender Expression: How a person “wears” their gender. It includes such things as dress and mannerisms.

Gender Identity: A term that refers to what a person feels their gender is. It is independent of their gender assigned at birth.

Gender Identity Disorder (GID): The psychological classification found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) that until 2012 was used to diagnose transgender people. This classification allowed others to describe the entire trans community as disordered, delusional and mentally ill. This diagnosis was also used to discriminate against trans people in regards to employment, healthcare, child custody and divorce cases.

Gender Role: This refers to what role a person “plays” in relation to other genders.

Heteronormative: The process through which social institutions and social policies reinforce the belief that human beings fall into only two distinct sex/gender categories: male/man and female/woman.

Heterosexism: The institutionalized assumption that everyone's heterosexual and that it is inherently superior to and preferable to homosexuality, bisexuality or being queer.

Heterosexual: Someone who forms sexual and affectionate relationships with members of another gender identity. Also referred to as "straight."

Heterosexual Privilege: The basic civil rights and social privileges that heterosexuals automatically receive. These rights are systematically denied to lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people based solely on their sexual orientation.

Homophobia: The irrational fear, hatred, aversion, or discrimination of homosexuals or what is perceived as homosexual behavior. Homophobia consists of three separate components: sexism, xenophobia (fear of difference), and erotophobia (fear of sexual desire). Currently, homophobia is relevant to issues of discrimination in regard to gender identity and sexual orientation.

Homosexuals: People who are attracted sexually and emotionally to persons of the same gender identity. Most lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people today do not like to use this term to define themselves. The word "homosexual" is often used as a descriptor when discussing concrete behaviors (e.g., to describe same-sex sexual behaviors or fantasies). It is also considered more of a clinical or medical term used to categorize instead of empower.

Inclusive Language: The use of gender non-specific terms to avoid heterosexist assumptions. i.e. partner instead of husband or wife.

Internalized Homophobia: An experience of shame, aversion or self-hatred in reaction

to one's own feelings of attraction for a person of the same gender identity.

Intersectionality: A concept often used in critical theories to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another.

Intersex: People who are born with both female and male genetic characteristics (i.e. sex chromosomes, genitalia or reproductive system)

Lesbian: A female identified person who has an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to other female identified people.

LGBTQ: The acronym for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer is an umbrella term that covers both sexual orientation and gender identification. Other variations include GLBT, LBGT, LGBTQA (Allies), and LGBTQQQ (Questioning/Queer).

Male Assigned At Birth (MAAB): A person who was assigned male when they were born.

Misogyny: Hatred, dislike, or mistrust of women.

Out: To be open about one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Partner or Significant Other: Primary domestic partner or spousal relationship/s. May be referred to as "girlfriend/boyfriend," "lover," "life partner," "wife/husband," etc.

Passing: Being able to pass with regard to sex, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and race; being read as having a sex, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, etc. other than the one you were assigned or identify with.

Questioning: A term that refers to those who are unsure of, or are reconsidering, their sexuality or gender.

Queer/Omnisexual/Pansexual: Inclusive terms more commonly used by the younger generation in the LGBTQ community to refer to a person of any gender identity who has an emotional, sexual, and/or romantic attraction to people regardless of their gender identity. Queer was formerly used as a slur to refer to gays and lesbians in an extremely derogatory way, however many in the LGBTQ community have reclaimed this term as a sense of empowerment.

Racism: Systematic behaviors and individual actions that reinforce the belief in the inherent superiority of white people over people of color based solely on their ethnic/racial heritage.

Sex: An act, or series of acts, that humans engage in as part of the expression of their sexual nature and their desire for love and affection.

Sexist: The belief that one of the binary genders is superior to all other genders.

Sexual Orientation: The desire for intimate emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender, another gender, or multiple genders.

Trans*: A broad umbrella term used to describe the continuum of individuals whose gender identity and expression, to varying degrees, does not correspond with their gender assigned at birth. Some transgender people wish to change their anatomy or hormones to be more congruent with their self-perception; others have no such desire. There is no correlation between sexual orientation and gender iden-

tity; transgender people can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual or queer.

Transmisogyny: Hatred, dislike, or mistrust of transwomen by all people including other women and other trans people.

Transphobia: A set of negative attitudes toward, fear and hatred of transgender and gender non-conforming people.

Transwoman/Transfemale/MTF: A term that refers to female-identified people who were Male Assigned At Birth (MAAB). Male to Female.

Transman/Transmale/FTM: A term that refers to male-identified people who were Female Assigned At Birth (FAAB). Female to Male.

Two-Spirit: A Native and/or Aboriginal person who is attracted to people of the same gender or many genders, and/or someone who possesses sacred gifts of the female/male spirit which exists in harmony in the one person. Most Native and/or Aboriginal cultures in North and South America have special status or roles, or understood gender crossing roles ceremonies to acknowledge their special identity and special relationship with the Spirit.

Xenophobia: Fear of difference, actual or perceived.

TYPES OF HOMOPHOBIA/TRANSPHOBIA

PERSONAL HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

are prejudices based on a personal belief that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people are sinful, immoral, sick, inferior to heterosexuals and cisgender people, or incomplete people. Anyone, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can experience personal homophobia; when this happens with lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer people, it's called internalized homophobia or biphobia.

Transgender people may also internalize society's fear and hatred of their difference in gender identity or transphobia. Like heterosexuals,

LGBQ people are taught that same-sex sexuality is inferior to heterosexuality, this is often internalized to the point where self-acceptance is difficult; transgender individuals may also struggle with the effects of their internalization of society's transphobia. The stigma attached to being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer is accepted without realizing that the experience is the result of oppression. Consequently, many LGBTQ people carefully conceal their identities; others try desperately to deny or to change who they are.

INTERPERSONAL HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

are individual behaviors based on personal homophobia. This type of hatred or dislike may be expressed through name-calling, jokes, verbal and physical harassment, and other individual acts of discrimination.

The physical assault of LGBTQ people can be a result of interpersonal homophobia, however most people act out their fears of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people non-violently. Relatives often shun their LGBTQ family members; co-workers can be distant and cold to LGBTQ colleagues; often heterosexuals and cisgender people aren't interested in hearing about the relationships of their LGBTQ friends nor help to make spaces more trans accessible.

CULTURAL HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

refer to social standards and norms which dictate that being heterosexual or cisgender is better or more moral than being LGBTQ and that everyone is or should be heterosexual and cisgender. This is a type of heterosexism and/or cissupremacy.

Cultural homophobia is evidenced every day in television shows and advertisements where virtually every character is heterosexual and/or cisgender and every sexual relationship involves a cisfemale and a cismale. In many cases where LGBTQ people are portrayed, they are usually unhappy, stereotyped, engaged in self-destructive behaviors, or ambivalent about their sexual orientation.

INSTITUTIONAL HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA refer to the many ways in which government, schools, churches, businesses, youth groups, and other institutions and organizations discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Heterosexism and cissupremacy are other terms used for this type of discrimination.

In religious organizations institutional homophobia and transphobia are reflected through stated or implicit policies that prohibit LGBTQ people from assuming leadership positions: unfortunately it is not uncommon for agencies to refuse to allocate resources or services to LGBTQ people; governments may also fail to ensure the rights of all citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

14 WAYS HOMOPHOBIA/TRANSPHOBIA AFFECT ALL YOUTH

how homophobia and transphobia affect LGBTQ youth

1 Homophobia/transphobia makes many LGBTQ youth feel lonely, isolated and ashamed.

2 Homophobia/transphobia creates an environment in which LGBTQ youth may have to face harrasment and even violence in their schools, communities and/or homes.

3 Homophobia/transphobia makes some LGBTQ youth 'act straight' to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity.

6 Homophobia/transphobia cause many LGBTQ youth to drop out of school and/or run away from home.

7 Homophobia/transphobia causes many LGBTQ youth to consider and/or attempt suicide. Many of the youth who kill themselves are LGBTQ.

4 Homophobia may impact the choices many lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer youth make to become sexually active before their are ready, often choosing partners of the opposite sex just to hide their sexual orientation or their questions. Transphobia may have the same effects on trans youth who are hiding their gender identity.

5 Homophobia/transphobia contribute to the self-doubt that results in many LGBTQ youth turning to drugs, alcohol and/or self harm to numb their feelings.

how homophobia and transphobia affect straight and cis youth

1 Homophobia/transphobia pressure straight people to act unkindly or even cruelly to LGBTQ people and encourages bullying and cruelty toward anyone whose appearance or behaviors isn't sufficiently "macho" or "feminine" (from the viewpoint of the bully).

2 Homophobia/transphobia force straight people to "act straight," limiting their individuality and self-expression. Straight youth often choose their clothes, hair color/style, friends and even behavior to "prove" that they are not LGBTQ.

3 Homophobia/transphobia can destroy family relationships. Some family members break off their relationships with LGBTQ family members.

4 Homophobia/transphobia lead many straight youth to become sexually active before they really want to just to "prove" they're straight.

5 Homophobia/transphobia along with racism, sexism and poverty, make it harder to end the HIV epidemic.

6 Homophobia/transphobia create challenges for straight people and LGBTQ people to be friends.

7 Homophobia/transphobia can prevent people from appreciating diversity and the wonderful variety that exists among all people.

Adapted and reprinted with permission from the Gay-Straight Alliance Network

PRIDE SYMBOLS



the pink triangle

One of the most popular and recognized symbols for the LGBTQ community is the pink triangle. The meaning of the symbol is rooted in World War II and is a reminder of the tragedies in that era. Although homosexuals were only one of the many groups targeted for extermination by the Nazi regime, it is unfortunately the group that history often excludes. The pink triangle challenges that notion, and defies anyone to deny history.

The history of the pink triangle began post WWI, when Germany suffered a population drop and embarked on a campaign for the production of children. This population campaign in 1933, marked the beginning of a savage war against gay men, during which the Nazis used propaganda films, decrees, repressive laws, prison sentences, incarcerations in work camps, a campaign to bring the sexes together and, finally, the death camps, in their attempt to achieve the total elimination of gay men.

A smear campaign against gay men, characterizing them as mentally diseased, feminine, cowardly, liars, blabbermouths, and disloyal was launched by the Nazis. They accused gays and lesbians of forming a secret order, which threatened national security. Upon Adolf Hitler's rise to power, he revised Paragraph 175, a clause in German law prohibiting homosexual relations, to include kissing, embracing and gay fantasies as well as sexual acts.

Convicted offenders, an estimated 25,000 in the period from 1937 to 1939 alone, were sent first to prison and later to concentration camps. They were sentenced to sterilization by castration and hard labor; in 1942 Hitler's punishment for homosexuality was extended to death.

Nazi Germany first targeted the 2 million gay men living in Germany. Lesbians seldom figured in the pronouncements, because lesbians could still bear children and therefore posed no reproduction problems for the creation of a pure Aryan race.

The Nazi death camps were constructed to eliminate Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses,

the mentally and physical handicapped, immigrants, political prisoners, anti-socials, and criminals. Each of these groups was forced to wear a colored inverted triangle to designate their reason for incarceration; hence the designation also served to form a sort of social hierarchy among the prisoners. Two yellow triangles overlapping to form a Star of David designated a Jewish prisoner. The pink triangle was for homosexuals. A yellow Star of David under a superimposed pink triangle marked the lowest of all prisoners—a gay Jew.

Stories of the camps depict homosexual prisoners being given the worst tasks and labors. The SS brutally assaulted and sexually abused gay men, especially at camp Sachsehauser. One gay survivor recalled, "I was the only available target on whom everyone was free to vent his aggressions." Gay men also were used for the medical experimentation programs at Sachsehauser and other camps.

The Nazis executed nearly half a million homosexuals between 1934 and 1945.

When the war was finally over, countless homosexuals remained prisoners in the camps under Paragraph 175, which was not repealed until 1969. Although Germany granted some form of restitution payment to most camp survivors, those who wore the pink triangle were excluded. Because of the many gays who were killed at Camp Sachsehauser, the camp now bears a monument, a towering obelisk, which bears a row of inverted pink triangles.

In the 1970s, gay liberation groups resurrected the pink triangle as a popular symbol for the gay rights movement. Not only is the symbol easily recognized, but it draws attention to oppression and persecution. Today, for many the pink triangle represents pride, solidarity, and a reminder of what can happen when fanatics gain control and launch social "hate wars" against minorities.

*Adapted from: Konnilyn G. Feig. *Hitler's Death Camps*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishing, 1978.



rainbow flag

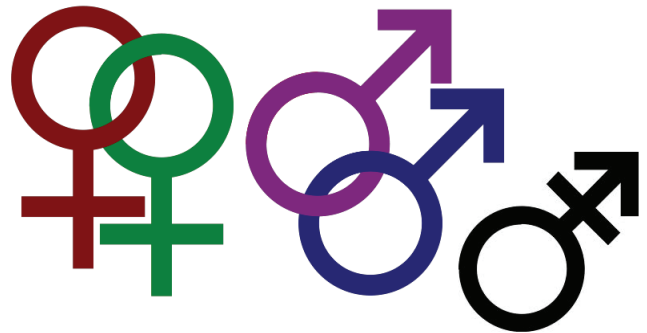
The rainbow flag has become an easily recognized symbol of pride for the LGBTQ community. The multicultural symbolism of the rainbow is nothing new. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition also embraces it as a symbol of that political movement. The rainbow plays a part in many myths related to gender and sexuality in Greek, Native American, African and other cultures.

Use of the rainbow flag by the LGBTQ community began in 1978 when it first appeared in the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade. At that time, San Francisco was grieving the assassinations of Harvey Milk, the city's first openly gay City Supervisor, and Mayor George Moscone.

Borrowing symbolism from the hippie movements and black civil rights groups, San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker designed the rainbow flag in response to a need for a symbol that could be used by LGBTQ people to celebrate and salute their community. Baker and thirty volunteers hand-stitched and hand-dyed two huge prototype flags for the parade. The flags had eight stripes, each color representing a component of the community: hot pink for sex, red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sun, green for nature, turquoise for art, indigo for harmony, and violet for spirit.

The next year Baker approached San Francisco's Paramount Flag Company to mass-produce rainbow flags for the 1979 parade. Due to production constraints, such as the fact that hot pink was not a commercially available color, pink and turquoise were removed from the design, and royal blue replaced indigo. This six-color version spread from San Francisco to other cities, and soon became a widely known symbol of gay pride and diversity (it is even officially recognized by the International Congress of Flag Makers). In 1994, a huge 30-foot-wide by one-mile-long rainbow flag was carried by 10,000 people in New York's Stonewall 25 Parade.

The rainbow flag has inspired a wide variety of related symbols, such as freedom rings and other accessories. There are plenty of variations of the flag, including versions with a blue field of stars reminiscent Stars and Stripes and versions with superimposed lambdas, pink triangles, or other symbols.



gender symbols

The Gender Symbols were originally ancient Roman astrological signs, the crossed Venus symbol representing the female and the pointed Mars symbol representing the male.

The double interlocking male symbol has been used since the 1970s by cis gay men, while the double female symbols have been used by both cis lesbians and cis feminists looking to represent the sisterhood of cis women.

The original transgender symbol was created by Holly Boswell, Wendy Parker and Nancy Nange-roni. It incorporates the traditional cis mal and cis female symbols with a new "transgender" symbol. The symbol is meant to exclude no one and the circle represents wholeness.

LGBTQ HISTORY: THE STONEWALL UPRISING

New York newspapers tend to use the term Stonewall Uprising, not the Stonewall Riots, for the six days of conflict between young gay, lesbian and transgender individuals and the New York Police Department. This event occurred in the wake of a police raid at the Christopher Street bar in Manhattan's West Village. As police crackdown on gay bars for operating without NY State Liquor Authority (SLA) licenses occurred, as did the raid. The SLA refused to grant bars that served the LGBTQ community licenses, forcing them to operate as illegal saloons.

Opportunists and Mafia affiliates stepped in, running unlicensed establishments and reputedly creating deals with the police to stay in business. On the night of June 27, 1969, a police raid on the Stonewall involving the arrests of 13 people inside the bar met unexpected resistance when a crowd gathered and one of those arrested, a cis woman, cried out to the assembled bystanders as she was shoved into a paddy wagon, "Why don't you guys do something!"

The conflict over the next six days played out; fire hoses were turned on people in the street, and barricades were thrown as groups continued chanting cries toward the police. The New York Post reported on June 28, 1969, that hundreds outside the bar had been observed chanting "Gay Power" and "We Want Freedom."

David Carter, a historian and author of *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution* has compiled "An Analytical Collation of Accounts and Documents Recorded in the Year 1969 Concerning the Stonewall Riots," from which the above anecdotes are drawn.

The first LGBTQ journalist to describe what happened at the Stonewall Inn was Dick Leitsch,

the then executive director of the Mattachine Society of New York, the first gay group to ever hold a picket in the city in the early 1960s.

"Coming on the heels of the raids of several other LGBTQ clubs, the Stonewall raid looked to many like part of an effort to close all gay bars and clubs in the Village.

"Why did the uprising happen at the Stonewall and not at another club? The answer may lie in the unique nature of the Stonewall itself. This club was more than a dance bar, more than just a LGBTQ gathering place. It catered largely to a group of people who are not welcome in, or cannot afford, other places of LGBTQ social gathering.

"The "drags" and the "queens", as transgender people were called at the time, two groups which would find a chilly reception or a barred door at most of the other gay and lesbian bars and clubs. Trans folks formed the "regulars" at the Stonewall. To a big extent, the club was for them.

"Another group was even more dependent on the Stonewall: the very young of the LGBTQ community and those with no other homes. At the time you had to be 18 to buy a drink in a bar and LGBTQ life revolved around bars. Where do you go if you are 17 or 16 and LGBTQ? The "legitimate" bars won't let you in the place, and LGBTQ restaurants and the streets aren't very sociable.

"Then too, there are hundreds of young LGBTQ people in New York who literally have no home. Most of them are between 16 and 25 and came here from other places without jobs, money or contacts.

"Many of them are running away from unhappy homes (one boy told us, "My father called me 'cocksucker so many times, I thought it was my name.'").

“Another said his parents fought so much over which of them “made” him gay that he left so they could learn to live together.

“Some got thrown out of school or the service for being LGBTQ and couldn’t face going home. Some were even thrown out of their homes by ignorant, intolerant parents who’d rather see their kid dead than LGBTQ.



“They came to New York with the clothes on their backs. Some of them hustled or had skills enough to get a job. Some of them, giddy at the openness of LGBTQ life in New York, got caught up in it and some were on pills and drugs. Some were still wearing the clothes in which they came to the city the year or more before.

“The Stonewall became “home” to these young people. When it was raided, they fought for it. That, and the fact that they had nothing to lose other than the most tolerant and broadminded LGBTQ place in town, explains why the Stonewall riots were begun, led and spearheaded by transwomen of color and homeless queer and trans youth.

“In short the Stonewall operated as a sort of defacto community center for LGBTQ youth rendered homeless by familial and institutional rejection, which had taken refuge in

New York City in hopes of finding a place where they could be in the world. This was the same for the transgender community, especially the transwomen of color who to this day are not always accepted by the rest of the community.”

This continues, decades later, to be a major problem, according to a study by the Williams Institute, which found in 2012 that about 40 percent of clients served by 354 youth service agencies were lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer and that the top reasons they were homeless were that they ran away in the face of family rejection or were kicked out by parents who could not accept their sexual orientation or gender identities.

There has been a lot of progress with the acceptance of the LGBTQ community since the Stonewall era. But there’s still a long way to go. Until the very folks who helped give rise to the Stonewall Uprising are fully accepted into and a priority in our movement we still have work to do.



Sylvia Rivera (holding the hammer) and Marsha P. Johnson (with color) of the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.) at the Christopher Street Liberation Day, Gay Pride Parade, NYC (ca. June 1970). Photographer Leonard Finch. Reprinted, by permission, from National History Archives of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center.

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LGBTQ MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH

I don't know any lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer people.

FACT

Yes, you do! Alfred Kinsey, in his study published in 1947, estimated that 13% of the male population and 7% of the female population were more or less exclusively gay or lesbian. Kinsey also found that over half of the adult population has had at least one homosexual experience, one of the more conservative estimates is 3% of individuals who report some level of homosexual or bisexual identity. Judd Marmor, Professor of Psychiatry at USG Medical School, has calculated that one in every four families has a member (parent or child) who is lesbian or gay, which doesn't even account for all the other identities in the community. Many experts view sexuality on a continuum, recognizing that many or perhaps most people are not exclusively gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer or heterosexual throughout their entire lives, and that people's identities may not match their behavior.

*A.C. Kinsey et al. *Sexual Behavior in Human Male* (Phil: Saunders, 1948) and A.C. Kinsey et al. *Sexual Behavior in Human Female* (Phil: Saunders, 1953).
Edward Laumann et al. *The Social Organization of Sexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).
Caitlin Ryan and Donna Futterman. *Lesbian and Gay Youth: Care and Counseling* (New York, Columbia UP: 1998).

MYTH

There are no gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender youth.

FACT

Assuming that roughly 10% of the population is homosexual or bisexual, there are approximately 3 million lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer adolescents in the United States. Yet traditional support systems (families, places of worship, schools, peers, and society in general) often reject, ostracize, or deny the existence of these youth. Statistics indicate the incidence of substance abuse, suicide, and school/peer/home problems are disproportionately high among LGBTQ youth. Suicide is the leading cause of death among LGBTQ adolescents.

*Gary Remafedi, ed. *Death by Denial: Studies of Suicide in Gay and Lesbian Teenagers*. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1994.

MYTH

It's "unnatural" to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer.

FACT

It is not "unnatural" to have sexual relations with people who gender identify as you do; the behavior is found in practically every culture throughout history. Same-sex bonding is a normal, natural, biological, and social occurrence. They were, in fact, accepted as "natural" in many European societies until the 13th century, after which time same-sex relations were increasingly probed by church and state. Today, such sexual acts are illegal in only about 35% of the world's countries, and some countries, such as Australia, Denmark, and South Africa, have national laws protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination. Scientific research has also found that LGBTQ behavior and coupling is common among a variety of different animal species, refuting the idea that being LGBTQ is an aberration in nature.

*Colin Spencer. *Homosexuality in History*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995. Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron, eds. *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

MYTH

LGBTQ people can change their sexual orientation through therapy.

FACT

Even though being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer is not a mental illness and there is no scientific reason to attempt conversion of LGBTQ people, some individuals may seek to change their own sexual orientation or that of another individual (for example, parents seeking therapy for their child). Some therapists who undertake this kind of therapy report that they have changed their clients' sexual orientation to heterosexual. Many of these claims come from organizations with ideological perspectives on sexual orientation and gender identity, rather than from mental health researchers. The use of treatments and their outcomes are often poorly documented and the length of time that clients are followed up after the treatment is often too short.

In 1990 the American Psychological Association stated that scientific evidence does not hold evident that conversion therapy is effective and concluded that it can do more harm than good. Changing one's sexual orientation or gender identity is not simply a matter of changing one's behavior; It would require altering one's emotional, romantic, and sexual feelings as well as how they view their own gender and restructuring one's self-concept and social identity.

*American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.; Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel.

MYTH

Homosexuality and transsexuality are mental illnesses.

FACT

In the mid 1950s the late psychologist Dr. Evelyn Hooker first demonstrated, in a landmark study that homosexual men and heterosexual men were no different psychologically. The label of "deviance" has been lifted by prestigious medical and educational associations including the American Psychiatric Association, which removed "homosexuality" from its list of mental illnesses in 1973. Psychologists, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals agree that homosexuality is not an illness, mental disorder, or emotional problem. It wasn't until 2012 for the same institutions to also declare that being transgender is also not a mental disorder.

*Judd Marmor, Irving Bieber, and Ronald Gold. "A Symposium: Should Homosexuality Be in the APA Nomenclature?" American Journal of Psychiatry. 130 (11): 1207-1216, 1973.

MYTH

Sexual orientation is a choice.

FACT

How a particular sexual orientation develops in any individual, whether homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual, is not completely understood by scientists. What is known is that sexual orientation emerges for most people in early adolescence without any prior sexual experience. Some people report trying continuously over a course of many years to change their sexual orientation from homosexual and heterosexual with no success. For these reasons, psychologists do not consider sexual orientation for most people to be a conscious choice that can be voluntarily changed.

*Caitlin Ryan and Donna Futterman. Lesbian and Gay Youth: Care and Counseling. New York: Columbia UP, 1998. American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

MYTH

LGBTQ people work in specific fields.

FACT

LGBTQ people are found in every occupation and profession. For example: National Lawyers Guild Gay and Lesbian Caucus, National Education Association Gay and Lesbian Caucus, Gay Nurses Association, Gay and Lesbian Association of Scientists and Engineers, Gay Prize Fighters of America . . . to name a few.

MYTH

LGBTQ people are unfit to be teachers.

FACT

In most parts of the United States, LGBTQ teachers are not able to reveal their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and by doing so could jeopardize their jobs. Therefore, there have been few studies on lesbian and gay teachers. There are some statistics, however, that invalidates the myth that they could influence their students' sexual orientation/gender identity or endanger them. There is no evidence that their effectiveness in the classroom differs from that of heterosexual/cis gender teachers. In a psychological test that predicts the success of teachers in the classroom, administered to 74 gay and lesbian and 66 heterosexual teachers, there were no differences in scores between the two groups. In 1974, the National Education Association (the nation's largest organization of public school employees) added "sexual orientation" to its resolution on non-discriminatory personnel policies and practices; they added "gender identity" some years later.

*M. Martin, "Gay, Lesbian, and Heterosexual Teachers: Acceptance of Self, Acceptance of Others." Unpublished report, 1990. National Education Association, Washington, D.C.

MYTH

LGBTQ people contribute nothing to society.

FACT

Historically, innumerable contributions have been made to society by LGBTQ people: Plato, Leonardo da Vinci, Julius Caesar, Gertrude Stein, Michelangelo, Emily Dickinson, Yukio Mishima, Peter Tchaikovsky, Alexander the Great, Bessie Smith, James I, Walt Whitman, Eleanor Roosevelt, Ian McKellan, Jane Addams, Oscar Wilde, Pedro Almodovar, Truman Capote, J. Edgar Hoover, James Baldwin, Tennessee Williams, Langston Hughes, Susan B. Anthony, Andy Warhol, Willa Cather, Margaret Mead, Alice Walker, Diego Rivera, Hans Christian Andersen, Steven Sondheim, Peter the Great, Bayard Rustin, Rupert Everett, Richard the Lionhearted, Lorraine Hansberry. Today many popular and influential LGBTQ people hide their private lives in an effort to escape society's intolerance and hatred.

MYTH

Lesbians hate men, and gay men hate women.

FACT

Homosexuality is not a negative relation to the opposite sex, but rather a stronger, more powerful desire for emotional and physical intimacy with same-sex individuals.

MYTH

LGBTQ people do not make good parents.

FACT

Studies of children raised by LGBTQ and by heterosexual/cisgender parents reveal no developmental differences between the two groups in the areas of intelligence, psychological adjustment, social adjustment, popularity with friends, development of social sex role identity, or development of sexual orientation. A recent study by the American Academy of Pediatrics found that “children who grow up with 1 or 2 gay and/or lesbian parents fare as well in emotional, cognitive, social, and sexual functioning as do children whose parents are heterosexual.” Children’s optimal development seems to be influenced more by the nature of the relationships and interactions within the family unit than by the particular structural form it takes.”

*Ellen C. Perrin, MD, and the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, “Technical Report: Co parent or Second-Parent Adoption by Same-Sex Parents.” *Pediatrics*, 109, 2: 341-344, February 2002.

MYTH

Lesbian and gay adults recruit children into homosexuality.

FACT

Research shows that sexual orientation is determined either before birth or very early in life and that no one can alter another person’s sexual orientation. In a study of 161 homosexual males with twin or adoptive brothers, 52% of the subjects’ identical twin brothers, 22% of their fraternal twin brothers and 11% of their adoptive brothers were homosexual, supporting the theory of a biological link. A study of lesbian twin sisters found similar results: the identical twins of lesbians were three times as likely to be lesbian or bisexual than fraternal twins. In a study comparing brain tissue of 19 homosexual and 16 heterosexual men, there was a significant size difference between the two groups in a cluster of cells in the hypothalamus (a region of the brain involved in sexual response). Similarly, in a study of 979 homosexual and 477 heterosexual men, most said that their sexual orientation was established before adolescence, regardless of whether they had been sexually active at that time.

*J.M. Bailey and R. Pillard, “A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation.” *Arch. Gen. Psych.*, 48: 1089-1096, December 1991.

J.M. Bailey et al, “Heritable Factors Influence Sexual Orientation in Women.” *Arch. Gen. Psych.*, 50: 217-223, March 1993. 3S. LeVay. *Science*. 253: 1034-1037, August 1991.

A.P. Bell, M.S. Weinberg, S.K. Hammersmith. *Sexual Preference: Its Development in Men and Women*. Bloomington, 1981.

MYTH

LGBTQ adults are a danger to children.

FACT

Sexual abuse of children occurs primarily within the family. Most sexual abuse of children outside the family is committed by pedophiles (people who engage sexually with children). Adult lesbians and gay men are no more likely to be pedophiles than heterosexuals. Same-sex pedophilia is not an indicator of adult homosexual orientation. Several studies reveal that 90-98% of pedophiles and child abusers are heterosexual men. To blame homosexuals for child molestation hides what is really happening to children and does nothing to keep children safe from sexual abuse by heterosexual males.

*A.N. Groth. *Men Who Rape*. New York: Plenum Press, 1979.

Benton County Sheriff’s Office, Corvallis, Oregon; Connecticut Department of Corrections; UCLA Medical Center.

MYTH

Lesbians and gay men are causing a breakdown of the family.

FACT

Only 26% of all American households are traditional nuclear families, a figure that represents a 14% decrease from 1970. Half of all recent marriages are expected to end in divorce, and the number of families without an adult male parent has increased by 139% since 1970. Despite numerous legal and social obstacles, many lesbians and gay men fight to retain ties with their families and for the right to raise their own children. At least six million children in the U.S. are estimated to have lesbian or gay parents.

The greatest difficulty facing these children is ridicule from other children, who have been taught intolerance, or simply do not understand homosexuality. A review of more than 30 studies comparing the children of lesbian or gay parents with those of heterosexual parents showed no significant differences in terms of gender identity or sexual orientation. Additionally, a study of the daughters of lesbian mothers and heterosexual mothers showed no difference in leadership ability, interpersonal flexibility, or self-confidence.

A New York State Court of Appeals in 1989 held that “The term family . . . should not be rigidly restricted to those people who have formalized their relationships by obtaining, for instance, a marriage certificate or an adoption order . . . A more realistic, and certainly equally valid, view of family includes two adult lifetime partners whose relationship is long-term and characterized by an emotional and financial commitment and interdependence.”

*U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1991.
Schulenberg. *Gay Parenting*. New York: Anchor Press, 1985.
C.J. Patterson. “Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents.” *Child Development*. 63: 1025-42. 1992.
J.S. Goltman. “Children of Gay and Lesbian Parents.” *Marriage and Family Review*. 14: 177-96, 1989.
Braschi v. Stahl Associates, Co., 74 N.Y.2d 201, 543N.E. 2d 49, 544 N.Y.S.2d 784, 1989.

MYTH

Societal prejudices against LGBTQ people cannot be changed.

FACT

A recent national survey found that 86% of parents now favor “expanding existing anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students.” 53% of these parents “strongly favor” policies to protect LGBTQ students, as opposed to only 5% who are “strongly opposed.” An impressive 80% of parents support “teacher sensitivity trainings on tolerance that include instructions on dealing with gay and lesbian harassment in schools.”

*Survey conducted in the summer of 2001 by Lake Snell Perry & Associates, www.glsen.org.

MYTH

All gay men and lesbians are upper middle-class and white.

FACT

Images found in mainstream gay media often reflect only those individuals who have the financial access to media resources. As a result, the mainstream media does not accurately represent the diversity of the LGBTQ community, ignoring individuals such as people of color, the elderly and homeless youth. The diversity of the LGBTQ community is much like that of the broader community, made up of people of every race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion and class.

*Amy Sonnie, ed. *Revolutionary Voices*, Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2000 and Kevin K. Kumashiro, ed. *Troubling Intersections of Race and Sexuality: Queer Students of Color and Anti-Oppressive Education*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001.

MYTH

Bisexual/queer people cannot be monogamous.

FACT

Bisexuality or being queer, as sexual orientations, are independent of a lifestyle of monogamy or non-monogamy. Bisexual and queer people are as capable as anyone of making a long-term monogamous commitment to a partner they love.

*Lorraine Hutchins and Iani Kaahumanu, ed. *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out*, Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 1991.

MYTH

Bisexual/queer people just confused or going through a phase.

FACT

It is true that for some people exploring their sexual identity, “bisexual” or “queer” are temporary labels. However, many people have a deep, lasting sense of themselves as bisexual or queer. Bisexuals or queers are not “mixed up” gays or straights, or simply “half and half.” They are attracted to more than one gender.

*Bisexual Resource Center, www.biresource.org

MYTH

The gender assigned to a person at birth is that person’s “real” sex or gender.

FACT

Sex is assigned at birth on the basis of a cursory look at the infant’s genitals. In about 1% of births, there is some ambiguity in the external genitals and mistakes can be made in determining sex. There can also be inconsistencies between a person’s internal reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, external sex organs or secondary sex characteristics. One or two in 1,000 births receive surgery to “normalize” genital appearance.

In addition, a person’s gender identity may not match their assigned sex. Unfortunately, most people are raised to ignore the variations that occur in nature and are trained to trivialize other people’s experience of their gender identity.

*Melanie Blackless, Anthony Charuvastra, Amanda Derryck, Ann Fausto-Sterling, Karl Lauzanne and Ellen Lee. “How sexually dimorphic are we? Review and synthesis.” *American Journal of Human Biology*. 12:151-166, 2000.

MYTH

All transgender people are gay or lesbian.

FACT

There is no direct correlation between gender identity and sexual orientation. Transgender people can be homosexual, bisexual, queer or heterosexual.

*Kate Bornstein. *Gender Outlaw*, New York: Vintage Books. 1995.

MYTH

Gay men are feminine; lesbians are masculine.

FACT

Some gay men seem feminine and some lesbians masculine, just as some heterosexual men seem feminine and some heterosexual women masculine. Traits designated as either masculine or feminine are found on a continuum in both the heterosexual and homosexual populations. Therefore, it is impossible to gauge someone’s sexual identity through traits perceived as either masculine or feminine.

RISK FACTORS THAT LGBTQ YOUTH FACE

Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth are happy and thrive during their adolescent years. Attending a school that establishes a safe and supportive learning environment for all students and having encouraging and accepting parents are especially important. This helps all youth achieve good grades and maintain good mental and physical health. However, some LGBTQ youth are more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience difficulties in their lives and school environments.

violence

Negative attitudes toward LGBTQ people put LGBTQ youth at an increased risk for experiences with violence, in comparison to other students. Violence can include behaviors such as bullying, teasing, harassment, physical assault, and suiciderelated behaviors such as cutting.

A survey of more than 7,000 LGBTQ students ages 13–21, found that in the past year, because of their sexual orientation:

- 8 of 10 students had been verbally harassed at school ;
- 4 of 10 had been physically harassed at school ;
- 6 of 10 felt unsafe at school;
- 1 of 5 had been the victim of a physical assault at school.

Exposure to violence can have negative effects on the education and health of LGBTQ youth. In a national study of middle and high school students, 61.1% of LGBTQ students were more likely than their straight peers to feel unsafe or uncomfortable as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Over 25% of LGBTQ students reported missing classes or days of school because of feeling unsafe there.

Another survey of more than 7,000 seventh and eighth graders examined the effects of school climate and homophobic bullying of LGBTQ youth. The researchers found that:

- LGBTQ youth were more likely than straight youth to report high levels of bullying and substance use;

“At [my high school], homophobia and hazing were rampant. I had to be adamantly heterosexual and had to make dehumanizing comments about girls or else be labeled a faggot. I had to prove my masculinity by hazing the underclassmen. Others found pushing wasn’t enough and so turned to whiffle-ball bats. Once someone was rolled down cement steps in a laundry bag just for the fun of it.”

- Questioning students reported more bullying, homophobic victimization, unexcused absences from school, drug use, feelings of depression and suicidal behaviors than either straight or LGBTQ students;
- LGBTQ students who did not experience homophobic teasing reported the lowest levels of depression and suicidal feelings of all student groups (heterosexual, LGBTQ, and questioning students).



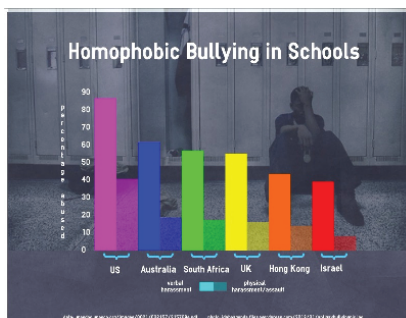
self harm

As a result of negative attitudes toward LGBTQ youth they are also at an increased risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors, suicide attempts and suicide. A national study of adolescents in grades 7–12 found that LGBTQ youth were more than twice as likely to have attempted suicide as their heterosexual peers. More studies are needed to better understand the risks of self harm among transgender youth.

In some cases, LGBTQ youth are thrown out of their homes or experience stress and conflict that can cause them to run away. As a result, they are at a greater risk for becoming homeless than their heterosexual peers.

Even less severe reactions can have long-lasting negative effects. Research published in the *Journal of Pediatrics* found significantly higher rates of mental and physical health problems among LGBTQ young adults who experienced high levels of rejection from their parents while they were adolescents. Compared with LGBTQ young adults who experienced very little or no parental rejection, LGBTQ young adults who experienced high levels of rejection were:

- 6 times as likely to have high levels of depression;
- 8 times as likely to have attempted suicide;
- 3 times as likely to abuse drugs;
- More than 3 times as likely to engage in unprotected sexual behaviors that put them at increased risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.



unplanned pregnancies

"I was 15 when I first had sex with a man. I did it because of pressure from my friends and maybe to prove to myself and other people that I wasn't a lesbian."

LGBQ youth experience considerably higher rates of unplanned pregnancies than their straight peers. Unfortunately, more studies of this kind need to be expanded to include transgender youth.

LGBQ youth who report high levels of family rejection during adolescence are more likely to engage in unprotected sex than LGBQ peers who did not experience high levels of family rejection. Research also compares LGBQ and heterosexual youth in terms of pregnancy involvement (becoming pregnant, or getting someone pregnant). LGBQ youth become involved with pregnancies at 2 to 7 times the rate of heterosexual youth. Sexual orientation and sexual behavior are different and separate dimensions and may intersect in unexpected ways, especially during adolescence:

- LGBQ youth report similar frequency of intercourse as straight youth;
- Lesbian and bisexual cisfemales are about as likely to have had sex with a cis male partner as straight cisfemales;
- LGBQ youth are younger at first intercourse, report more sexual partners;
- 1 in 3 teen fathers and 1 in 8 teen mothers report having sexual partners of varying genders or partners of the same gender identity.

The Prevention Researcher by Lis Maurer <http://blog.tpronline.org/?p=1315>

substance abuse

"When you get to the point where there's no one else there to listen to you, to be your friend, you'll turn to anybody. So it's like, 'Come on, hang out with us, we have marijuana.' So that's how I started going down that route, experiencing a lot of things fourteen and fifteen year olds shouldn't."

Far too often, GLBT youth view drugs and alcohol as their only means of coping with various risk factors such as violence, harassment, isolation, family rejection and homelessness. Drugs may be a way to relieve the pain of oppression and reduce inhibitions.

A 2008 study by Dr. Michael P. Marshal of the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center revealed that LGBQ teens are 190% more likely to use drugs and alcohol than their heterosexual peers and that the usage rate is even higher among certain subgroups. For example, the prevalence of drug or alcohol use among bisexual youth is 340% greater than the rate among straight teens. Among lesbian youth, the number rises to 400%. Similar studies need to be conducted that include transgender youth.

Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools. Human Rights Watch, 2001.

Hunter, J. et al. Columbia University HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, 1992.

GLBT Youth and Substance Abuse: Seeking Intersection of Support

By Tamarah Gehlen <http://www.lavendermagazine.com/our-lives/glblt-youth-and-substance-abuse-seeking-intersection-of-support/>



eating disorders

A Washington State University study provide evidence that trans youth are at increased risk for eating disorders. Trans youth reported being diagnosed with these disorders at a high rate: 17%. Their ability to feel better about their own bodies was attributed to hormone therapy and top or bottom surgeries. When eating disorders and "Gender Dysphoria" are co-occurring, hormones should not be postponed until the eating disorder is resolved, because it is likely to be directly linked to Gender Dysphoria.

"I was a girl, but I wanted to be a boy. When my puberty began, my insecurities with my physical appearance became my obsession. As my body grew into a curvy female form I let go of the fantasy of turning into a boy and surrendered to the idea that I'd forever be uncomfortable in my own skin. My curves made me feel fat. My curves scared me."

Studies show that increased disordered eating behavior among transgender individuals includes restraint, weight concern, shape concern, drive for thinness, bulimia, body dissatisfaction, body checking and depression. Among trans people, individuals who were assigned male at birth or transwomen are at slightly higher risk than individuals assigned female at birth or transmen. Researchers and experts in the field speculate that FAAB individuals are more likely to reduce body weight in order to suppress the secondary female sexual characteristics while MAAB individuals drive comes from a desire to fulfill the sociocultural slimness ideal for females of Western societies.

<http://alchemistsclosetarticles.blogspot.com/2012/07/trans-gender-and-eating-disorders.html>

<http://gsanetwork.org/news/blog/transgender-identity-and-eating-disorders/02/29/12>

RISK FACTORS THAT HETEROSEXUAL PEOPLE FACE

While persons that identify as heterosexual may not be directly affected by homophobic and/or transphobic violence and discrimination, homophobia and transphobia are oppressive to all people, regardless of sexuality or gender identity.

1 Homophobia/Transphobia locks all people into rigid gender-based roles.

2 Homophobic/Transphobic conditioning compromises the integrity of heterosexual people by pressuring them to treat others badly, actions contrary to basic humanity.

3 Homophobia/Transphobia inhibits an individual's ability to form close, intimate relationships with others of the same gender.

4 Homophobia/Transphobia generally restricts communication with a significant portion of the population and, more specifically, limits family relationships.

5 Societal homophobia/transphobia prevents some lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people from developing an authentic self identity and adds to the pressure to have a heterosexual marriage. This chain of events in turn, can cause undue stress and often times trauma on everyone involved including heterosexual spouses and their children.

6 Homophobia/Transphobia can cause premature sexual involvement, which increases the chances of teen pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Youth, of all sexual identities, are often pressured to become heterosexually active to prove to themselves and others that they are straight.

7 Homophobia/Transphobia combined with sexophobia (fear and repulsion of sex) results in the elimination of any discussion

of the lives and sexuality of LGBT people as part of school-based sex education, keeping vital information from all students. Such a lack of information can have life-threatening results in the age of HIV/AIDS.

8 Homophobia/Transphobia can be used to stigmatize, silence, and, on occasion, target people who are perceived or defined by others as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and/or transgender but who are, in actuality, heterosexual and/or cisgender.

9 Homophobia/Transphobia prevents heterosexuals from accepting the benefits and gifts offered by LGBTQs: social and spiritual visions and options, contributions in the arts and culture, to religion, to family life and to all facets of society.

10 Homophobia/Transphobia (along with racism, sexism, classism, etc.) inhibits a unified and effective government and societal response to HIV/AIDS.

11 Homophobia/Transphobia diverts energy from more constructive endeavors.

12 Homophobia/Transphobia inhibits appreciation of other types of diversity causing it to be unsafe for everyone because each person has unique traits not considered mainstream or dominant. Therefore, we are all diminished when any one of us is demeaned.

*Written by: Warren J. Blumenfeld. Reprinted from GLSEN's website: www.glsen.org

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS QUIZ

Match each term or symbol with its correct definition or description.

- _____ 1. Androgyny
- _____ 2. Xenophobia
- _____ 3. Transgender
- _____ 4. Rainbow flag
- _____ 5. Gender Expression
- _____ 6. Transphobia
- _____ 7. Queer
- _____ 8. Two-Spirit
- _____ 9. Bisexual
- _____ 10. Coming out
- _____ 11. Heterosexism
- _____ 12. Gay
- _____ 13. Intersectionality
- _____ 14. Gender
- _____ 15. Gender Queer
- _____ 16. Intersex
- _____ 17. Homophobia
- _____ 18. Pink triangle
- _____ 19. FTM
- _____ 20. Homosexual

- A. A symbol used in Nazi Germany.
- B. The process of first recognizing and acknowledging non-heterosexual orientation and/or a transgender identity to oneself and then disclosing it to others.
- C. Combining both assumed male and female qualities.
- D. An individual (male or female) who is attracted sexually and emotionally to both cismales and cisfemales.
- E. A male-identified person who was assigned female at birth.
- F. Fear of difference, actual or perceived.
- G. Characteristics of masculinity and femininity that are learned or chosen.
- H. Dressing in such a way as to question the traditional feminine or masculine qualities assigned to articles of clothing.
- I. How a person “wears” their gender. It includes such things as dress and mannerisms.
- J. The irrational fear of, hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuals or homosexual behavior.
- K. A broad umbrella term used to describe the continuum of individuals whose gender identity and expression, to varying degrees, does not correspond with their genetic sex.
- L. A term for same-gender loving people that gained prominence in the late 19th century.
- M. Symbol of LGBTQ pride introduced in 1979.
- N. A Native American concept traditionally referring to people who display varying gender characteristics.
- O. A concept often used in critical theories to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another.
- P. Institutionalized bias against homosexuality rooted in the belief that heterosexuality is superior or the norm.
- Q. Term for same gender loving people first used in the 1960.
- R. Hatred and/or discrimination against people who break or blur gender roles and sex characteristics.
- S. People who are born with varying genetic characteristics.
- T. Inclusive term used in the LGBTQ community.

MYTHS AND FACTS QUIZ

Determine if each statement is a myth or a fact. If the statement is a myth, please provide information that “corrects” the myth in the lines following.

1. MYTH FACT

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth are at a higher risk of suicide than their straight peers.

2. MYTH FACT

Homophobia has no impact on straight people.

3. MYTH FACT

Sexual orientation and gender identity are not usually fixed.

4. MYTH FACT

Children of gay and lesbian parents are more likely to be gay and lesbian than those of straight parents.

5. MYTH FACT

Reparative therapy is a viable form of changing one’s sexual orientation backed by the American Psychological Association.



Talking About LGBTQ Issues

suggestions for discussing LGBTQ concerns with students



privilege check

- » Heterosexual Privilege
 - » Cis Privilege
 - » White Privilege

coming out

- » For Students
- » For Educators
 - » For Families
 - » For Youth of Color
 - » For Immigrant Youth
- » For Transgender and Gender Variant Youth

sexuality/gender models and theories

- » Troiden's Model of Identity Formation
 - » DeVine's Family Systems Model
 - » Gingerbread Person
 - » Gender Gumby
 - » Telling Stories

Staff members do not need to be trained counselors to be valuable allies to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth.

The best thing you can do as a staff member interacting with LGBTQ youth is to listen, affirm their feelings, respect confidentiality, and know how to refer students to appropriate resources.

The following are resources that may help you better understand the particular needs of LGBTQ youth who are dealing with issues of sexuality and/or gender identity within many other multiple identities.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSING LGBTQ CONCERNS WITH STUDENTS

Be yourself.

Remember that students may appear to be confused about their sexual orientation or gender identity when, in fact, they are only confused about what terminology to use.

Use the vocabulary that the student uses.

If the student uses “homosexual,” follow their lead; similarly, if the student says “gay,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” or “transgender,” use that term.

Remember that the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer student may be experiencing grief as a reaction, since most know that mainstream society is not completely accepting.

Be aware of your comfort and limitations. Do not add pain resulting from your own judgment about sexuality and/or gender identity generally or homosexuality and transgender folks specifically.

Respect the confidentiality of students who confide in you or who ask for assistance. Be sensitive to what a student wants out of the discussion. One student may need a referral to a counselor or other resource, while another may simply want a sympathetic listener.

Be aware that people of color and immigrant or first generations students face multiple discriminations upon revealing their sexual orientation or gender identity, which may result in consequences that differ from white students or students with families that have been in this country for many generations.

Do not put words in their mouths. It is not our job to tell youth what their issues are, but rather to help them deal with the issues they present. Listen, and let them do the talking.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Does the student have friends whom they can trust with the information?
- Do the student’s parents know?
- What might happen if they did?
- If the parents cannot support the student, are other adults available for support?

Thank the student for trusting you.

HETEROSEXUAL PRIVILEGE

Some of the rights and privileges that heterosexual people take for granted everyday are not available to LGBTQ people. Becoming sensitive to homophobia and heterosexism involves understanding how a person's sexuality can affect them on a daily basis.

As a heterosexual person:

- I can kiss or show affection with my loved one in public.
- I can talk about my relationship without having to explain them.
- I am accepted as normal by most people.
- I expect support from family and friends and can express sadness and pain openly when a relationship ends or my partner dies.
- I can parent or be around children without anyone becoming mistrustful or suspicious.
- I can rent an apartment without concealing the nature of my partner.
- I have the right to legally marry and receive related tax benefits; my relationship can be solemnized in the religious rite of marriage.
- I can live my life without hiding who I am and the feelings that I have; I do not have to hide my friends or social activities.
- I have the right to have in-laws and be able to celebrate family holidays.
- My children have the right to be comfortable with their friends, and invite them into our home.
- I can watch media without seeing people like me ridiculed.
- I can expect books and songs to talk about and reflect my experiences.
- I can have access to health insurance through my spouse's employment benefit plan or I can expect to have medical benefits provided for my partner.
- I do not have to "explain" my sexual identity or disprove myths about it.
- I do not fear that my sexual orientation may become a major point in a smear campaign affecting the custody of my children, the job or promotion I want, the house I would like to buy, or the way I am treated by co-workers, neighbors, friends, and/or family.
- I have the right to purchase items (e.g. house, car) with a partner and apply for a loan together without being questioned.
- I have the right to custody of our kids if my partner dies.

- I have the right to be legal guardian of my spouse in the case of a disabling accident or illness.
- I can expect the help and assistance from authorities if I have an abusive partner, or if there is other family discord.
- I have the right to visit my spouse when hospitalized in intensive care or other “family only” settings.
- I have the right to be seen as a whole person, rather than judged solely by my sexual orientation.
- I can be sexual with my partner without breaking the law.
- I can have a photo of my spouse/partner on my desk without risking hateful comments or losing my job.
- I can ignore prejudice against LGBTQ people because it does not affect me personally.
- I can be affirmed, not simply “tolerated,” by those around me.
- I don’t expect to hear hurtful jokes or comments about my life.
- I can expect that almost all the people with whom I interact are heterosexual.
- I can avoid having people quote the Bible to me, call me a sinner, or condemn me.
- I can talk about my life without having to change the pronouns.
- I can be sure that traditional family images and models will be emphasized in the curricula used for my children.
- I can speak before a group without being expected to speak for all heterosexuals.
- I can speak in public without people discounting what I say because of my sexual orientation.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without having my sexual orientation minimized or ignored.
- I can go home from most meetings of organizations to which I belong feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out of place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
- If my day, week, or year goes badly, I don’t assume that a negative episode is rooted in prejudice.

*Adapted from: MN Coalition for Battered Women, 1990; and Family Services, Inc., HIV/AIDS and Anti-Homophobia Education Program, 166 E 4th St., St. Paul, MN 55101

got privilege?

CIS PRIVILEGE

“Cisgender” means your gender assigned at birth aligns with your gender identity and expression. If you are cisgender, listed below are benefits that result from your alignment of identity.

As a cisgender person:

- I can use public restrooms without fear of physical intimidation, or arrest.
- I can use public facilities such as changing rooms without stares, fear, or anxiety.
- Strangers don't assume they can ask me what my genitals look like and how I have sex.
- My validity as a human is not based on how much surgery I've had or how well I "pass."
- I have the ability to walk through the world and generally blend-in, not being constantly stared and laughed at because of my gender.
- I can access gender exclusive spaces and not be excluded due to my gender.
- Strangers call me by the name I provide, and don't ask what my birth name is and then assume that they have a right to call me that.
- I can reasonably assume that my ability to acquire a job, rent an apartment, etc. will not be denied on the basis of my gender.
- I have the ability to not be profiled as a sex worker because of my gender expression.
- I have the ability to flirt or form a relationship and not fear that my gender assigned at birth may be cause for rejection or attack.
- If I end up in the emergency room, I don't have to worry that my gender will keep me from getting treatment.
- My identity is not considered a mental pathology by the psychological establishments.
- I'm not required to undergo an extensive psychological evaluation in order to receive basic medical care.
- I do not have to defend my right to be a part of the "Queer Community," gays and lesbians will not try to exclude me from "their" equal rights movement because of my gender identity.
- If I'm murdered (or have any crime committed against me), my gender expression will not be used as a justification for my murder.
- Hollywood accurately depicts people of my gender in films and television, and does not solely make my identity the focus of a dramatic storyline, or the punchline for a joke.

- I can easily find role models and mentors to emulate who share my gender identity.
- I can assume that everyone I encounter will understand my identity and not think I'm confused, misled, or hell-bound when I reveal it to them.
- I can purchase clothes that match my gender identity without being refused service/mockered or questioned about my genitals.
- I can purchase shoes that fit my gender expression without having to order them in special sizes or ask someone to custom-make them.
- No stranger checking my ID or driver's license will ever insult or glare at me because my name or sex does not match the sex they believed me to be based on my gender expression.
- I can reasonably assume that I will not be denied services at a hospital, bank, or other institution because the staff does not believe the gender marker on my ID card matches my gender identity.
- I have my gender as an option on a form.
- I don't fear interactions with police officers due to my gender identity.
- I am able to go to places with friends on a whim knowing there will be bathrooms there I can use.
- I don't have to convince my parents of my true gender and/or have to earn my parents' and siblings' love and respect all over again.
- I don't have to remind my family over and over to use proper gender pronouns *for the rest of my life*.

WHITE PRIVILEGE

“White privilege” (or white skin privilege) refers to institutional advantages that white people benefit from beyond those commonly experienced by people of color in the same social, political, or economic spaces.

As a white person:

- I can arrange to be in the company of people of my own race most of the time.
- I can move and be fairly certain of renting or purchasing housing in an area that I can afford and in which I would want to live.
- I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
- I can go shopping alone assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- I can turn on the television or open the paper and see people of my own race widely represented.
- I am taught that people of my skin color are a part of my national heritage.
- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
- I have the ability to go into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit my cultural traditions.
- I can go into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who is knowledgeable about my hair.
- I can count on my skin color to make me look financially reliable.
- I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
- I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes or not answer letters without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
- I can speak in public to a powerful group without putting my race on trial.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I will not be asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of people of color, who constitute the worlds' majority, without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
- I can criticize the government and talk about how much I fear its policies without being seen as a cultural outsider.
- I can be sure that if I ask to talk to “the person in charge” I will be facing a person of my race.
- I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race if I get pulled over by the police.
- I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
- I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I was hired based on my race.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my race will not work against me.
- Easily find blemish cover or bandages in flesh color that more or less matches your skin.

*It's HARD to see RACISM
When you're white.*

COMING OUT

The term “coming out of the closet” refers to the lifelong process of becoming aware of one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity, accepting it, and telling others about it. The development of a positive identity can be a long and difficult struggle for many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people, as they must confront many discriminatory attitudes and practices. For most, significant decisions must be made regarding “whom to tell” and “when to tell.”

What might lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people be afraid of when coming out?

- Rejection; loss of relationships
- Harassment/abuse
- Being thrown out of the family/home
- Being forced to undergo therapy
- Loss of job
- Physical violence

Why might lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people want to come out?

- Live honestly; end the hiding game
- Feel closer to family and friends
- Feel “whole” around others
- Stop wasting energy by hiding
- Feel a sense of integrity & congruity
- Make a statement that “gay is okay”

How might lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people feel about coming out?

- Scared
- Proud
- Relieved
- Anxious
- Vulnerable
- Uncertain

How might someone feel after a person comes out to them?

- Scared or uncomfortable
- Disgusted
- Shocked or disbelieving
- Sad
- Not sure what to say or do
- Supportive
- Angry
- Flattered or honored

What do lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people want from the people they come out to?

- Acceptance
- Support
- Closer relationships
- Understanding and acknowledgment of their feelings
- Assurance that their relationships won’t be negatively affected

*Compiled from: GLSEN, 121 West 27th Street, Suite 804, New York, NY 10001.

COMING OUT: FOR STUDENTS

Be clear about your own feelings. If you feel comfortable with your identity, others will be aided in their acceptance.

Timing is important.

Never use coming out as a weapon. Coming out is a gift to another person that communicates you care enough to share a big part of your life with them.

Talk about your love/caring for the person so they can see that your coming out is positive.

Be prepared for negative reactions, such as surprise, anger, or hurt. Try not to be defensive. If you accept a person's feelings, you communicate that you truly care about him or her. Try to remember your own negative reactions when you first realized your sexuality or gender identity.

If you receive negative reactions, keep the door open for further communication. Realize that some people have very little information about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people, and information they do have may be negative.

Be well informed about LGBTQ issues. You are the teacher.

Introduce your friends and family to your LGBTQ friends. This lets them know that they are okay, too.



Remember that your self-worth is not dependent on acceptance from others.

Remember that it is your decision to come out. You don't have to come out to everyone.

Coming out is a risk. You don't know whom the person will tell. You have the right to ask the person not to share your disclosure with others.

You may want to role-play and practice before making the announcement. Although coming out gets a little easier the more you do it, it's important that your words and thoughts be well chosen.

COMING OUT: FOR EDUCATORS

Recognize the importance of this process for LGBTQ students. If you respond in a warm and caring manner, the student will feel that the “air has been cleared.” Now it will be possible for the student to give an authentic picture of day-to-day activities, close friends, problems with partners and the unique struggles of being LG-BTQ.

Respect the risk the student is taking by coming out to you. They may have already lost the support of family and friends by coming out to them. Remember that there are still members of the “helping professions” who have strong anti-gay and anti-trans prejudices. Your LG-BTQ students may have experienced negative treatment by other counselors or teachers, or may have friends who have experienced such treatment. Queer and Trans people learn quickly that a straight or cis person’s reaction can never be predicted. No matter how warm, caring, and nonprejudiced you may appear, it will still be a risk for the student to come out.

Take it as an indication that the student sees you as a person who can be trusted. You can take the new information as a sign of progress in the establishment of trust in your relationship. Occasionally, a LGBTQ student will seem to tell you about their sexuality or gender identity to try and “shock” you. If the student blurts out their sexuality or gender identity in anger, or makes a very cold statement about being LG-BTQ, remember that this outward appearance may be an effort to cover a lot of fear within. Try to respond in a supportive way, chances are, you will later laugh together about how uncomfortable that first moment was for both of you.

Show your appreciation and support of the student; help to make it a happy occasion. The coming out event will enable you to be “on target” with your student. Your positive response will relieve tension and uneasiness in your student. Verbalize your appreciation and support in a way that seems natural to you. Try these expressions on for size: “I appreciate your telling me this, Carlos, and I want you to know that I think this will help us to understand each other a lot better”; or, “Thank you for sharing this with me Mary. We have been trying to increase our sensitivity to LGBTQ issues here at (school name). Let me show you a resource list. By the way, did you know that there is a LGBTQ group here at school?” or, “I’m glad that you feel comfortable enough with me to tell me you are (LGBTQ).”

Be ready to share your positive experiences with LGBTQ people, but avoid the “some of my best friends are gay” response. If you have no positive experiences to share, we are not suggesting that you manufacture them. If you know of people who are out of the closet, you might want to call one of them to discuss any questions or concerns about counseling LG-BTQ people. This could be the first of a growing collection of “positive experiences.”

Have a local LGBTQ resource list available. Your student may not be aware of the many services that exist for LGBTQ youth.

Adapted from: 1Project 10 Handbook: Addressing Lesbian and Gay Issues in Our Schools, 1989, Virginia Uribe, Fairfax High School, 7850 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90046. 2Anthony F. Rotatori ed. Advances in Special Education: Counseling Special Populations. New York: JAI Press, 1995.

COMING OUT: FOR FAMILIES

Don't rush the process of trying to understand your child's sexuality and/or gender identity. Do take the time to seek information about the lives of queer and trans people from other parents of gays, friends of your LGBTQ child, literature, and most of all, from your own child.

Don't criticize your child for being different. Do listen to what your child's life is like and what kind of experiences they have had in the world.

Don't blame your own feelings on your child. Do accept that you are responsible for negative reactions.

Don't expect your child to make up for your own failures in life. Do help your child to set their individual goals, even though these may differ drastically from your own.

Don't try to force your child to conform to your ideas of proper sexual behavior or gender identity. Do try to develop trust and openness by allowing your child to make their own decisions.

Don't blame yourself that your child is LG-BTQ. Do be proud of your child's capacity to have loving relationships.

Don't respond to anger with anger. Do look for the injured feelings under the anger and respond to them.

Don't discriminate against your own child. Do defend them against discrimination.

Don't demand that your child live up to your idea of what a person should be. Do allow your child to develop their own personality.

Don't try to break up their loving relationships. Do respect your child's right to find out how to choose the right person to love and how to make relationships last.

Don't insist that your morality is the only right one. Do say, "I love you."

Don't assume that your child should see a professional psychotherapist. Do get professional help for anyone in the family, including yourself, who becomes severely depressed over your child's sexuality or gender identity.

Adapted from: Tackling Gay Issues in Schools: GLSEN CT & Planned Parenthood of CT, Ed. Leif Mitchell, 1999.



COMING OUT: YOUTH OF COLOR

As a diverse group of people that regularly battles prejudice, violence, and ignorance from governments, hate groups, and the like, LGBTQ people know what it's like to be discriminated against. That's why the community tends to pride itself on being anti-discriminatory and accepting of people from all walks of life. Unfortunately, the LGBTQ community is not devoid of both overt and casual racism.

Even though, in theory, people should know better, certain forms of racism in the LGBTQ community have become so normalized that they get brushed off as minor. Racism, in an institutional sense, is a race-based form of discrimination from a position of power or privilege. This means that a gay person with white privilege can be racist toward gay people of color and people of color in general.

These instances of racism can seem like “little” things, such as the fetishization of black men by gay white men, the stigmatization of Asian men by gay men of other races, mainstream LGBTQ campaigns with little racial awareness, and racial “preferences” that reflects an underlying prejudice.

As normalized as they are, this racism is destructive for LGBTQ people of color who are not well represented in either their own racial communities or the mainstream LGBTQ community. The lack of acceptance from either group puts a strain on how safe LGBTQ people of color feel in many spaces. So if you're white and LGBTQ and you want to make sure that LGBTQ spaces and LGBTQ student groups are as safe and inclusive for everyone as possible. Here are some steps you can take to support people of color and be more aware.

1. Be Aware of Intersectionality

Be aware that the experience of being LGBTQ and white is not representative of being lesbian and Asian or gay and Latin@ or queer and black.

Awareness of intersectionality means recognizing that LGBTQ people of color can be discriminated against not just as people of color or as LGBTQ people, but as both simultaneously.

For example, if you're a gay white woman and you're already aware of how your gender and sexuality intersect, remember that race is yet another intersection, and not a negligible one. In most cases race is highly visible, apparent from birth, and con-

2. Don't Think That Being LGBTQ Means You Can't Be Racist

Keep intersectionality in mind, understand that just because you've faced discrimination doesn't mean you understand every form of discrimination or are immune from being discriminatory yourself. Everyone has some form of privilege, and acknowledging your privilege when it comes to race means acknowledging the unconscious ways in which you can also be racist.

If a person who has directly experienced racism is telling you that you're being racially oblivious and you dismiss everything they say because "I've been discriminated against too," you're devaluing the experiences of people of color just as much as the institutions that continue to exclude them. When LGBTQ people of color call out other people in the community for being racist, they don't want you to tear yourself apart with white guilt. What they want you to do is check yourself, listen to what they have to say, and be more aware of experiences besides your own.

Seeing racism in the LGBTQ community isn't about demonizing white people or making people paranoid about causing offense. It's about making sure we're all self-aware enough to check our cultural blind spots and to truly listen to and value other people's experiences.

3. Know Overt and Casual Racism When You See It

What does casual racism look like in LGBTQ spaces? A lot like casual racism everywhere else. Just about every other common racial stereotype under the sun are examples of casual racism. Stereotypes fuel racism in all its forms. Casual racism also says that LGBTQ people have transcended all responsibility for dealing with racial issues.

For example, if you're a queer person of color who wants to vocalize a racial concern in a predominantly white queer space and racism rears its head, you could be accused of being divisive or overly sensitive. Sometimes racism masquerades as inclusion or open mindedness. For example, there are gay people who go out of their way to date someone of another race just to say they've done it. Dating someone because of their race is as ridiculous as rejecting someone because of their race. The same applies to predominately white gay groups that tokenize people of color. Tokenism may seem progressive, but it's just another form of othering.

When you see casual racism, remember it, talk about it. Notice if you're ever guilty of it and take responsibility for it. Take the race related concerns of LGBTQ people of color seriously – as in listen and learn.

Adapted from Jarune Uwujaren's article: <http://everydayfeminism.com/2013/02/how-white-queers-can-be-more-inclusive-of-queer-poc/>

COMING OUT: TRANSGENDER OR GENDER NON-CONFORMING YOUTH

This section was written for transgender youth by transgender youth.

We have been in some of the same situations as you, and we are here to help you in every way that we can. Being transgender and having to go through so many steps to make your body match your mind, especially when your parents are unsupportive, can be overwhelming and depressing. Many parents of transgender youth start out being not-so-supportive, and even the few that are accepting often do not know where to look for information to help their children transition.

If you are not yet 'out' to your parents – meaning you have not told them that you are transgender – then coming out is likely on your mind most days. Coming out can be scary, because you can never know for sure how your parents will react or if they will understand the way you feel. It doesn't have to be scary, though. Coming out can be made a lot easier when you have a friend on your side who supports you, or when you come out to your parents in a letter rather than in person. The one thing we can promise you about coming out is that you will feel so much better when you do. Maybe not at first, but in the long run, coming out will make your life so much easier.

"I never actually came out to my parents. I came out to a close family friend of ours first – he was gay, so I knew he would accept me. I sent him an email and told him that I have always felt like a girl inside, and that I want to get surgery and everything so I can be a normal girl. He told me that he completely supported me, and that I shouldn't be scared of coming out to my parents because they had always suspected I might be transgender since I was really little.

"Later, my mom read the email when I left my computer out, and she told me that she knew all along that I might be transgender, because I used to tell her when I was little that I was supposed to be a girl, her daughter. She didn't know very much about transgender youth back then, but she promised to accept me and help me as much as she could. That was two years ago.

"Now I have been on puberty blockers and hormones for more than a year, I am having surgery in less than a year, and I finally am the girl I have always needed to be."

- a 16-year-old transgender girl

Coming out experiences vary greatly. Some parents will be encouraging from the start, like the parents of this 16 year old. They may have suspected all along that their son or daughter was gay or transgender, and gotten used to the idea over time. Other parents may be completely shocked. They could react with anger, sadness, fear, or any mix of these emotions. It is completely normal for parents not to be supportive of their child's transition at first. Many parents go through what is called a "grieving process"; they feel they have lost their son or daughter because their child wants to transition to the other gender. In reality, their child is the same child they have had all along. Some parents take a long time to understand this.

If your parents are not totally on-board with your transition at first, there are a few things you can do to help them understand. First, ask them to read about transgender youth. Books like "The Transgender Child" can be extremely helpful for parents who don't know very much about transgender youth. You can also refer them to websites and organizations that can provide them with more knowledge as well as support from other parents in the same situation.

- The Trans Youth Equality Foundation (www.transyouthequality.org)
- TransActive (www.transactiveonline.org)
- Transitioning Families (www.transitioningfamilies.org)

Locally in the Twin Cities there are several Trans Youth serving organizations:

- Trans Youth Support Network (www.transyouthsupportnetwork.org)
- Reclaim! (www.reclaim-lgbtyouth.org)
- SOY: Shades of Yellow (www.shadesofyellow.org)
- Out for Equity also runs a Trans Youth Support Group once a week.

Ask your parents or guardians to get you a therapist as well, preferably a therapist who specializes in transgender issues and has experience working with transgender youth. Finally, there are many support groups for transgender youth and their parents across the country. If you can find one in your area, encourage your parents to go with you. You would be amazed to see some of the changes that happen in parents when they are able to discuss their concerns and fears with people who are going through the same thing.

We want your coming out experience to be as positive as possible. It's always smart to reach out! Take good care of yourself by knowing when to reach out to adults who can support you!

Adapted from: [/www.transyouthequality.org/coming_out.html](http://www.transyouthequality.org/coming_out.html)

TROIDEN'S *MODEL OF IDENTITY FORMATION*

Coming out is an interactive, ongoing process through which lesbian, gay and queer people recognize their sexual orientation and choose to integrate this knowledge into their personal and social lives. Troiden's four-stage model helps us to understand this process; however, the stages are not fixed and development may be affected by factors like race, class, gender & ethnicity.

sensitization

Prior to puberty, the child feels different from same-sex peers. This difference is usually not perceived as homosexuality until puberty. Many lesbian, gay and queer adults can recall feeling different as early as age four.

identity formation

This stage often occurs during adolescence. Young people begin to sense their "difference" is sexual. They experience both homosexual and heterosexual desire, perceiving a need to choose either between or some variation of both of them. Young people know that they will be stigmatized as homosexuals and may feel guilt, shame, loneliness and an intense need for secrecy. If they have information about homosexuality it is often derogatory and/or distorted.

RESPONSES TO IDENTITY CONFUSION

Denial of homosexual or queer feelings, fantasies, and behavior

Repair person may attempt to change their sexual orientation

Avoidance involves six strategies:

- Try to pay a lot of attention to the opposite sex
- Limit exposure to opposite sex so family and friends don't notice lack of interest
- Avoid learning anything about homosexuality

- Be actively homophobic; go "queer-bashing";
- Engage in heterosexual dating, promiscuous and unprotected sex with opposite sex partner;
- Escape self through drugs and alcohol

Redefinition view homosexuality as "just a phase."

Acceptance of orientation.

identity assumption

Often occurs during or after late adolescence. Person defines self as gay, lesbian or queer and presents self as gay, lesbian or queer to other LGBTQ people. Quality contact with other LGBTQ people facilitates positive identity formation.

Role models provide

- Strategies for dealing with heterosexism and homophobia
- Legitimization of gay, lesbian or queer identity and orientation
- Range of identities and roles in LGBTQ communities
- Norms of behavior for LGBTQ communities

commitment

The gay, lesbian or queer person incorporates sexual identity into all aspects of their life. The person experiences integration of emotionality and sexuality, and sees self as valuable and worthy of openness.

*Adapted from: Richard Troiden, "The Formation of Homosexual Identities." The Journal of Homosexuality. 17 (1,2): 43-74. 1989.

DEVINE'S *FAMILY SYSTEMS*

Like adolescents who go through a process of coming out, parents of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer children also undergo a multistage process that is often lengthy and, for some parents who are never able to accept their child's sexuality, unachievable. However, all parents go through some process of adaptation.

Stage 1 - Subliminal Awareness

Family suspects that child is LGBTQ.

Stage 2 - Impact

Family learns that child is in fact LGBTQ. A crisis may result.

Stage 3 - Adjustment

Child is urged to change or keep their sexual orientation or gender identity a secret.

Stage 4 - Resolution

Family mourns loss of perceived heterosexual &/or cisgender child and begins to unlearn prejudices against homosexuality and transsexuality.

Stage 5 - Integration

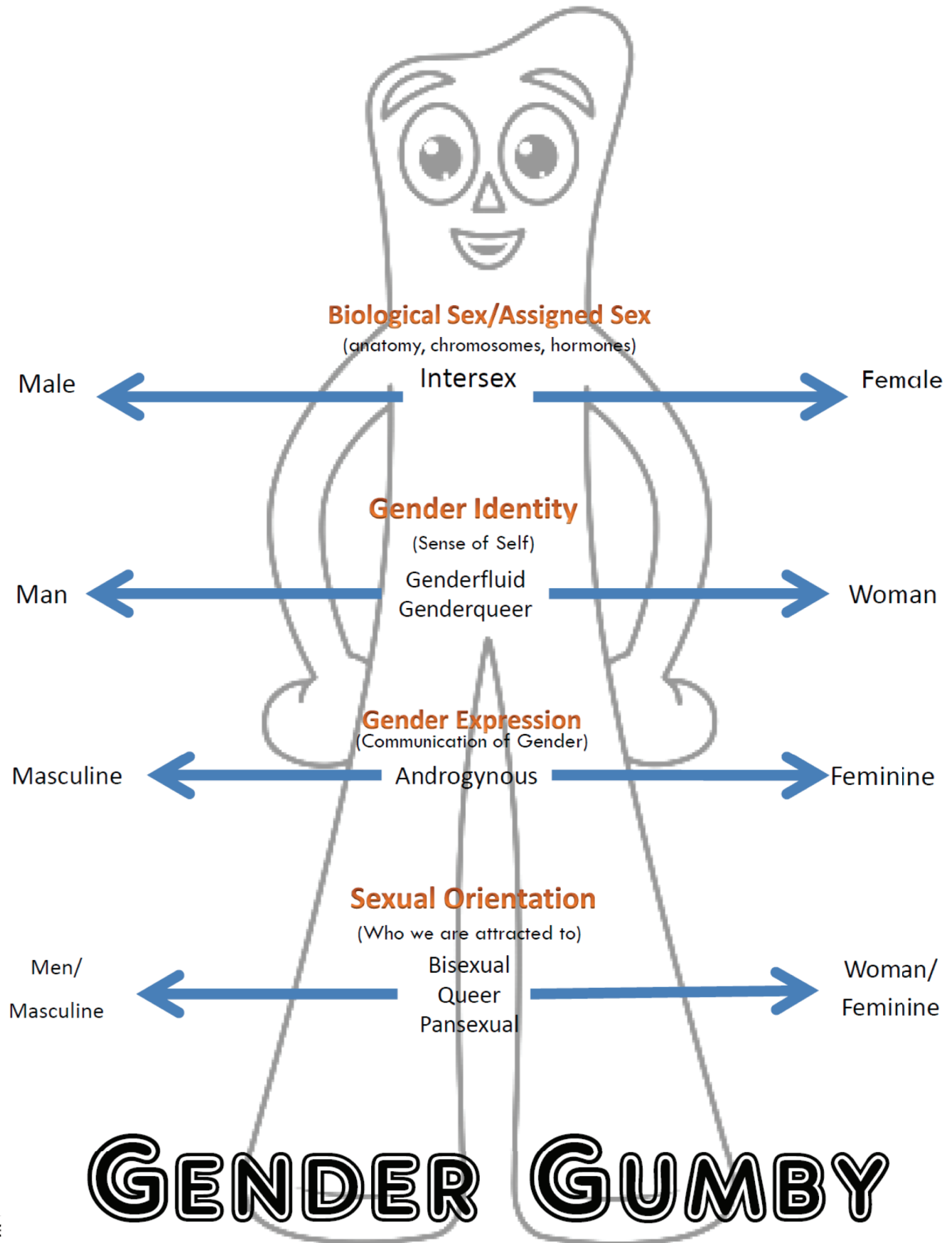
Child's gender identity/ sexual orientation is accepted and integrated into family in a positive way.

How the family moves through these stages is determined by family closeness, flexibility, and parenting themes.

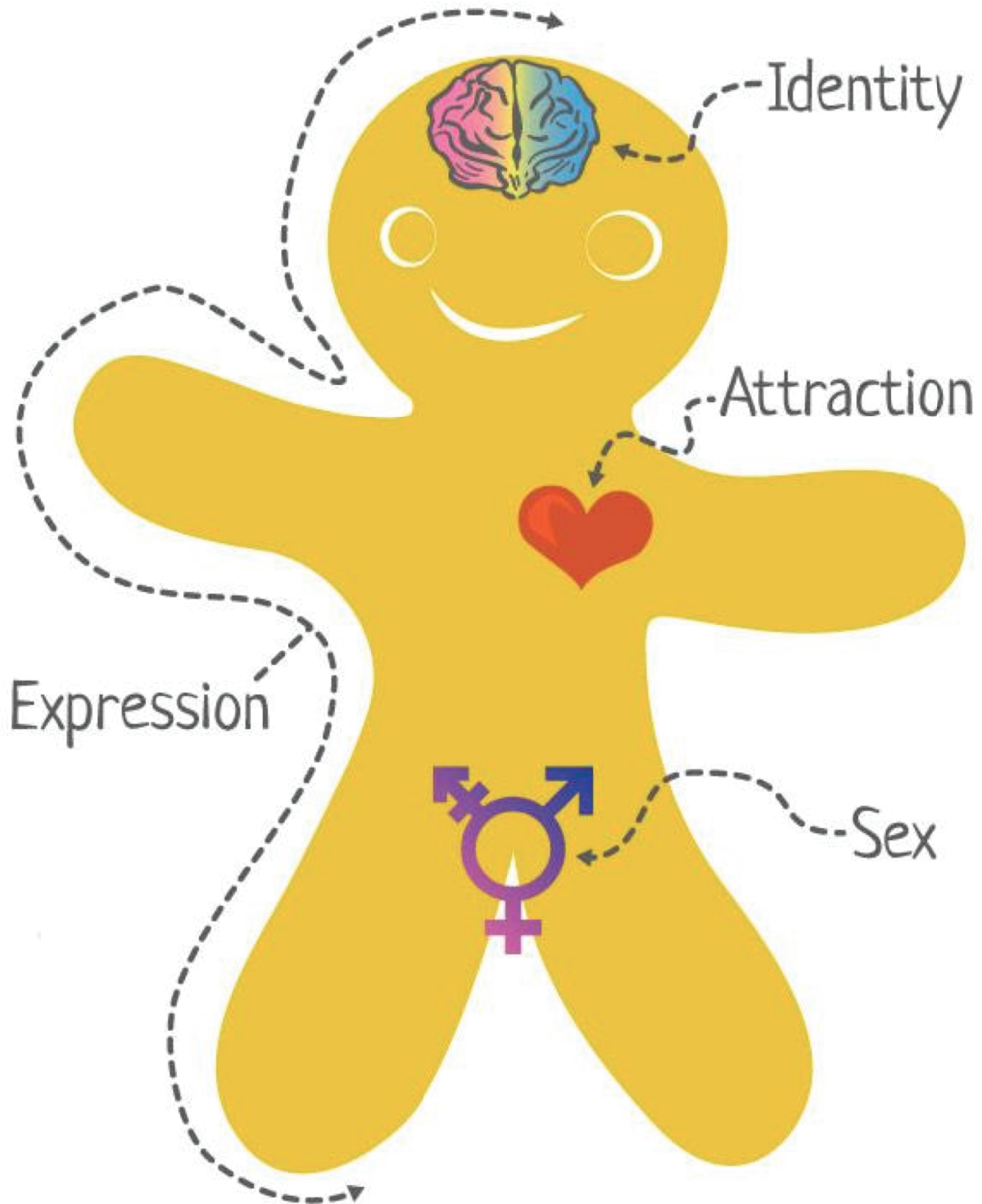
Parenting themes include:

- **Unconditional Love:** for child;
- **Conventionality:** reject child for not conforming to social norms;
- **Respectability:** need to look good at any cost;
- **Blaming:** child is a problem and needs to be fixed;
- **Religious:** child is rejected on the basis of religious doctrine;
- **Gender Rigidity:** parent doesn't believe that homosexuality or transsexuality is real.

WHERE DO YOU LIE ON THE SPECTRUM?



THE GINGERBREAD PERSON



TELLING STORIES

Here are a few writings that reflect the diversity within the LGBTQ community. They also speak to how discrimination against sexuality and gender identity intersects with other forms of discriminations. A person's sexuality or gender identity is only a part of their identity, just as homophobia and transphobia are only two of the many forms of oppression that still exist.

Coming Out Story

In Fourth grade I was in the room sitting there working until my friends name Jose came and said, "Do you know what gay is?" At first thought, it was happy then again I think it was something stupid that he wanted to test me, I didn't care what he said. I ignored him, next thing you know he came and said the same thing. I gave him the answer. " Yes! It's when a boy likes a boy or a guy whatever, something like that now LEAVE ME ALONE!" Everyone looked at us like some fight was going. I sent out to the room for doing that, I was scared. Then Ms.Boyed (teacher) came and started to talk to me. She asks if there is a problem going on with Jose and me. I replied no there wasn't. We went back to class and the students were staring at me like I was a piece of meat that they never tasted before. It's like making out with the box but taste different. I have a girl and her name was Crystal. She was the girl that I tell about myself but I never mention that I like guys. She came up and said something about the days will overcome your gayness around other people. (Which happens today) Jose came back on Friday and he apologize what he has done to me. I accepted and everything went well till 5th grade started.

Fifth grade was my worst year I've been through. My life story is about when I was little. Every time I go to a school, people just make fun of me like it's nothing but funny. When they tease people, they feel ashamed what they did to me. Life was hard for me but I lived through. I did so many bad things in life that I could regret, but there is no turning back in life. See how things aren't like the things in the cartoon. Fighting, killing, but still alive just like the emo's. I can't make anything else happen in my life accept school and work. How can all this become my problem?

I hate this; seems like a room of darkness overcoming your light. No one could save you in a lifetime. Shouldn't take this long for a person to see you that you are in the room full of darkness. Let me ask you this, Could you make anything else to make you a better person in life. Here is my life story about me out of all the years I had. On the beginning of the year like the first day of school, I walked in to see what or who's in my classroom. I found that Crystal was there and Jose went to California to stay with his grandpa. I was going to miss him but, I didn't, which is sad but I'll be all right. The bell rang and other students came from the door and sat at the seats. At that time I looked at everyone to see what I know before I talk to them. I see this boy sagging his pants so, I was thinking, "No, I am not going to talk to him". Then, the three cute white guys came and sat down next to me, which was weird. (Don't ask why). I was looking at them and they seem nice but the

weird part is that they touch each other too much. I thought they were gay but I found out that two of them have a girlfriend, so I didn't bother them including the dude with out the girlfriend. (Man I could travel back in time to face my fears even though I'm through with them.) There was a lot of guys that are touchy or being themselves. Then the guy that was sagging was talking to me. I was thinking in my head like, "Are you even going to talk with those other guys? Why me?" (When you feel like you don't want to talk to them but they talk to you, but wouldn't happen. I really hated him for doing that. Wondering why I hate him? I think, well I hate him because he is those types of guys that play with girls so I didn't want to be his friend. Instead (I went to the flow.) I couldn't stand him and it was like a week already. Then I stop and look at him very closely to see what he is trying to do. I notice that he was trying to make friends. I couldn't think of anyway better to be his friend. Me and my friend which is Vue, he was the best guy friend I could ever get from any other guys that are my friends with. I was very impress when his dad and my dad knew each other. I was like OH MY GOD! I just grab the keys and went to the car waited for my dad to come. (I kinda hate Vue at that time, so basically I still hate Vue). I never told him that I hated him and at the same time I like him. My first guy friend is my first crush. I was very impressed how like him even though I hated him. After that day my dad told that no one will be home and (that was so true.) No one was home and all the neighbors had no cars and the garage was open as well so I was thinking that I should go to the park. So I just went to the park and waited. I hear someone was walking like something was going to happen. Next thing you know Vue was standing there like a creeper. He told me that my dad and his dad went fishing so I was like (dang). So I was stuck with him through the whole day. I stayed at his house doing nothing until his Auntie came and told Vue that I have to do something. He gave an Xbox controller and we started to play "Halo Combat Evolved." He stops at the middle of game and went somewhere. Then I got up and ask the Auntie that could I use the bathroom. It was that path that Vue went. He went to the small hallway that is connected with 4 doors and 3 of them are bedroom. The bathroom was on the left were the two bedroom were across from each other. I went in and did my business and washed my hands and got out. When I got out of the bathroom and the carpet was not on the floor flat and that because the door pushed that carpet up. Then I saw the door open to my right side and I trip and Vue was trying to push me up instead he fell with me. I was laying on top on him and our lips were touching each other. I was like "OH MY GOD! I KISSED HIM." I got up and walked to the couch and sat there and told that he could play without me. I could feel that my cheek was going to be hot pink as in like a something hit me with a bow heart arrow. I wouldn't think that I would able to kiss him like that. When his aunt left to buy things at the store. He ask me why did I do that for? I replied that I didn't mean to do it, I just trip and that carpet was bad so you know. He remained silent. That was my first kiss as well so I was not really expecting that. I was making my way through the hard things like are we are going to talk again. Even though I still hate him but, something happened soon that day. Many things did happen I should

say. It's like a luck charm. When I came home my dad caught a big fish that is 9-inch fish. I don't even know the name of that fish but I think it was a catfish? That's when I got home and he told me that story. I couldn't make anything about it. I was too busy thinking on the kiss that I had. When the time comes I'll tell him.

Chapter two

It was 6th grade and many things happen like new students are being worse than us and how many people from last year. I got a feeling that me and Vue will not be close then before. I couldn't help it so, I tried my best not to ignore him but he still ignore me. I was like you know what is this? I didn't care or do whatsoever I just made everything hard to myself. He could see that I was struggling but, I wouldn't bother him, then one day he came up to me and said "There is a time when I won't be able to be with you" I just frown and walked away. At that time I don't want to look at him or be near him. I just got stress out and things.

When it was middle school a lot of people knew that I was gay, many of them was surprise about it. It wasn't stressful as it is but I made it through. My mom kept asking me if I was gay. I kept saying no because she is really religious. So I was scared that she might kick me out or something. I wasn't sure if it was that right time or not but I got to what I got to do. I didn't have much friends and I'm always quiet. In the middle of the school year I heard there was a LGBT group. I never like never informed that it was in the beginning of the year. So maybe I was thinking that I was slow or that the information is not right. I didn't go because I thought people were just nice to me when I was nice to them.

Right now I'm 15 and I told my mom and dad. How well we was sitting at the table and eating. I said to my mom that I like guys. My dad didn't hear because he was listening to those Hmong Thai stories. My mom just looked at, nothing was surprising on that. I started to cry and my dad saw me. "Why are you crying?" he said, my heart pounded and I just ran downstairs to stop myself from crying. It took me 30 min to stop crying. The reason why I cry is because I was scared that they might do something to me. The next few days my dad ask me why did I cry few days ago. Tears came down again, and wonder if this pain goes away. My dad took me to his car and went to the store to buy stuff and he bought me a 3Ds (which I didn't want) I wouldn't think that is will come out but it did. I just said it like nothing was going to happen, but I think too much. My dad didn't say anything in the car or when we got in the house. From there I was telling my 3 sisters and my 2 brothers. They support me and I really don't have a connection to them but they love me who I am. Since then my dad hasn't talk to me. I'm mostly quiet at home and very lonely. This is my coming out story :')



Creating Change

personal capacity

- » Riddle's Attitudes Towards Difference Survey

interpersonal capacity

- » Qualities of the LGBTQ Ally
- » Action Steps for Being a Trans Ally
- » Understanding Harassment
- » A Student's Guide to Surviving Anti-Gay (LGBTQ) Harassment and Physical or Sexual Assault

institutional capacity

- » Responding to Homophobic/Transphobic Slurs in the Classroom
- » How Staff Can Help End Homophobia/Transphobia in Schools
- » Building Safe Space at an Institutional Level

personal capacity

Examine Your Beliefs

Before you can make change in an institution, you need to examine your own prejudices, acknowledge them, and be vigilant about how they affect your behavior. Dorothy Riddle's Attitudes Toward Difference Survey can be helpful in beginning to examine your personal feelings about LGBTQ issues.

interpersonal capacity

Examine Your Behavior

Once personal attitudes are acknowledged, building safe space requires work on the interpersonal level. Preconceived, ingrained notions can be difficult to change. It is far easier to change one's own behavior. Interpersonally you can build safe space by refraining from disrespectful behavior and being proactive bystanders.

When witnessing disrespectful behavior, instinctively you use a series of internal filter questions to decide whether or not it is time to intervene. Oftentimes these questions prevent educators from responding in a timely fashion. When this happens the disrespectful behavior goes unaddressed, giving it permission to continue.

This section will provide practical suggestions that will help you make informed age-appropriate responses to disrespectful behavior.

institutional capacity

Examine Your School

Once staff, students, and families have examined their personal and interpersonal capacities, they can work together to change their school environment. Institution change requires organized assessment, strategic planning, and specific actions with measurable outcomes.

RIDDLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIFFERENCE SURVEY

Dorothy Riddle, a psychologist from Tucson, Arizona, did groundbreaking research on people's attitudes toward differences. She categorized person's attitudes toward differences using a seven-stage continuum of positive and negative responses. The following is a revised quiz from the GLSEN Lunchbox.

Directions: Put a check next to each statement with which you agree. Bracket the 2-3 consecutive statements that most accurately reflect your current range of thinking about lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and transgender LGBTQ people.

- 1. Homosexuality is unnatural and immoral. LGBTQ people are emotionally or psychologically ill.
- 2. LGBTQ people should participate in reparative therapy or any other treatment available to help them change their sexual orientation &/or gender identity.
- 3. We should have compassion for LGBTQ people. They can't be blamed for how they were born.
- 4. LGBTQ people didn't choose to be the way they are. If they could somehow become heterosexual or identify with their gender assigned at birth, they would surely do so.
- 5. Homosexuality &/or cross-dressing is a phase that many people go through and most grow out of.
- 6. LGBTQ people need our support and guidance as they wrestle with the many difficult issues associated with their identities.
- 7. I have no problem with LGBTQ people, but see no need for them to flaunt their sexual orientation &/or gender differences publicly.
- 8. What LGBTQ people do in the privacy of their own bedroom or what their gender assigned at birth may be is their business.
- 9. LGBTQ people deserve the same rights and privileges as everybody else.
- 10. Homophobia and Transphobia is wrong. Society needs to take a stand against anti-gay bias.
- 11. It takes strength and courage for LGBTQ people to be themselves in today's world.
- 12. It is important for me to examine my own attitudes so that I can actively support the struggle for equality that LGBTQ people have undertaken.
- 13. There is great value in our human diversity. LGBTQ people are an important part of that diversity.
- 14. It is important for me to stand up to those who demonstrate Homophobic &/or Transphobic attitudes.
- 15. LGBTQ people are an indispensable part of our society. They have contributed much to our world and there is much to be learned from their experiences.
- 16. I would be proud to be part of an LGBTQ organization, and to openly advocate for the full and equal inclusion of LGBTQ people at all levels of our society.

SCORING GUIDE

Find the numbers below that correspond to the bracketed range on your survey. Read the attitude and characteristics that encompass this range. According to the Riddle Scale, this is where you stand with regard to LGBTQ people.

RANGE	ATTITUDE	CHARACTERISTICS
1 – 2	Repulsion	LGBTQ people are strange, sick, crazy & aversive.
3 – 4	Pity	LGBTQ people are born that way and it's pitiful.
5 – 6	Tolerance	Homosexuality and transexuality are just a phase of development that most people grow out of.
7 – 8	Acceptance	We need to make accommodations for LGBTQ people's differences; an LGBTQ identity doesn't have the same value as a heterosexual one.
9 – 10	Support	The rights of LGBTQ people should be protected and safeguarded.
11 – 12	Admiration	Being LGBTQ in our society takes strength.
13 – 14	Appreciation	There is value in diversity. Homophobic and transphobic attitudes should be confronted.
15 – 16	Nurturance	LGBTQ people are an indispensable part of our society.

YOUR RATING

- 1 - 4 Your personal feelings may prevent you from being inclusive of all students.
- 5 - 8 You are somewhat accepting but aren't in a place of support for all students.
- 9 - 12 You are ready to provide support and affirmation for all students.
- 13 - 16 You are able to appreciate and embrace all students.

QUALITIES OF AN LGBTQ ALLY

An ally to GLBT individuals is a person who...

- Believes that it is in their best interest to be an ally to LGBTQ individuals.
- Has worked to develop an understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer issues; is comfortable with their knowledge of gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Is comfortable saying the words, “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” “transgender” and queer.
- Understands how patterns of oppression operate and is willing to identify oppressive acts and challenge the oppressive behaviors of others.
- Works to be an ally to ALL oppressed groups.
- Is quick to take pride in and appreciate successes in combatting homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia and cissupremacy.
- Comes “out of the closet” with their pride and support.
- Chooses to align with LGBTQ individuals and represents their needs, especially when they are unable to do so themselves.
- Expects to make some mistakes and does not use feelings of guilt to become an ineffective ally.
- Promotes a sense of community with LGBTQ individuals and teaches others about the importance of these communities; encourages others to also provide advocacy.
- Is not afraid to be called the same names and to be harassed in the same ways as those whom they are defending.
- Is able to address/confront individuals without being defensive, sarcastic or threatening.

Ally - (verb) -lied, -lying

1: to unite or form a connection between: ASSOCIATE

2: to connect or form a relation between (as by likeness or compatibility):
RELATE

(noun) pl - lies

1: one allied with another: SUPPORTER

ACTION STEPS FOR BEING A TRANS ALLY

“Transgender” encompasses many different gender presentations and identities, from Male-to-Female & Female-to-Male to Femme Queen, Boi, Transfag, Female-born man, Transwoman, Tomboy, Butch, Crossdresser, Male who was Assigned Female at Birth, Female who was Assigned Male at Birth and many more. Many people who may not identify as “transgender” still face discrimination based on their gender expression and for not conforming to traditional gender presentations.

Don’t make assumptions about a trans person’s sexual orientation.

Gender identity is different than sexual orientation. Being gay doesn’t mean you’re trans and being trans doesn’t mean you’re gay. Sexual orientation is about who you’re attracted to. Gender identity is about how you see yourself. Trans people can identify as gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual, queer, asexual, etc.

If you don’t know what pronouns to use, ask, politely and respectfully.

Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so also.

Confidentiality, Disclosure and “Outing.”

Some trans people “pass” and some do not. Knowing a trans person’s status is personal information and up to them to share with others. Trans people can face real danger, violence and sometimes murder when others reveal their trans status. Others routinely lose housing, jobs and friends. Do not casually share this information, or “gossip” about a person you know or think is trans.

Don’t assume what path a trans person is on regarding surgery or hormones.

Affirm the many ways people can and do transcend gender boundaries, including the choices some make to use medical technology to change their bodies. Some trans people wish to be recognized as their gender of choice without surgery or hormones; some need support and advocacy to get respectful medical care, hormones and/or surgery.

Don’t police public restrooms.

Recognize that gender variant people may not match your expectations or the little signs on the restroom door! Encourage businesses and agencies to have unisex bathrooms and be understanding and accommodating if a trans person is feeling unsafe in the bathrooms.

Don’t just add the “T” without doing work.

“LGBTQ” is now commonplace to show support for queerness. To be an ally for Transpeople, Gays, Lesbians, Bisexual and Queer people need to examine their own gender stereotypes, transphobia and be willing to defend trans people and celebrate trans lives.

Listen to trans voices.

The best way to be an ally is to listen to trans people themselves. Check out the sites and books below. Talk to trans folks in your community; they are the experts on their own lives!

UNDERSTANDING HARASSMENT

What is sexual/gender orientation harassment?

Sexual orientation harassment is a form of discrimination committed on the basis of one's sexuality; including harrassing someone based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Examples include:

- Verbal or physical violence, threats and intimidation;
- Derogatory comments, name-calling, jokes and stereotyping;
- Harassing letters or phone calls;
- Threats of "outing" (alleging or disclosing that someone is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer without his/her permission);
- Sexual remarks or suggestions;
- Repeated belittling, demeaning, insulting remarks on the basis of a person's gender identity or sexual orientation;
- Sabotaging an employee or student's character, reputation, work efforts, or property because of perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

Dealing with sexual/gender orientation harassment:

- No one should have to tolerate harassment. As an educator, you have the right to speak up and tell the person that you find a statement or behavior harassing or offensive. Tell the person you expect the behavior to stop immediately.
- Keep records of what happened and when it happened. Document in writing or on tape, or tell a friend in confidence, the names, dates, places, times, witnesses, the nature of the harassment. and how it affected you. Save any letters, cards, or notes in a secure place.
- In the case of employee harassment, report the incident to your supervisor or the other employee's supervisor. In the case of a student, report the behavior to the student's principal or assistant principal.
- Board of Education policy prohibits retaliation of any kind against any person who, in good faith, brings a complaint under these procedures. You may also report harassment to the Human Resource Department (in the case of harassment by an employee) or to the Office of Student Human Rights (in the case of harassment by a student).

Right: You have a right to be free of sexual and gender orientation harassment at work and school.

Responsibility: You are responsible for your words and actions and may not harass anyone because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING ANTI-GAY (LGBTQ) HARASSMENT AND PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ASSAULT

The first thing is to get safe. You can:

- Tell the person to back off. (You can say something like, “Maybe you didn’t mean anything by it, but…” or, something more angry than educational, such as, “Stop! Get your hands off me!”) But **don’t escalate** the situation by calling the offender names or threatening them.
- Diffuse the situation, if it seems to be getting physical (“Never mind; let’s forget it.”), and go to a safe place.

Think about your possible choices:

- Is there a safe place nearby? Are there people close by who could help you?
- Is there more than one assailant? Does the assailant have a weapon? Could you use your voice and your body to protect yourself by yelling, running away, fighting back, or attracting someone’s attention?
- Sometimes people decide that not resisting is the best way to minimize physical injury or further danger.
- **However you respond, remember that the assault is not your fault.**

After you are safe:

- Talk with someone you trust, someone you feel safe and comfortable with.
- Tell an adult. Maybe there’s an adult at school whom you trust, a particular counselor or teacher, the nurse, the principal, a school security person, or whomever you trust most. If that doesn’t work, ask their supervisors for help or go to the school board.
- Maybe you feel you need to go outside the school for help, to a parent or guardian or a family friend. Whomever seems safest, do tell an adult. As understanding as a friend your own age may be, there are some times when only an adult can provide protection or legal advice.
- Write down everything that happened (who said and did what, the time and place, and who was involved, including witnesses).

Treat the assault seriously.

Even if other people minimize what happened by acting as if it doesn’t matter or by saying that it’s not “that bad,” physical and sexual assault are very serious. And verbal harassment can feel like torture. **You deserve to be safe.**

Understand that you may have many different kinds of reactions to the assault.

Sometimes people who are assaulted feel upset, angry, scared, ashamed, or hopeless. Other people don’t feel anything. **There is no “right” way to feel after an assault.**

The law may be able to help.

Sexually assaulting somebody or beating somebody up is a crime. In some states, so is attacking or threatening a person or damaging their property because of their sexual orientation, race, religion, gender, disabilities, etc. You have the right to report the attack to the police or Child Protective Services.

If you decide to call the police:

- Call as soon as possible after the incident. (You can make a report months or even years afterward, but it might be harder for the police to act on your case the longer you wait.) If the assault was sexual and you do report immediately, it's best not to shower or change your clothes so that you don't lose any physical evidence that might help the police.
- If anti-gay slurs were used in the course of the incident tell the police officer that the crime (or one of the crimes) you are reporting is "malicious harassment as defined by *RCW 9A.36.080*." Stress that the crime was motivated by hate based on perceived sexual orientation. **You don't have to say whether you are actually gay and you shouldn't be asked.**
- Describe in detail the hate or prejudice that was expressed and what caused you to fear harm. For example, "They called me 'faggot' and said they would 'kick my butt'." Or, "They asked me why 'dykes' liked other girls and said they would, 'teach me to like boys'." If you have any physical pain, make sure it is written down in the police report. Get the incident number from the officer and ask how to get a copy of the police report. Get the officer's name and badge number.

If that doesn't work or you are scared to try those things, you are still not alone. Community agencies may be able to help.

- You can call a local crisis line for information and support.
- To talk with a counselor who knows about gay issues:
 - » The Trevor Helpline, a national 24-hour confidential hotline, staffed by trained counselors familiar with gay, lesbian, bi, trans and questioning youth. Web site: www.thetrevorproject.org/. Phone: 1-866-4-U-TREVOR (1-866-488-7386).
 - » Safe Schools Hotline: Information, referral and advocacy for students, families and educators struggling with anti-LGBTQ bullying, harassment or violence in a public or private elementary, middle or high school. The hotline is run by a Sexual Assault Resource Center and an intervention specialist from Safe Schools will call you back within 24-hours. Phone: 1-877-SAFE-SAFE (1-877-723-3723); Email, 7 days/week: intervention@safeschoolscoalition.org
- There are support groups for LGBTQ youth in some communities & schools. And for teens who are being harassed because somebody thinks they are gay, even if they are not.
- A local sexual assault center can help. Most sexual assault centers have 24-hour hotlines with trained, supportive staff that can answer questions and share information about your options. You don't have to give your name. Some sexual assault centers have legal advocates who can help you go to the police. And they usually help with sexual harassment as well as assault.
- For information about support in your area, see the Safe Schools web site: <http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/blackboard-organizations.html>

Some people also decide to:

- Contact the United States Department of Education’s Regional Office for Civil Rights.
Phone: 1-800-421-3481, TDD: 202-205-5166; Email: OCR@ED.Gov; Web: www.ed.gov/ocr
- Contact a lawyer about bringing a “civil suit” against the offenders:
 - » Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund (212-809-8585 or lambdalegal@lambdalegal.org)
 - » American Civil Liberties Union (212-549-2585 or find your local chapter: <http://www.aclu.org/community/community.html>)
 - » Youth Legal Information Line at the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Staffed (Pacific Standard Time): Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. [noon-8, Eastern] Web site: www.nclrights.org Phone: 1-800-528-3257

In the end, your safety is what matters. Leaving is not the same as failing. Sometimes your only alternative may be transferring to a safer learning environment.

- It isn’t legal to just drop out if you are under the age of sixteen, and, besides, you deserve an education! So contact your school district if you need help making arrangements for a safer place to learn, a different school or home-schooling, a GED program, etc.

Remember, it is not your fault!

- If you were attacked “because” you were gay or lesbian or bi or trans or somebody thought you were, what caused the assault was their prejudice and hatred, not your sexuality.
- If you were attacked when you were in a dangerous place (like a party with no adults or a hitchhiking situation), it may be a good idea not to go there again, but that does not mean you are to blame. The offender is the only one to blame.
- If you are a guy and you think this kind of thing only happens to women, think again. Guys get beaten up and raped, too. Sometimes the offenders are male; sometimes, they are female. Either way, it does not mean you are any less.
- If you were attacked and decided not to fight back, that is not the same as consent. That may have been the smart – or only – thing to do. It does not mean you “wanted” it and it does not make the attack your fault.

The bottom line is...

You deserve to be able to be yourself, without having to face verbal or physical violence...and to be able to get an education without having to lie about being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer or about having gay friends or family members or about believing in civil rights for gay people. And no matter how alone you may sometimes feel, you deserve help and support.

RESPONDING TO HOMOPHOBIC/TRANSPHOBIC SLURS IN THE CLASSROOM

Homophobic and transphobic slurs are commonplace on school campuses. Adults can play a critical role in curtailing the use of such slurs and ensuring a healthy and safe school climate. Although we might hear it or see it, we don't always know how to address the slurs, such as "faggot," "dyke," "he/she," "it" or "that's so gay." This uncertainty can keep us from doing anything, which sends the message to students that it is okay to use such hurtful and damaging language in school.



- **Be sure school/classroom rules & an anti-slur policy are posted & reviewed with students.** Work with colleagues to identify & support enforcement of school wide expectations
- **Post “Safe Space” posters and/or stickers in classrooms and hallways; also available from Out for Equity.**
- **Immediately intervene to stop the slurs:**
 - » **Use a “matter of fact” tone.** *“Excuse me, that language is unacceptable and it's against our school rules.”* Call it *homophobia/transphobia*; define them. Explain that homophobia/transphobia is the hatred or fear of LGBTQ people
 - » **Clearly explain why you are calling the incident homophobic/transphobic.** Occasionally students don't realize the prejudice in what they are saying. Take a few moments to explain what they are saying is name-calling. “Telling someone that they are ‘so gay’ is offensive. Although you might mean ‘stupid’, you're actually saying stupid & gay are the same. It's not OK to put down gay people. And, it's not OK to call someone stupid.”
 - » **Teachable moment:** Ask the student if they know why the the term is considered offensive. If students understand where the word comes from, or the history of why it is hurtful, it can often help avert further offenses. “The word ‘faggot’ actually means a bundle of sticks used for creating a fire. The term originates as far back as the 15th century, when gay men were forced to collect wood for witch-burning fires during the Spanish Inquisition — and their own bodies were used as fuel when the flames died out.”
 - » **Intervene in gender-based stereotypes.** Gender stereotypes are simplistic notions held by individuals or groups that expect males and females to fall into predictable roles. Hearing somebody refer to a group of boys as “girls” or calling a boy a “sissy” should be addressed as bullying behavior.
 - » **Impose immediate consequences** for the student who was using the slurs.
 - » **Follow up privately.** Check in with the student who was called a name to make sure they are OK, and to let the student know that you care. Follow up with the student who used the hurtful language. Often times, students who bully are in need of positive role models.

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR CLASSROOMS

Seven ways you can address Homophobic/Transphobic slurs at your school:



1. Let the student know that you have LGBTQ friends or family and that you find what they said personally offensive. *“You know, I have good friends who are LGBTQ, so I find what you just said to be really offensive.”*
2. Tell the student why what they said was inappropriate. *“What you just said was really inappropriate because you are implying that there is something wrong with being LGBTQ when there isn’t.”*
3. Tell student to repeat what they said using more appropriate language. *“I need you to say that again without the hate language please.”*
4. Remind students that there is nothing wrong with being LGBTQ. *“If you don’t like it, you should use a different word.”*
5. Teach students more sophisticated words to substitute for “that’s so gay” or “that’s fruity.” You could teach just one word or several and have a poster on the wall to point to. Remind students that using slurs makes them look ignorant, while using more sophisticated terms will make them look smarter. Such words might include:

Lackluster, pedestrian, sophomoric, banal, asinine, facetious, etc.

When a student uses a phrase like “that’s gay,” have them restate it using one of the sophisticated words.

6. Make a list of slurs with your students that they commonly use and hear. Talk about why they are wrong and about what kind of people might use those terms. Keep this banned words list handy, on the wall, etc. to remind students not to use them.
7. Teach students the meaning of the word homophobic (irrational fear or hate of people who are LGBTQ), talk about the similarities between homophobia and racism, then remind them when they are being homophobic/transphobic.

HOW STAFF CAN HELP END HOMOPHOBIA/TRANSPHOBIA IN SCHOOLS

create a safe environment

The constant assumption of heterosexuality and gender normativity renders lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people invisible. Such invisibility is devastating to the individual's sense of self. Both the school as an institution and its professionals must be inclusive in their language and attitudes. By reminding themselves that LGBTQ people are found on every staff, in every classroom and on every team, faculty can “unlearn” heterosexism.

However, in far too many schools, physical and verbal harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people is the norm. Schools must make it clear that neither physical violence nor harassing language like “faggot” and “dyke” will be tolerated. Harassment policies must be publicized to the entire school community, ensuring that the consequences of, and procedures for, dealing with such behavior are clear to all.

provide support for students

Interrupt homophobic/transphobic jokes, comments, and behaviors. Challenge stereotypes and end invisibility. Don't assume someone who “looks gay” or “looks butch” is therefore LGBTQ. Don't assume “macho males” or “feminine females” are straight. Say the words—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer—every day, in a positive way. Wear an LGBTQ positive button. Be aware of LGBTQ resources—both at school and in the community.

provide training for faculty and staff

School staff needs to be equipped to serve all the students with whom they work, including LGBTQ students. Understanding the needs of LGBTQ youth, and developing skills to meet those needs, should be an expectation of all educators. Schools must provide the ongoing training necessary for the faculty to fulfill this expectation.

do not assume heterosexuality

The constant assumption of heterosexuality renders LGBTQ people, youth in particular, invisible. Such invisibility is devastating to the individual's sense of self. Both the school as an institution and its professionals as individuals must be inclusive in their language and attitudes. Inviting “wives or husbands” instead of “partners,” offering health care only to heterosexual families, and encouraging all students to find opposite sex dates are all *inappropriate* manifestations of heterosexism and cis-supremacy. By remembering that LGBTQ people are found on every staff, in every classroom, and on every team, faculty can “unlearn” heterosexism and cis-supremacy by using inclusive language.

provide role models

Studies consistently show that personal acquaintance with LGBTQ people is the most effective means for reducing homophobic/transphobic bigotry. Both LGBTQ and straight students benefit from having role models such as openly LGBTQ teachers, coaches, and administrators. Positive LGBTQ role models offer straight students an alternative to the inaccurate stereotypes with which they have been taught.

LGBTQ students get the chance (often for the first time) to see healthy LGBTQ adults, providing them hope for their own future. Schools need to create the environments necessary for LGBTQ faculty to feel safe in “coming out,” just as heterosexual faculty “come out” daily through such acts as wearing wedding rings and talking about their spouses.

reassess the curriculum

Teachers need to incorporate LGBTQ issues throughout their curriculum; not just in classes such as health education, but also in traditional disciplines such as English, history, and science. This can be done in three ways:

- First, incorporating new curriculum in fields such as gay history is easy, thanks to the proliferation

(reassess continued)

proliferation of such material in recent years.

- Second, teachers can address the impact of sexual identity on works by LGBTQ people already included in their curriculum, such as the novels of Virginia Woolf, the music of Tchaikovsky, or the poetry of Whitman.
- Finally, teachers can undo the “hidden heterosexism and cissupremacy” of the curriculum, such as the exclusive use of opposite-sex couples in math word problems. The bulk of the school day is spent in class; as long as LGBTQ issues are marginalized as “special” and outside the classroom, students will continue to see LGBTQ people as “marginal.”

provide appropriate care and education

While being gay is not a health issue (any more than being heterosexual is), health education on sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases should sensitively address the particular issues of LGBTQ people. Counselors and other health staff should be particularly careful to make their sensitivity to LGBTQ issues clear, as the history of psychiatric “cures” for homosexuality has led to a climate of distrust between many LGBTQ people and the health care profession.

diversify library and media holdings

Often, the library is the first place students turn for accurate sexuality information. And often, few or no works on LGBTQ issues are found there. Librarians and media specialists need to be sure their holdings are up to date and reflect the diversity of their schools. The existence of collections addressing LGBTQ issues needs to be communicated through such means as book displays that include LGBTQ titles.

broaden entertainment programs

Extracurricular activities often set the tone for the school community. Assemblies and other programs should regularly include LGBTQ content that reflects the diversity of our schools.

check all that apply

- ___ Sexual orientation/gender identity is included in our anti-discrimination policies for faculty/staff hiring.
- ___ Forms for parents/students accommodate a diversity of households & gender identities.
- ___ The faculty has received training on issues of sexual orientation & gender.
- ___ Our school has sponsored informative programming for families on issues of sexual orientation & gender.
- ___ Our school has a Gay/Straight Alliance or similar group for students.
- ___ There are openly LGBTQ students in the school.
- ___ There are openly LGBTQ teachers or staff in the school.
- ___ LGBTQ issues are addressed in curricula.

BUILDING SAFE SPACE AT AN INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Out for Equity has investigated key components to building safe space in schools. These include building relationships, finding connections, multiculturalism, and careful assessment.

Through research we qualitatively surmised several key components to a successful climate improvement program:

build relationships

Relationship building is essential to implementing a successful program. Relationships are strengthened through one-on-one direct contact. Time needs to be spent on getting to know key staff.

In order for institutional change to occur a team effort is required. All too often outside consultants work with schools and supervise initiatives that lack the capacity to continue once the consultant leaves. Building a mechanism within the school community is key to success. On-site teams nurture the personal relationships that are the building blocks of a successful program.

find connections

Stand-alone interventions do not have lasting impact. Initiatives must continue over a significant period of time. Rather than being episodic they need to be integrated into the culture of a school community.

Furthermore, there are many competing initiatives and external pressures at a school. Perhaps the most significant lesson learned through Out for Equity's climate change evaluation is that it is impossible for any program to be successful unless it is woven into the myriad of competing initiatives in a school building. Why recreate the

wheel if there is already a structure in place to get the message across? Some schools' staff form safe staff teams, others work in tandem with Gay/Straight Alliance student groups, and others work through already-established site committees to foster respect.

multiculturalism

Initiatives related to safety and respect for LGBTQ people and those who are perceived as such are most effective when presented under the umbrella of multiculturalism. The intent is not to sugarcoat issues related to sexuality, however provide context of something to which everyone can relate. The caution here is to not have issues of sexual orientation get lost in the mix of all the other "isms."

careful assessment

Each school building has a set of unique needs, and careful assessment is required to determine institutional differences.

Approach change strategically. Evaluate present climate, develop a vision for the future, and have concrete actions to move toward the desired outcome.

Gay/Straight Alliances



- » Starting a GSA
- » Legal Rights of GSAs
- » Ideas for Meetings
- » 20 Ways Your GSA Can Rock
- » How Does Your School Rate?
- » Assess the Racism and Transphobia in Your GSA
 - » Questions to Check Yourself and Your GSA
 - » Building Anti-Racist GSAs
- » Transgender Inclusivity in GSAs
- » Homophobia and Transphobia Awareness Week
 - » Day of Silence Project
- » Transgender Day of Remembrance

The most popular model for LGBTQ student support is the Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA).

These groups are student-run and meet on a regular basis with a limited adult facilitation. The size of the groups vary, from a few members to a few dozen.

GSAs often have a mission of addressing the needs and concerns of LGBTQ students and their friends. Some groups focus on providing a safe and confidential space for students who may be struggling with issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. Others function more as activist groups, working to fight prejudice in the schools through educating the broader community about LGBTQ issues.

Examples of GSA activities and projects include:

- Organizing a Diversity Day and/or other LGBTQ awareness events;
- Bringing in a guest speaker;
- Talking with the school staff about the concerns of LGBTQ students;
- Acquiring more LGBTQ-related books in the library;
- Attending a movie, play, or political rally;
- Hosting social events.

This section provides a broad overview of Gay/Straight Alliances: how to start one, how they operate and what they can do to help reduce anti-gay and/or transphobic discrimination in schools.

STARTING A GSA

step 1: follow guidelines

Establish a Gay/Straight Alliance in the same way as you would establish any other group or club at your school. In your Student Handbook, there should be a section detailing the procedure for forming a club or group at your school. Follow those guidelines. In some schools, this may mean that written permission from an administrator is required. In other schools, this may mean that you simply have to put up fliers announcing the first meeting and find a faculty member to act as your group's advisor.

step 2: find a faculty advisor

Some Gay/Straight Alliances have advisors who are teachers; others have faculty advisors who are guidance counselors, nurses, or librarians. Just like student members of a group, the faculty advisors don't have to be "out" to be part of the group and many existing groups have straight allies as advisors. How do you pick a faculty advisor? Ask a teacher or staff member whom you think would be receptive. Advisors will receive clock hours for their work.

step 3: inform administration of your plans

It is important to immediately inform the administration about your plans to establish a Gay/Straight Alliance. Having an administrator on your side can be very useful but is not imperative. They can help you to arrange Days of Awareness, speakers for school assemblies, teacher trainings, etc. They can work as liaisons to the community and school board.

Some administrators may be uncomfortable with the formation of this group and you can help them to understand why you want to form a Gay/Straight Alliance. If they refuse to allow your group to form, and have allowed oth-

er similar civil rights groups to form, they are breaking the law.

step 4: inform guidance counselors and social workers about your group

Some staff may know students who would be interested in attending meetings that you may not know. They may be able to encourage students to attend the group who are dealing with these issues, whether they are questioning their own sexuality, know someone who is gay or lesbian, or are interested in issues affecting gays and lesbians.

It can be useful to invite social workers and guidance counselors to come to meetings to help facilitate discussions about difficult issues like "talking to your parents about homosexuality," "coming out to friends and family," "being with a friend or relative who is gay." The meetings may also bring up issues that students will want to discuss in greater detail with a supportive adult.

step 5: pick a meeting place

If possible, find a classroom or spot in your school that is off the beaten track. At first, students may feel a little nervous or uncomfortable about attending a meeting. They may feel worried that others will harass them or make assumptions about their sexual orientation if they join the group.

It is important to acknowledge that homophobia is a problem in many schools and that unfortunately being gay, being perceived to be gay, or even being a supportive straight ally, can put someone at risk for harassment. Try to find a meeting spot that gives members a sense of security and privacy.

step 6: advertise

Advertising the formation of the group is one of the first important steps you can take toward fighting homophobia and transphobia in your school. For some students, seeing the words Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Queer on a poster can be the first time they feel that there are other people like them in the world. Some of these students may be questioning their own sexual orientation, gender identity or someone close to them may be gay. These students may never even attend a meeting, but seeing the posters may give them a great deal of comfort knowing that there are other people in their school addressing these issues, or that feel the same way as they do exist.

The posters can also spark campus-wide discussions. Traditionally, there has been a great deal of silence around issues of sexual orientation. Fear, ignorance and misinformation can make discussing homosexuality a frightening, even taboo experience. Putting up posters can be the springboard to beginning conversations. The posters may give people a reason to bring up their own feelings, questions, or thoughts about homosexuality.

Of course, not all these feelings will be positive or supportive. However, breaking the silence is often the first step a school takes in educating people about these issues and addressing the myths and the questions people have about trans issues and sexuality. The more people talk and the more education your group does, the more likely you will be able to begin to dispel some of the myths and assumptions people carry with them about LGBTQ people. Don't be discouraged if the posters are defaced or torn down. Almost all groups have this experience. Keep putting them back up. The longer you persist, the less often they will be defaced.

step 7: get snacks

Providing food at your meeting can be a great idea. Food gives people something to do with

their hands. It is a good icebreaker. It can also give people an excuse to come to meetings: "I was hungry so I just thought I'd stop by and get a handful of chips."

step 8: hold your meeting

Now that you have a faculty advisor, food, a meeting spot, and posters advertising your group, you're ready to actually hold the meeting. Some groups begin with a discussion about why they feel having such a group is important. You may want to play group-building exercises or watch a film.

step 9: establish ground rules

Some ground rules that other groups have established include:

- Members are in no way obligated to declare or define their sexual orientation, nor is anyone allowed to make assumptions about members' sexual orientations.
- Confidentiality will be maintained. It may be hard or impossible to insure that people don't talk about things brought up in the group, but names or identities should never be revealed.
- You must be respectful of each other, but you don't have to be politically correct all the time. Respect each other and realize that everyone is learning about the issue. It's OK to say something that may sound homophobic. Learn why it is problematic.
- Faculty members participate on an equal basis with students. Faculty may help encourage discussion or participation, but they are not there to teach or lead the group. They are there as participants.

step 10: plan for the future

You may want to write out an outline of goals that you would like to work towards for the future, including Assessment Plans and Action Plans. The former would include various ways to assess the climate of your school and what work needs to be accomplished in the future, and the latter might be a list of goals for the future.

LEGAL RIGHTS OF GSAS

Does a public school have to allow a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) to form at a high school or middle school?

Under the Equal Access Act (EAA), a federal law passed in 1984 that applies to all public secondary schools that receive federal funding, a secondary school that allows at least one student-initiated non-curriculum-related club to meet on school grounds during lunch or after school must allow all other non-curricular student groups, including GSAs, access to the school and cannot otherwise discriminate against the group, even if the club represents an unpopular viewpoint.

As a federal judge concluded in an Equal Access Act case:

The Board Members may be uncomfortable about students discussing sexual orientation and how all students need to accept each other, whether gay or straight. . . . [But] [school officials] cannot censor the students' speech to avoid discussions on campus that cause them discomfort or represent an unpopular viewpoint. In order to comply with the Equal Access Act, Anthony Colin, Heather Zeitin, and the members of the Gay-Straight Alliance must be permitted access to the school campus in the same way that the District provides access to all clubs, including the Christian Club and the Red Cross/Key Club.

Does the school have to give a GSA the same privileges as other clubs?

Under the EAA, if a public school allows at least one non-curriculum related student group to use its facilities for a meeting place during non-instructional time, it cannot "deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against" any students who wish to conduct club meetings, such as a GSA. This means that the school must give the GSA the same privileges and treat it the same as other clubs, including equal access to such things as meetings spaces, bulletin boards, use of the PA system, etc.

Failure to grant a GSA the same privileges may also violate the Equal Protection Clause of the federal or state constitutions, the First Amendment, and/or state statutes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Can the school require the club to change its name to something less "divisive" like the "Tolerance Club" or to broaden its mission statement?

No. The group has first amendment speech and associational rights in its name and its mission. As one federal court explained:

A group's speech and association rights are implicated in the name that it chooses for itself. The board is not allowed to require the student group to change its name merely because the Board finds that it would be less "divisive." . . . [The students] testified that these name changes would attack the very core reason for having the club. . . . [One student] said that the use of the word "Gay" in the title is important to announce that "being gay or homosexual is not bad, it's who you are." . . . [Another student] said that taking the word gay out would take the focus away from the issues people face and would imply that there's something wrong with the word "gay." . . . For all of the reasons that [the students] mentioned when talking about being forced to change the club's name, the Board's suggested name change clearly infringes on profound expressive meaning that the group attaches to its name.

Moreover, as discussed above, once the Act has been triggered, a school cannot "deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against" a student club based on the content of the students' proposed discussions. Requiring the club to change its name or mission statement based on the content of the name or the mission violates the Act's prohibition against discrimination.

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IDEAS FOR MEETINGS

Things I've Always Wanted to Know, But Was Afraid to Ask...

Holding a Question and Answer Day allows students to anonymously write down questions on any subject they want and then spend the rest of meetings discussing the questions and coming up with answers.

Bring-a-Friend Day

Many groups report that they wish they could get more students to come to their meetings. Bring-A-Friend Day is one way to do just that. On an appointed day, group members bring at least one friend to the meeting. Some members might choose to bring someone whom they think is supportive, but for whatever reason, hasn't gone to any meetings. Others might pick someone they think needs to learn about homophobia or heterosexism. Still others might just drag along their best friend.

Working for Change

Most groups have spent at least some meeting time working to institute change in their schools or communities. Some have written editorials for their school papers describing the work of their group, their plans for the future, what they'd like to see change in their school, how to combat anti-gay prejudice, etc. Other groups have detailed instances of homophobia on campus including the defacing of GSA posters, anti-gay slurs or remarks they've heard, etc. and then distributed them to students, teachers, administrators and school board members. Groups have written editorials for their school newspapers, PTO newsletters, and community papers about topics such as "Homophobia Hurts Everybody," and "Why I'm a Straight Ally." Groups have also spent their meeting time planning political action strategies.

Movies, Movies, Movies

Film screenings are fun events that can stimulate interesting discussion on LGBTQ themes, such as the film *Bent* and the persecution of LGBTQ people during the Holocaust, or the film *Boys Don't Cry* and gender identity issues.

Plays

Plays are a great group activity for Gay/Straight Alliances. Some theaters offer discounts to groups and

others may be willing to offer cheaper seats to students.

And the Award Goes to . . .

Who doesn't love to win an award? For example, you could give an annual award to the senior who has done the most for the advancement and well being of gay and lesbian students in their schools. These types of awards can inspire students to work hard on important issues and can also generate publicity for your group. Your alliance could offer an annual prize or you could ask a community group, store, restaurant, or company to offer a prize at the end of the year.

Guest Speaker

Many groups invite speakers or guests from local LGBT or diversity community groups to discuss different issues. Speakers may be invited for an open meeting or an administrative-approved, school-wide event. Common community groups that have been invited include chapters of GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network), PFLAG (Parents, Friends and Families and Lesbians and Gays), ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) and COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere).

Family Night

Invite family members to attend a GSA meeting held in the evening. Every meeting give family members an opportunity to learn about the activities that your group has been doing, and what the GSA is planning for the future. Different family members can offer all kinds of interesting resources to your group, and as a result, some family members have established groups of their own toward creating safer communities.

Socialize

Gathering together with other alliances and hosting a dance can be a great way to make new friends and have fun. You might also want to host a dance for your school. Many students have gone to their proms in same-sex couples.

*Written by: Warren J. Blumenfeld. Reprinted from GLSEN's website: www.glsen.org.

20 WAYS YOUR GSA CAN ROCK THE WORLD

1 create a diverse school library

See what books and resources your school has to offer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students. Talk to your administration or librarian about getting more diverse and/or inclusive books added to your library. Your group, or local community organizations, might also donate LGBTQ friendly books to the library.

2 creating safe spaces

Creating a campaign educating teachers on the importance of creating a Safe Space in their classrooms. You can do this by developing fact sheets, writing testimonies, or possibly having a 1-on-1 meeting explaining the importance of a safe space for all students. Going a step further, your group can provide teachers with “Safe Space” stickers for their classrooms.

3 day of silence

Participate in the Day of Silence Project, an international event that increases awareness about the invisibility of LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ issues. Students who protest the silence created by heterosexism and anti-LGBTQ bias in our society take a 9-hour vow of silence. Instead of speaking, participants hand out cards explaining the purpose of the event.

4 documentary of a student's life

You might organize a week or month-long documentary of the harassment, name-calling and discrimination students have faced or seen against others in their school. Following you can compile reports, write editorials, or hold a discussion about the results.

5 document school heterosexism or gender bias

Research and list examples of heterosexism around the school and then present these to your school administration and possibly even your school newspaper. You may find this in written policies, practices, or events. Some examples may include no bathrooms that aren't gender-specific for those who don't fit into socially defined gender labels, or a policy that prohibits persons of opposite genders going to the prom or other school functions.

6 diversity day

Sponsor a “Day of Diversity” with other school groups interested in civil rights issues. Get together and talk about the problems they've worked on and the issues they addressed. Such a day can be a great way to better understand and educate on the diversity of our world. Building coalitions among various school groups can be a great way to meet new people, explore ideas and increase everyone's base of support.

7 diversity panels

A number of schools have hosted “Diversity Panels,” which allows spokespeople to represent racial, religious, gender and sexual orientation diversity a chance to talk about their experiences with harassment and discrimination. Students from one GSA spoke at the “Day of Respect” all school assembly. This can be a good way to work educating others and creating a safer school environment, while establishing alliances with other students and groups.

8 editorials

Many student leaders write editorials for their school and community newspapers. These editorials can often have a range of topics, from discussing what it's like as an LGBTQ

(editorials continued)

identified student in your school to the harassment and bias LGBTQ people endure.

9 educational “theme months”

Use pre-established “theme months” and give them a queer slant. For national Poetry Month, have poetry readings where students and teachers read the poetry of LGBTQ authors or have LGBTQ students and teachers read their own poetry. Better yet, make it a community wide event sponsored by your group. It’s great positive publicity!

You could hold similar events or invite speakers for other theme months, such as Black History Month and Women’s History Month. Talk about the intersections between sexual orientation and other aspects of life. And don’t forget, October is LGBTQ History Month.

10 guest speaker meeting

Invite a speaker from a LGBTQ community organization to come speak about LGBTQ issues in schools or perhaps choose a video for teachers to watch.

11 handouts & information board

Create a handout or fact sheet on LGBTQ issues, or host a monthly bulletin board with such information. Issues may include statistics and reports of the harassment LGBTQ youth and people face, or even the history of an LGBTQ related item. Example can include: the pink triangle symbol or the Stonewall riots.

12 LGBTQ alumni go back-to-school

Alumni can be wonderful allies. They can serve as bridges between the school and the community. Many have access to helpful and exciting resources. Your school’s alumni may be

able to assist you with everything from vocal and financial support to speaking engagements and training resources. Some groups have invited LGBTQ alumni to return to their alma maters to talk about the experiences they had as an LGBTQ identified student in your school. Alumni can have enough distance to talk freely about the obstacles they encountered and they can be useful allies in getting support for your work.

How do you find and contact alumni? Your group can put a notice in the town paper, the local community gay paper, or in your school’s alumni paper stating that your group would like to speak with interested, supportive alumni. You might want to describe what your group does, why it’s important and list a contact person for readers to obtain more information.

13 marching with pride

Many groups have attended civil rights and pride marches as well as the AIDS Walk and other community events. Any such formal activity off-school grounds may depend on your school rules on field trips and all such activities should be organized through the school administration in advance.

14 non-discrimination and anti-harassment policies

Find out what your school’s anti-harassment and non-discrimination policies say; do they include the words “actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity”? Your group could organize a letter writing campaign or you could speak to your administration advocate adding the words if they’re not. If they are, check and see what your school district’s policy says. You could work with other GSAs in your school district to ensure the words are included. You don’t have to stop there – check out your town and state policies, too. Know how you’re protected under the law!

15 organize a movie event

Many schools have used some of the recent successful movies or documentaries to bring LGBTQ issues to the school at large. In some schools a panel discussion or guest speaker has often followed such events. Check a listing of LGBTQ related films and documentaries.

16 outreach to middle schools

Research has found that anti-LGBTQ slurs are the second most commonly used insults uttered by elementary school children. One GSA member said, "It's important to go to the middle schools and teach sixth graders that when they say 'fag' it's offensive and wrong. Many students don't understand how such a word can hurt others, or even themselves."

Members of another group went back to their middle school and talked with the administration about the homophobia they encountered there. They told the administration that they felt it was important to do something to change the climate of that school. After working with the administration, the members of the GSA returned to the middle school and discussed anti-LGBTQ harassment and discrimination with three different eighth-grade classes. The eighth graders had lots of questions and the group members were exuberant in having had this opportunity to help break the silence and fear surrounding issues of anti-LGBTQ bias at their alma mater.

17 guest speaker meeting

Invite family members to attend a GSA meeting held in the evening or weekends. Pick activities that will appeal to people of all ages. Themed events around different community celebrations can help bring a wide array of events so all families will feel represented.

18 queering the curriculum

Brainstorm ways teachers of each subject can be inclusive of LGBTQ issues in their classes. Examine the curriculum your teachers are already using, and brainstorm ways they could include LGBTQ people, events, or topics in the lesson plans. Go subject by subject and then distribute the results of your brainstorm to each department!

Furthermore, include some of the many LGBTQ inclusive curriculums now available from organizations such as GLSEN. Include a note on why it's important to be inclusive of all students.

19 school climate survey

A number of GSAs have sent out surveys to assess the level of tolerance their school has for LGBTQ students and to better target the work that needs to be done. Some have surveyed students, teachers and school staff and parent about issues relating to LGBTQ students and homophobia.

Surveys can be a helpful determinant in figuring out what types of educational activities to plan and what types of posters might help people rethink their assumptions. Consider issuing a yearly survey to measure the school's climate and effects of your GSAs work. In most schools, surveys must be approved by the administration, so meet and work with them on how you can approve the school climate for everyone.

20 teach the teachers

Consider sponsoring trainings for teachers in your school about issues facing LGBTQ students, the things you would want them to know. Put together a panel of students who want to talk about their own experiences or what they have witnessed in school.

HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL RATE?

ADMINISTRATORS (SCHOOL DISTRICT LEVEL)

YES NO

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ▽ | ▽ | Have clear school district policies that respect and protect our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) students and staff members from harassment, violence, and discrimination. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Have examined our hiring/employment policies and practices to ensure that we do not discriminate based upon sexual orientation or gender identity. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Provide school-based support groups for LGBTQ students. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Ensure adequate information is available in school libraries for ALL students. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Support and encourage curricula that include LGBTQ issues. |

ADMINISTRATORS (LOCAL SCHOOL LEVEL)

YES NO

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ▽ | ▽ | Provide learning opportunities for staff and students (educational in-services related to issues of sexual diversity and the effects of homophobia on a student's academic performance, etc.). |
| ▽ | ▽ | Support equal access to services and activities (e.g., dances, proms, social activities) for all students. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Encourage and support LGBTQ staff. Allow them to serve as positive role models for students. |

SCHOOL PERSONNEL (TEACHERS, COUNSELORS, ETC.)

YES NO

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ▽ | ▽ | Talk about homosexuality in the classroom and affirm diversity, when relevant to class topic. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Foster environments wherein sexual harassment and discriminatory behaviors are unacceptable. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Use inclusive language (i.e., "significant other" or "date" instead of "boyfriend/girlfriend.") |
| ▽ | ▽ | Create inclusive curriculums, which acknowledge LGBTQ history, and the contributions, which LGBTQ people have made to society through art, literature, politics, science, etc. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Support and encourage curricula that include LGBTQ issues. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Identify gay-positive advocates at school to serve as mentors, supportive staff and role models. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Have available and visibly located: brochures, posters, pamphlets, and books with accurate information. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Do not assume that all students are heterosexual. |
| ▽ | ▽ | Have knowledge of resources including: books available in the library, support groups for youth and their families, hotline numbers, etc. |

ASSESS THE RACISM AND TRANSPHOBIA IN YOUR GSA

GSAs, like all institutions in the United States, reflect the racist and sexist or transphobic elements of this country's past and present. GSAs are found to mostly serve predominantly middle to upper class, white and cisgender students. In schools that are more diverse, or located in rural areas, GSAs often don't exist. The GSA movement simply cannot fulfill its potential unless its population represents the population of the whole LGBTQ community at large. Transforming into an anti-racist and pro-transgender organization requires passing through these four stages of organizational development:

The **ALL WHITE AND CIS GENDER CLUB**, while it does not deliberately exclude people of color (POC) or transgender (trans*) people, is composed almost exclusively of white and cisgender people. POC and trans* people either do not join the group, or leave shortly after they do. In the all white and cisgender club, people of color and trans* people must fit into an all white, all cisgender culture. The all white and cisgender club fails to address internal issues of race and gender identity, and is not accountable to people of color or trans* people.

The **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OR 'TOKEN' CLUB** adopts clear affirmative action policies and goals to include POC and trans* people in its leadership. It may also conduct workshops to eliminate prejudice. But, much like the all white and all cisgender club, the 'token' organization remains slanted in its perspective and structure, despite the fact that it outlines clear policies for including POC and trans* people.

The **MULTI-CULTURAL CLUB** is composed, at every level, of a diverse group of people. It educates its participants on issues of race, gender identity and diversity. Its commitment to diversity is reflected in its vision and constitution, and in what it does on a daily basis. Nonetheless, POC and trans* people within the organization are still made to fit in to an existing culture.

The **ANTI-RACIST AND PRO-TRANS* CLUB** actively confronts the racism and sexism or transphobia inherent in this country's past and present, and considers how that gets reflected internally, within the organization. It cultivates anti-racist and pro-trans* awareness and participation among its members, and people of color and trans* people are actively and meaningfully involved as leaders and empowered participants. Anti-racist and pro-trans* organizations educate their members about racism and sexism or transphobia, challenge their members to think and communicate about race and sexism or transphobia, even when it becomes uncomfortable, and creates an ongoing dialogue about issues of race, gender identity and class within and outside of the organization.

No organization falls perfectly into any of these classifications, though an organization may be in one stage more than the others. What is your GSA's state of development?

_____ % **All White and Cis Gender Club**

_____ % **Multi-Cultural Club**

_____ % **Affirmative Action or 'Token' Club**

_____ % **Anti-Racist and Pro-Trans* Club**

QUESTIONS TO CHECK YOURSELF AND YOUR GSA

- 1** Do close friendships within the organization cross racial, gender and cultural boundaries?
- 2** In terms of race, does your GSA's population resemble the population of students in your school's hallways? In terms of gender, are there any people who identify as trans* or gender non-conforming in your GSA?
- 3** Now compare the demographics of your school to that of the leadership of your GSA? Are they similar?
- 4** Relative to other schools in your district, is your school better or worse off economically? Are there GSAs in schools that differ from yours economically?
- 5** Has your GSA done anything special for Black History Month, Latino History Month, etc? When celebrating LGBTQ heroes do you include trans* people and LGBTQ people of color (POC)?
- 6** Does your GSA follow the Christian calendar? Do you take non-Christian religious/cultural events and holidays into consideration when planning?
- 7** Is your meeting room handicap accessible?
- 8** Are your fliers and posters printed only in English? Or do you include Spanish or other languages spoken in your school?
- 9** Do you make it clear that anyone with special needs will be accommodated?
- 10** Do you retain most POC and trans* people who come to your GSA meetings? Do one or a few white and cisgender cliques dominate your GSA?
- 11** Do you make an effort to consider the consequences of your GSA's decisions on non-humans and the environment?

BUILDING ANTI-RACIST GSAS

Organizing around intersectionalities is a strong and powerful way to incorporate all aspects of the LGBTQ community and all the people within. The LGBTQ youth movement cannot survive unless it includes POC and addresses issues of sexism, transphobia, racism, classism, ageism and environmental injustice. Everyone must link together to create a multi issue social justice movement, which incorporates the needs and rights of multiple communities.

However, many GSAs have struggled with intersectionality organizing because of a lack of internal diversity. There are a number of reasons why students of color may not be as actively involved with GSAs as white students. GSA organizers from around the Bay Area came up with these ideas about why many GSAs are disproportionately white:

- **Perception that Gay = White:** Most national LGBTQ leaders and famous queer folks are white, and people of color are often under-represented at LGBTQ events.
- **Tokenization:** If a GSA is already mostly or all white, students may feel that being the only person of color at meetings would put pressure on them to educate the rest of the club about diversity or racism.
- **Language barriers:** Especially if your school has a large population of students who do not speak English as a primary language, creating all of the GSA's flyers and materials in English may send a message that the club would not be a comfortable place for some students.
- **Cultural barriers:** Sexual orientation and homophobia are understood and acknowledged differently by different cultures. Many organizations that deal with LGBTQ issues are ethnocentric and fail to recognize that sexual orientation and homophobia may have different associations for different people.
- **Prioritizing identities:** Many LGBTQ youth of color have described the alienating experience of having to choose one identity over another. For example, if they've been part of a racial/ethnic club at school they feel forced to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity. Conversely, if they've attended the GSA, they've felt forced to ignore or downplay their racial/ethnic identity.

Here are some broad strategies that GSAs can use to address these issues and build diverse, anti-racist organizations:

Welcome LGBTQ People of Color

- Focus GSA organizing and activities on multiple issues.
- Invite queer people of color to visit your GSA/school as speakers or trainers.
- Create materials in different languages.

Engage Straight People of Color as Allies

- Organize around health, oppression, public policy, school policy and other points of multi-issue or coalition-based organizing.
- Go to diversity club meetings and/or set up an umbrella “Diversity” or “Multicultural” club at your school.

Educate the GSA

- Have an anti-oppression/anti-racism workshop.
- Engage in a dialogue about racism within the school and/or within the LGBTQ community.
- Have different student clubs give trainings/facilitate dialogues for your GSA (and see if other clubs would like the GSA to lead an anti-homophobia workshop at one of their meetings).

Build Coalitions

Coalitions unite different organizations around a common issue, such as ending hate crimes at your school. Coalitions work together to organize campaigns and sponsor activities that help meet common goals. Consider having long-term coalitions with other diversity-focused groups at your school that encourage members to form personal as well as organizational relationships. This will help straight People of Color become more familiar with the GSA and not force queer People of Color to choose between one club activity or the other.

- Here are some ideas for activities you can organize as a coalition:
- Put together a photo exhibit on diverse families.
- Arrange for a section of the AIDS quilt to be exhibited at your school.
- Organize a rally, assembly, protest, or peer-education program about hate crimes.
- Have a voter registration drive for seniors.
- Host a diversity-themed film festival, poetry slam, or concert.

Some Suggestions for Building Anti-Racist GSAs:

- Don't give up! This stuff isn't easy, and may make you feel uncomfortable.
- Set specific, realistic goals for diversity and write them down.
- Visit other clubs and educate people about your GSA and invite them to your meetings.
- Plan an event with other groups in your school.
- Hold a panel that includes people from different backgrounds and have them take questions from the audience.
- Print fliers and posters in all the languages spoken in your school and let people know that their special needs will be accommodated with interpreters.
- Research and educate your members about issues of race and class and how they relate to your school.
- Create a dialogue within your GSA about how people of color and other groups are excluded, exploited, underserved or oppressed. Create a safe space for people to talk about how they feel.
- Do something for different history months, cultural celebrations, holidays, etc.
- Educate your teachers about issues of race and class.
- Take on activist projects that intersect different kinds of oppression and liberation, and collaborate with other groups on them.
- Connect with students in a school that differs from yours demographically.
- Make a meaningful effort to be open, welcoming and nice to newcomers.
- Create an exhibit about racism and LGBTQ oppression and hang it in your school's hallways.
- Brainstorm additions to this list!

TRANSGENDER INCLUSIVITY IN GSAS

GSAs can be a powerful force in the fight against discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender nonconformity, issues that are often at the root of homophobic harassment. However, many GSAs have not yet addressed gender identity or transgender issues because they do not know how to go about it. Here are some tips and suggested activities that can be used to help your GSA become more gender-inclusive, begin talking about gender identity and transgender issues and make your school safer for transgender or gender-questioning students.

- 1 When your GSA asks for gender on a form or a survey don't have people mark either male or female.** Leave a blank line and allow people to write it in.
- 2 Don't separate your GSA into "boys" and "girls" for activities.**
- 3 As a GSA, watch and discuss movies with gender nonconforming characters,** such as *Gun Hill Road*, *Boys Don't Cry*, *My life in Pink (Ma Vie en Rose)*, *Tomboy*, *Two Spirit*, *A Girl Like Me: The Gwen Araujo Story*, *Different for Girls*, *Normal (2003)*, *Romeos*, *Beautiful Boxer* and *Southern Comfort*. Consider hosting a screening of these movies as an educational event at your school, or design a curriculum for teachers to use if they show one of these films in class.
- 4 Bring in books and newspaper articles about people who identify as transgender.** Have them talk in your GSA about trans* issues.
- 5 Research statistics about transgender-related harassment and use them in your outreach and publicity materials.**
- 6 Be sure to include gender identity issues in your plans for the school year.**
- 7 Campaign to create a unisex bathroom at your school** or better yet develop a trans* inclusive policy so people can choose which bathroom they would like to use. Write a proposal to the principal and the staff. Tell them that you think bathrooms should be open to anyone. Let them understand that you want a safe space where a student of any sex, gender, or gender identity can change for a sport or use the bathroom and feel safe.

8 Design and lead a gender sensitivity training for students and/or teachers at your school. Consider using the following activities to get folks talking about gender identity and gender-related expectations:

- Give everyone a chance to choose pictures of people out of magazines or books. (ask them not to show anyone their picture.) Ask everyone to describe the person without referring to the person's genitals or using pronouns that we associate with a specific gender. Have each person read aloud their description and then have everyone "guess" the gender. Here is a list of questions you can use for discussion when the "guessing" is done: Why did you associate some adjectives with men or women? Is something wrong with a person whose attributes are not considered normal for their gender? Why or why not? Can someone be both masculine and feminine? Does that change their gender or gender identity?
- Break everyone into small groups (or one-on-one if your group is small already) give each person a bag of mixed jelly beans or M&M's (anything will work as long as they are the same size and shape and that they do vary in color) Tell each group to divide their bag up into two categories, using any criteria they can think of. Give people as much time as they need. Here are some follow-up questions. How did you divide up the contents of the bag? Was it hard to think of criteria? Can some objects fit into both categories? If not can you think of an instance when an object could? Or where one couldn't fit into either group? Do you think some people don't fit into one particular gender category? Do you think if someone has the body of a "man" and acts like a "woman" (or vice-versa) that they should alter their body or dress/style to fit the gender that they act like? Why or why not?

9 Get a copy of *My Gender Workbook* by Kate Bornstein for your club. Look through the book for other activities to use both within your club and for outreach or education purposes.

10 Always keep in mind that when you talk about gender not to make a huge issue out of it; allow people to feel comfortable. If you sensationalize people who are transgender or gender non-conforming (and members of your GSA may be struggling with issues of gender identity) you may make them feel even more uncomfortable or confused. You want to create a safe place for your peers.

HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA AWARENESS WEEK

Homophobia and Transphobia Awareness Week is a special week that is designed by a school's Gay/Straight Alliance to help the students and staff of that school learn more about the issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people. It is a week to educate, inform and help create safer school environments for everyone. A variety of different activities may take place that involve the entire school and promote thinking about homophobia and transphobia. Encourage teachers to talk to their classes about homophobia and transphobia, as well as the week's activities. The week is designed to generate discussion and increase visibility of LGBTQ issues at the school. Possible activities include:

daily announcements

Use this manual and other resources to research facts and information about LGBTQ issues. Compose announcements that inform the student body about LGBTQ issues as well as upcoming events pertaining to the week. Organize the announcements by day and time of day read. Be sure to have someone go to the office and read these announcements, or give them to whomever reads the announcements at your school.

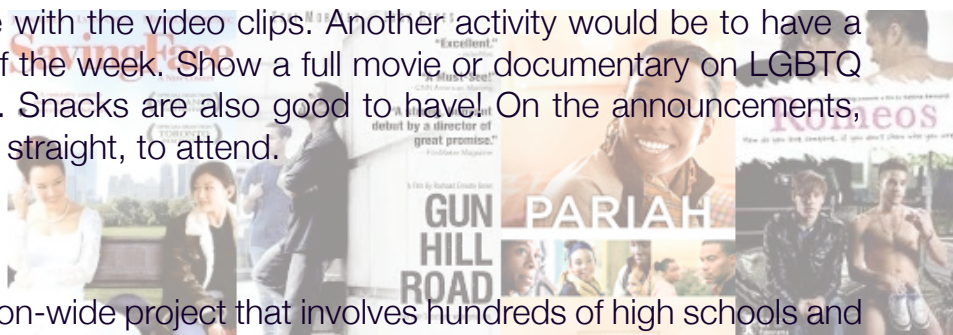
movie clips

Used in conjunction with the daily announcements, movie clips can help reinforce the message of respect. Possible video clips can include different celebrities or activists talking about issues in the LGBTQ community. Some schools have made their own clips. Your GSA could plan and produce a skit advertising the GSA and promoting respect. Make sure school officials have okayed these clips.

Have teachers briefly explain to their students what they will be seeing and afterwards have teachers discuss with the students what they saw. You may want to provide teachers with some discussion questions to use with the video clips. Another activity would be to have a video night after school one day of the week. Show a full movie or documentary on LGBTQ and have a discussion afterwards. Snacks are also good to have. On the announcements, encourage all students, LGBTQ or straight, to attend.

day of silence

The Day of Silence Project is a nation-wide project that involves hundreds of high schools and colleges around the country. One day in April every year participating individuals take a vow of silence to protest "the silence faced by LGBTQ people and their allies." In many schools, the event culminates in a "Breaking the Silence" rally in which students can speak out and make their voices heard. For more about this event, see the page entitled "Day of Silence Project."



optional reading for sustained silent reading

If your school participates in Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), put together a packet of reading material dealing with LGBTQ issues. Write a cover letter to teachers explaining what the reading material is and distribute the letters and readings to teachers a few days prior to SSR day.

discrimination day

Make small, round stickers available to every teacher. Announce that any student who has ever been discriminated against (on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, age, class, religion, national origin, etc.) should place a sticker on their hand. This is a good activity for early in the week to get students talking about respect in general and how homophobia and transphobia connects to and intersects with other forms of oppression.

lifesavers

Purchase rainbow-colored, individually-wrapped LifeSavers and print out multiple copies of “life saving” quotes about discrimination and social justice. Staple one message to each Life-Saver and have teachers hand out the candies either on one special day or throughout the week.

rainbow day

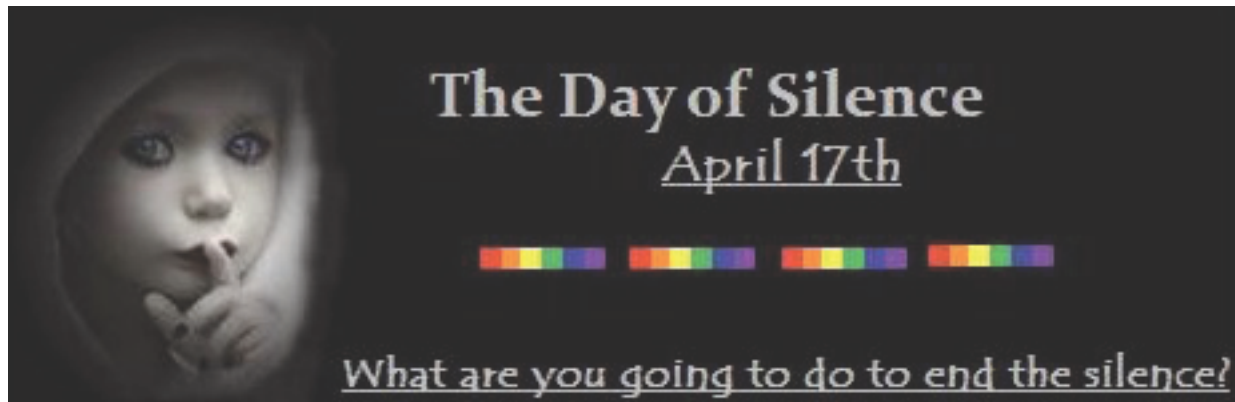
Have a Rainbow Day, during which students and staff can show their support of LGBTQ rights by wearing rainbow colors, or make available to teachers and students rainbow ribbons to wear. Include on the morning announcements information about the history of the rainbow flag.

student assembly

Large assemblies are a great way to end your Homophobia and Transphobia Awareness Week and make LGBTQ issues visible in your school. Arrange the assembly and decide on a guest speaker. Contact the Out for Equity office if you need a list of possible speakers. Write a letter/email to the guest inviting them to come to your school. Include an explanation of what you are doing and why, the date and time of when you would like them to come speak, and directions to your school. Reserve a large meeting place for the assembly, such as the school auditorium or gym. Send out an invitation to teachers and have them RSVP their class for the assembly. If possible, you may want to have more than one assembly, over different class periods, so that as many classes as possible can come. Student involvement in the assembly is also a great way for students in the audience to make the connection between homophobia, transphobia and fellow classmates. For example, students from the Gay/Straight Alliance could present readings or poems they have written or perform a skit advertising their group.

DAY OF SILENCE PROJECT

The Day of Silence Project has been making itself heard as a method of protesting the treatment of LGBTQ people since 1996. First conducted by students at the University of Virginia, the Day of Silence Project now involves hundreds of junior high schools, high schools and colleges around the country. Its capacity to generate publicity, momentum and resources for student groups makes the Day of Silence Project an effective catalyst for school change.



tips to prepare your schools for the big event

Get registered and get connected by going to DayofSilence.org. Get connected to other GSAs and other groups by following the Day of Silence Facebook page (National Day of Silence), on Twitter (@DayofSilence) and on the blog (blog.dayofsilence.org)

Build a team of committed organizers. You may want to plan the Day of Silence Project within an established school group, such as a GSA, or you may want to build a coalition of interested individuals possessing a variety of strengths from different school groups.

Draft an action plan for your Project. The action plan should address what will get done, when it will get done, and who will be responsible for doing it. There are a lot of elements requiring preparation: publicity, fundraising, logistics, and follow-up events are just a few.

Gather participants. There is no “right number” of participants for the Day of Silence Project, but more people means greater visibility and helps participants to feel less isolated during their hours of silence. Begin by making a list of every person and group that might be supportive of the event. Use email, newspaper, radio announcements, and flyers to solicit participation.

Produce materials for participants. The most important items for participants to have are the “speaking cards,” and, depending on your budget, you could provide armbands, T-shirts, stickers, flyers, or other materials. In addition to boosting visibility and creating a sense of community among participants, such materials can help to educate your school community and publicize future events.

Get the word out! Write a press release and contact local media to let them know about your school’s participation. Try to target specific journalists who’ve covered LGBTQ or other social justice issues in the past. Request that they conduct an interview with your organizers, in order to promote student voices and reinforce the grassroots, student-led structure of the Day of Silence Project. Arrange (with permission, or course!) for a photographer or camera crew to visit your school on the day.

Establish a safe space. The National Day of Silence has the potential to be a solitary event; at large schools, participants may be dispersed. In order to help participants throughout the day, you should set up some support activities and safe spaces. One event could be a “silent lunch,” which would promote visibility, publicity and group unity. You should also establish a safe space, somewhere participants can visit if they are feeling stressed out during the day.

Organize a “Breaking the Silence” event. Many schools and communities end the Day of Silence by holding a rally to “break the silence.” Students can speak out about their experiences with harassment and discrimination, or request that district and statewide nondiscrimination policies be amended to include sexual orientation and gender identity. A “Breaking the Silence” rally is also the perfect opportunity for high schools, college, and local community groups to come together and begin building coalitions.

Organize follow-up events. Make sure that you take full advantage of the awareness generated by the Day of Silence Project by producing follow-up materials and events. Plan for follow-up events, such as speak-outs, film screenings, performances, guest speakers, and teach-ins in your action plan.

Debrief with your GSA. Once the day of action is complete, it’s important to debrief the day. How did it go? What was it like? What should you keep for next year? What went well and what would you like to do again next year? What would you like to change to make next year better?

day of silence pledge

Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement protesting the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people and their allies. My deliberate silence echoes that silence which is caused by harassment, prejudice, and discrimination. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward fighting these injustices. Think about the voices you are not hearing today. **What are you going to do to end the silence?**

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

what is the transgender day of remembrance?

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is held in November each year to memorialize those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. Although not every person represented during the Day of Remembrance self-identified as transgender, each was a victim of violence based on bias against transgender people. The list of deaths only contains those deaths known to the transgender community or that have been reported to the media. The Day of Remembrance is held on November 20th to honor Rita Hester, whose murder kicked off the “Remembering Our Dead” web project and a San Francisco candlelight vigil in 1999. Rita Hester’s murder, like most anti-transgender murder cases, has yet to be solved.

what is the purpose of the day of remembrance?

The Transgender Day of Remembrance serves several purposes. It raises public awareness of hate crimes against transgender people, an action that current media doesn’t perform. Day of Remembrance publicly mourns and honors the lives of transgender people who might otherwise be forgotten. Through the vigil, we express love and respect in the face of national indifference and hatred. Day of Remembrance gives transgender people and their allies a chance to step forward and stand in vigil, memorializing those who’ve died by anti-transgender violence. The Day of Remembrance in schools can also be used as a way to educate students, teachers, and administrators about transgender issues, so we can try to prevent anti-transgender hatred and violence from continuing.



what are the guiding principles of the day of remembrance?

These are the guiding principles developed by the organizers of the Day of Remembrance. You can use these words to help frame your message and tone for the day:

- » “Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it.” (Santayana)
- » “All who die due to anti-transgender violence are to be remembered.”
- » “It is up to us to remember these people, since their killers, law enforcement, and the media often seek to erase their existence.”
- » “Transgender lives are affirmed as valuable.”
- » “We can make a difference by being visible, speaking out, educating and organizing around anti-transgender violence, which can effect change.”

what can be done for the day of remembrance?

- » “Candlelight vigils/marches”
- » “Discussion forums with local activists, politicians, or school officials”
- » “Performance actions”
- » “Poetry or spoken word art readings”
- » “Visual representation of the number of deaths with:
 - “Cardboard tomb stones of remembered people
 - “Paper cutouts of remembered people
 - “Body outline chalkings of remembered people”
- » “Teach-ins and speakers bureaus”
- » “Art/photography displays”
- » “Movie screenings (such as “Gun Hill Road”)”
- » “Trans 101 trainings for staff or any interested people”
- » “Anything else that reflects the grounding principles of the day that you can imagine”

tips for planning & having a successful day of remembrance

BEFORE:

Make a Plan. Your GSA should prepare for exactly how you want to approach the project and what you want the day to consist of.

Create a Timeline. After deciding what it is your club would like to do, you should create a timeline for everyone to know what needs to be done. Include who is in charge of each item and when it needs to be completed.

Get More People Involved. You should try to get as many people as possible aware of the event and involved. Creating a Facebook event page, posting on other social media sites, sending out e-mail announcements, advertising in the school newspaper, putting up flyers and posters and of course by word of mouth, are all useful methods of advertisement.

Build Coalitions/Build Bridges. Consider including other school clubs that may be interested in collaborating on the event. There might be a need for education on how violence affects different groups, as well as how anti-transgender violence is increasingly affecting low income youth of color. It is important for other groups to know how violence based on gender affects all communities.

Issue a Press Release. Let the local media know about what you are doing to honor the Transgender Day of Remembrance. Describe the events at your school, history of the event, and use some quotes from GSA members about why you are doing the event. Be sure to include a phone number for a reporter to contact your group to follow-up for interviews.

Get Teachers/Administrators/Staff Involved. Find out if staff are interested in participating.

Let your Principal Know. Schedule a meeting with your principal to explain your plans for the Day of Remembrance.

Be Prepared! Have a pre-Transgender Day of Remembrance meeting to discuss positive ways to handle harassment from non-participants. Be prepared to have spokespersons from your group who can speak about the event. This is an emotionally charged subject, and can end up being a very “down” event. Provide remembrance of those who have been lost, as well as reassurance and healing for those in attendance.

DURING:

Announce the Event. Post an announcement in the daily bulletin explaining the event and requesting that all staff and students be respectful of the students participating in the project.

Coordinate Volunteers. Ask people to help setup your event. Make sure that you have enough people for setup, monitoring the event, and cleanup.

Provide Resources. Have a resource spot or staffed table where people can find info about your GSA or other LGBTQ groups and resources.

Organize Visual Displays. Organize a visible display such as having your participants wear a sticker or T-shirt that commemorates a victim of anti-transgender violence.

During the event, be sure to let people know what the purpose of the event is, have speakers discuss transgender issues, read the names of people victimized by anti-transgender violence, describe the meaning of the visual art you have used on campus (e.g. cardboard cutouts, chalkings, etc.), close the event, and thank everyone for coming.

Create a Safe Space. Due to the intensity of the event, you should think of creative ways to create a safe space, like a room where people can go if they need to reflect or talk about their feelings.

AFTER:

Continue the Education. Host a discussion about how to raise awareness of transgender people everyday as opposed to one day out of the year.

Evaluate the Day. Evaluate the successes of the day and discuss what improvements could be made for next year.

Plan for Next Year. Lay groundwork for the next Transgender Day of Remembrance.

The Day of Remembrance can be a perfect opportunity to raise people's awareness of and interest in transgender issues. Some ideas for addressing larger issues within the school or community include:

- Adding "gender identity and gender expression" to the school's handbook
- Having a Trans 101 training for faculty and staff
- Having some restrooms be gender neutral and available to people of all genders to use
- Educating the school's GSA or diversity group on trans issues and how to be better allies



Support Groups

- » Expectations for Facilitators
- » Ongoing PA Announcements
 - » Reporting Form
- » LGBTQ Youth Counseling Guidelines
- » Stages of Group Development
 - » Open-Ended Questions
- » Intake Forms for New Group Members
 - » Post-Intake Questions
- » Support Group Lesson Plans

Support groups exist to break feelings of isolation that often lead to feelings of despair, low self-esteem and high-risk behaviors. These groups provide important services to LGBTQ youth in three main areas: social, support and education.

Social

- Support groups offer LGBTQ youth a safe space to meet others like themselves.
- These groups serve the purpose of breaking the isolation among LGBTQ youth that often leads toward developing feelings of despair, low self-esteem, and high-risk behaviors.
- School dropout rates, absenteeism, drug and alcohol use, and other high-risk behaviors. This can be prevented and reduced through the direct efforts of support groups.
- Through support groups, LGBTQ youth can find and develop a sense of community within the context of the broader school community.

Support

- Support groups are led by trained professionals in group work, homophobia, sexual orientation, and how to create safe school climates for LGBTQ youth.
- Confidentiality within support groups is necessary to provide youth with the opportunity to offer and receive support from their peers.
- Through support, youth can internalize a sense of pride and self-worth that can be impossible to achieve through isolation in a hostile environment.

Education

- Support groups provide youth with the opportunity to ask their questions in a safe, healthy environment.
- Adult facilitators provide education regarding homophobia, sexual orientation, school policies regarding harassment, healthy coping strategies, and school and community resources.

EXPECTATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

The following is a list of ground rules and expectations of support group facilitators by the Out for Equity program.

- **Participate in facilitator trainings.**
- **Maintain appropriate boundaries** with students.
- **Work with students to establish ground rules** that emphasize the importance of respect and confidentiality. These could include: respect different ideas or beliefs, take turns talking, listen, everyone participating has the right to pass, no blaming, no assumptions, etc.
- **Do not transport students in your car.**
- **Make a consistent weekly commitment to co-facilitate the group.**
- **Allow adequate planning and debriefing time** with the co-facilitator.
- **Maintain open communication** with the co-facilitator and program coordinator.
- **Work with youth to brainstorm ideas** and troubleshoot problems.
- **Work closely with your school's GSA Advisors** regarding issues of school climate.
- **Consistently maintain tracking forms** and notes.
- **Distribute and collect mid-year and year-end student assessments** regarding group satisfaction.
- **Plan activities** such as games, discussions, videos, and approved guest speakers with the youth.

- **Cover items on “Support Group Topics” list.**
- **Emphasize that support groups are intended to contribute to the emotional well-being and academic success of students.** Please remind your students that class time and schoolwork must come first. When students have a test or are behind in their work, they should attend class instead of group. Group time is counterproductive if it interrupts academic success.

Often groups are hard to get started. It is important to continue making announcements and hanging posters even when attendance is low. Support group visibility and consistency is comforting to those not yet ready to attend.

Below is a sample announcement:

ongoing PA announcement

(Please read once per week on an ongoing basis.)

A confidential support group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer students is available in our school. If you have questions about sexual orientation or gender identity, or simply want a safe place to talk about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer, this group is available for you.

For more information about the time and location of the group, see: _____.

Thank you!

LGBTQ YOUTH COUNSELING GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are applicable to those who provide counseling in any capacity, not just those facilitating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer support groups.

Always maintain primary counseling skills (empathy, understanding, encouragement, empowerment, education, affirmation, etc.)

Be aware of basic ethical guidelines for counseling, and follow them when working with LGBTQ clients (just as you would with other clients.)

Use inclusive language such as “partner,” “significant other,” and “companion” rather than assuming “boyfriend/husband” and “girlfriend/wife.” Never assume that you know a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

Express opposition to sexism, transphobia, heterosexism, homophobia and other “isms” in both your personal and professional lives.

Be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer affirmative. Be supportive of LGBTQ coworkers, and, if you are straight or cisgender, use the power that accompanies your privilege to serve as an ally for LGBTQ rights.

If you are LGBTQ, be willing to identify yourself if it is safe to do so.

Be educated on the special dynamics of same-sex relationships (isolation, dating, family dynamics, HIV, religion, intersectionalities, etc.)

If you are unfamiliar with a subcultural issue, word, or symbol that your LGBTQ clients use, ask for clarification. Allow your clients to educate you when necessary.

Be familiar with resources (e.g. books organizations, videos, support groups, bookstores, etc.) available locally (community, state) and nationally.

Encourage your professional organizations and employers to provide training and supervision on LGBTQ issues.

Take political action in the larger society to confront sexism, transphobia, homophobia and heterosexism. Advocate for legislative and social reform.

Continually examine and address your own issues around homophobia, transphobia, sexism, heterosexism and gender roles. Process these feelings with others, and remain aware of transference and counter-transference issues in the therapeutic relationship.

Ask questions. When you make a statement you close a door. When you ask a question you open a door for the expression of thoughts and ideas.

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

All support groups go through similar stages of development. It will be useful for group facilitators to be aware of the needs of members at each stage. Group facilitators can help each group meet its goal by providing specific interventions at each stage. The following section outlines the main features of each stage and the role of facilitators during each stage.

beginning

- Members may be anxious about what to expect. Facilitators should help each member enter the group and feel welcome.
- Members need to feel they are part of a cohesive group. Facilitators should point out commonalities among members, establish group guidelines and goals and establish patterns of communication.

middle

- Members could possibly be struggling to be understood. Facilitators should establish norms with the youth that encourage responsibility for supporting each other. Encourage experimentation and define the way conflict and differences are expressed.
- Members will test the facilitator to see whether or not the facilitator cares about and accepts them. Facilitators should work to develop members' trust so that they can express their feelings without fear of being rejected or punished.
- Members begin to express themselves and share more of their feelings and experiences. Facilitators should monitor the group's tone and point out behaviors that encourage disclosure.

end

- Members need to talk about successful efforts at trying new ideas learned from the group. Facilitators should begin to prepare members for ending.
- Members start to move apart and seek outside relationships. Facilitators should help the group evaluate their experiences in the support group.
- Members may have any number of reactions to ending group including denial, regression, flight or acceptance. Facilitators should outline these feelings.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

questions related to group and group process

- Three things I would really like to get from group this year are...
- Two social events I wouldn't miss are...
- The thing I find most frustrating about group is...
- What I like to see happen in group this year is...
- The thing I like best about group is...
- What I'm willing to contribute to group is...
- The main reason I think people don't come to group is...
- Three places I've seen signs for group...
- Three places where there should be signs for group are...
- One way we could make group more visible is...
- Three of our group rules are...
- The last time I heard something positive about LGBTQ people in school was...
- The last time I heard a homophobic remark in school that was targeted at me or at LGBTQ people was...
- If I had to choose three most important aspects of my identity, I would choose...
- One way I think our school could be safer around LGBTQ issues is...

other topics for open-ended questions

identity-getting to know you

- Important components of my identity besides sexual orientation and gender include...
- My favorite holiday is...
- My favorite thing about being LGBTQ is...
- The most challenging thing about being LGBTQ is...

LGBTQ history

- What is Stonewall?
- Name three famous GLBT people in history (not current artists)
- What First Lady had a female lover, in addition to her husband? (Roosevelt)

school climate

- On a scale of one to ten, I would rate my school a ___ on safety around LG-BTQ issues.
- Name three safe staff members.

- My ideal school situation would be...
- Three steps that I would take if I were being harassed in school are...

meeting people

- The best place to meet a potential date is...
- The hardest thing about meeting people is...
- How do you know if someone is LG-BTQ?

coping strategies: healthy vs. unhealthy

- When I'm stressed out, I have a tendency to...
- The emotion I have the hardest time dealing with is...
- My support system includes...

community resources

- Name three organizations that serve the LGBTQ communities.
- What does PFLAG stand for?

INTAKE FORM FOR NEW GROUP MEMBERS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Emergency Contact Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Emergency Contact Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Reasons client wishes to attend LGBTQ support group:

Intake Checklist:

___ Student understands the expectations of group participation and interaction.

___ Student understands the expectations for confidentiality and agrees to keep information divulged in the group confidential.

___ Student understands that academic achievement takes precedence over group attendance.

___ Students understand that they may discontinue participation in group at any time.

___ Students understands that he or she has the right to expect to be heard and receive supportive, non-judgmental feedback.

___ Student has no mental health or academic barriers to participation in the group.

___ **Students will be admitted to the LGBTQ support group based upon the intake interview.**

___ **Student will NOT be admitted to the LGBTQ support group based upon the intake interview.**

Additional information or referrals have been made for this student, including:

Intake Coordinator: _____

Support Group Facilitator: _____

POST-INTAKE QUESTIONS

1. Why do you come to group?
2. What do you hope to get from group?
3. What are your expectations for group?
4. What are your expectations from other group members?
5. What does coming to group mean to you?
6. How can the group improve to make you feel more comfortable/safe/etc.?
7. What LGBTQ issues would you like to talk about in group, or get more information on?

LESSON PLANS

The following are sample lesson plans developed by Christy McCoy, LGSW, school social worker. The lessons are designed to cover a wide range of topics and to strengthen group cohesiveness.

first group meeting: introduction

OBJECTIVES:

- Begin the process of developing cohesiveness and establishing trust.
- Establish group rules and consequences for breaking group rules.

MATERIALS

Magazines, scissors, tape, glue, poster board, and construction paper

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Establish group rules & display on poster board.
- Each group member creates a collage representing who they are and what they hope to gain from group, allow 15 minutes for this.
- Once each member has completed their collage, they will present the collage to the rest of the group. The remainder of the group session should be devoted to the presentations.

CLOSE

Pair students. Have each student make a positive observation about their partner's collage.

attraction and the process of coming out

OBJECTIVES

- Identify what qualities attract us to another.
- Discuss feelings associated with coming

out.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- What qualities do you find attractive in another person?
- When and how did you first become aware of your sexual preference?
- What kind of feelings did you experience when you first realized your sexual preference?
- For those of you who have come out, who did you first come out to?
- What are the obstacles that make it difficult to come out?
- What support or advice would you give to someone who hasn't come out yet or is questioning their sexual identity?

CLOSE

Where can someone go if they are questioning their identity? Review community resources.

love, lust and infatuation

OBJECTIVES

- Define and make a distinction between love, lust and infatuation.
- Identify the importance of loving self before one can love another
- Evaluate unhealthy ways of fulfilling one's need for love.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Describe what love looks like and feels like.

(Love, Lust and Infatuation continued)

- How do you know you are loved?
- What is the difference between lust, infatuation and love?
- What qualities define a loving relationship?
- What role does attraction play in love?
- What things can get in the way of giving or receiving love?

CLOSE

If you want a loving relationship in your life with yourself or another person, what steps should you take to make that happen?

*Adapted from Values and Choices by Sandy Naughton et al.

relationships

OBJECTIVES

- Identify the core values that define a healthy relationship.
- Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Establish some guidelines for improving current relationships.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- What do we need in a relationship? Make a list.
- Of these things, what can live without?
- Discuss the core values of trust, respect, responsibility, equality, and fairness. Explain how these values are interconnected.
- Describe what a healthy relationship looks like using the above values.
- Describe an unhealthy relationship.
- Is there a relationship in your life that is missing one of the above values? Ask if anyone would like to describe how this relationship impacts them as a person.
- How long does it take for trust to develop in

a relationship?

- What happens if someone is dishonest or breaks that trust?

CLOSE

What steps can you take to create and maintain a healthy relationship in your life?

sexual health

OBJECTIVES

- Differentiate between sexuality and sex.
- Provide information regarding sexually transmitted infections.
- Develop a personal protection plan.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- What is the difference between sex and sexuality?
- Write the following S.T.I.'s on individual pieces of paper: Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Human Papilloma Virus, Hepatitis B, H.I.V./A.I.D.S., Herpes, Crabs, Syphilis, Trichomonas, Vaginitis. Give a piece of paper to each group member. Begin with one S.T.I. at a time, ask what the group already knows, dispel myths and fill in the missing facts.
- What can you do to protect yourself from getting a sexually transmitted infection?

CLOSE

If I had questions about sex, I would . . . (Provide a list of community resources such as Healthstart, Planned Parenthood, Red Door Clinic, Model Cities, Face to Face, Minnesota A.I.D.S. Project, etc.)

drugs and alcohol

OBJECTIVES

- Analyze and develop an understanding of how drugs and alcohol play a role in one's life.

(Drugs and Alcohol continued)

- Create a daily plan to establish a positive state of mind.
- Provide healthy alternatives to calm one's mind and deal with those issues that are troubling.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- What role do drugs or alcohol play in your life? Why?
- What do drugs and alcohol really mask?
- What is missing when we have to use drugs or alcohol to cope?
- What is something simple you can do every morning to put yourself in a positive state of mind?
- What are some healthy steps we can take to calm our mind or to temporarily escape chaotic situations?
- What should we do to deal with our hurt/pain/ sadness/anger?

CLOSE

What will you do the next time you are hurting, angry, or sad?

strengthening the group

OBJECTIVES

- This activity should be done during the middle phase of the group. The group should have established norms and trust.
- Strengthen cohesiveness and shared understanding.

MATERIALS

Several strips of blank pieces of paper, pens, and a bowl or basket.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Pass out enough strips of paper for the total number of group members to each in-

dividual member. For example, if there are five group members, each group member should have five strips of paper.

- Each member anonymously asks the other members a question and then folds the pieces of paper and hands them to the facilitator. The facilitator places the folded pieces of paper in the basket.
- Before writing their questions, the members are reminded of the group rules. They are also reminded that the questions must be respectful and appropriate. Individual members have the right to pass.
- Once all the questions are collected, the facilitator reads the question aloud. If a question is inappropriate, the facilitator has the right to pull the question. This is also explained to the group. Example: Christy - What is your favorite book?

CLOSE

What is one thing you learned about someone today that you did not know before?

self-reflection

OBJECTIVES

- Recognize strengths as gifts and assets.
- Begin to reflect on thoughts, behaviors, or past issues that are current barriers to healthy relationships with self and others.
- Establish a plan to begin to eliminate barriers.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- What are your strengths?
- What areas about yourself would you like to enhance or improve?
- What is one thing that is holding you back or haunting you that won't let you move on or live up to your full potential?

(Self-Reflection continued)

- What have you done in the past to deal with this obstacle?
- What steps are you going to take today to get rid of this baggage?
- After the group has discussed their responses to the above questions, give each student a piece of stationary paper and an envelope. Next ask each student to state their responses in a letter to themselves. Ensure the group that the only person to see these responses is the individual. Therefore if a group member didn't share something in group, they could write their response at this time. Once the letter is written, each member should address his/her envelope and seal it. This activity should be completed during the middle phase of the group process. The letters should be mailed to the student at the close of group. This provides each member the opportunity to reflect on his/her growth.

CLOSE

How can you remind yourself of your successes and goals on a daily basis?

the qualities I admire most about you are

OBJECTIVES

- Identify the strengths of various group members as seen through the eyes of other members. This activity should be conducted during the ending phase of group development to allow members to reflect on the assets of others.
- Enhance self-awareness.
- Validate role as a group member.

MATERIALS

Markers and blank sheets of paper cut in quar-

ters and markers.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Hand out enough pieces of paper for each member to write down what they admire about all the members in the group. Allow ten minutes. The facilitator should decide ahead of time if they would like to participate.
- One by one, each member will be the center of attention where the other members will verbally share what they admire about that individual.
- Once a response has been shared, that member will give the written response to the individual. After all the responses are read for one individual, they can keep the responses as a reminder of the group and of their strengths.

CLOSE

Where can you keep these written responses so that when you need a lift, you can refer back to them?

group mural

OBJECTIVES

- Identify common bonds.
- Celebrate each individual's uniqueness.

MATERIALS

Markers and a long sheet of butcher paper

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Tape a long sheet of butcher paper or a couple of poster boards on the wall and provide several markers or crayons to the group.
- Instruct the group to draw a group mural depicting the things they do in common and the things they do that are more uniquely their own.

CLOSE

Identify one thing you learned about another group member that you did not know previ-



Lesson Plans

personal capacity

- » Role Playing to Counter Harrasment
- » What's So Bad About "That's So Gay"?

power

- » Power + Prejudice = Oppression
- » Where do I have access to power?
 - » Heterosexual Questionnaire

examining difference

- » Riddle Scale
- » Demographic Guessing Game

SOFFA (significant others, friends, families, allies)

- » What is a Family?
- » How to Be a Super Activist and/or Ally

gender identity

- » Learning the Language
- » Leveling the Palying Field
 - » The Pronoun Game
 - » Getting it Done

This section will provide practical tools for educators and GSA participants wishing to incorporate LGBTQ issues into classrooms and meetings. The lessons cover a variety of topics and target students kindergarten through college.

Educators and GSA participants should be prepared for a wide range of responses when raising LGBTQ issues. Some people may show particular interest in certain topics, others may become embarrassed, uncomfortable or respond with hostility.

When initially raising LGBTQ issues, educators and GSA participants should be relaxed and non-confrontational. In class, LGBTQ issues are best introduced as emerging from the class content,

examples could include:

- An LGBTQ author/book/poem during English
- An LGBTQ civil rights activist during Civics
- An LGBTQ Scientist during Science

Students should know that the discussion must remain respectful. If students remain hostile to the issues educators can respond that over 10% of the population is LGBTQ and it's important to learn about all communities so that we can celebrate eachothers differences.

By emphasizing that LGBTQ people are a part of all different communities and cultures educators can help students see that they need to learn about respecting the rights of people around them.

ROLE-PLAYING TO COUNTER HARRASMENT

Grade Level

6-12

Objectives

To recognize and combat prejudicial actions.

Student Activities

1. Brainstorm individual differences for which people are harassed or discriminated against (i.e. racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, ability, appearance, etc.)
2. Discuss the ways people harass others using the chart below:

Words (that are disrespectful, cutting, degrading, hurtful in any language)

- What you say
- What you write
- What you draw

Actions (either in front of someone or behind their back that are disrespectful, cutting, degrading, hurtful, etc.)

- Using your hands
- Using facial expressions
- Using your body
- Using violence

3. Role-play harassment by matching words and actions with individual differences (i.e. how can you be disrespectful of someone's appearance using spoken words?)
4. Role-play the same scenario showing how one can be respectful or how one can intervene in a positive way.

Extensions

- Students can write about personal experiences based on the activity.
- Role plays can be performed or video taped and used as discussion starters.

WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT "THAT'S SO GAY"?

Grade Level

3-8

Objectives

1. Students will explore how the phrase "that's so gay" is hurtful to students;
2. Students will begin to understand and express their opinions, verbally and in writing, about how language can be used in bullying;
3. Students will write letters expressing their viewpoints about bullying in schools.

Materials

Chart paper, Markers, Journals, Pencil

Student Activities

1. In your journals, spend a few minutes responding to these questions: Have you ever been called a name? How did that name-calling make you feel?
2. On tables or in different places around your classroom will be "graffiti boards"—pieces of chart paper with questions at the top of the paper displaying the questions below. Go to each board and read the question at the top. Use a marker to write your answer to or thoughts about the question somewhere on the board. If you don't know an answer to one of the questions, that's okay. Just write whatever comes to mind.

(Note: Graffiti boards should be prepared in advance; students may circulate freely or, depending on space limitations, move around the classroom in a more structured way.)

Questions for graffiti boards:

- What do you think of when you hear the word "gay"?
- In what ways have you heard the word "gay" used?
- Why do you think people sometimes use the phrase "that's so gay"?
- How would you feel if someone said "that's so gay" about something you were doing or about something you liked?

- What would you do if you heard someone say “that’s so gay” or another unacceptable remark?
3. Once everyone has had a chance to examine each of the boards, circulate a second time and read other students’ answers. Make note of anything that stands out to you as surprising or informative.
 4. As a class, come together to discuss the questions and the answers you read and wrote. (Note: Clarify any definitions, and talk about why words like “that’s so gay,” “gay,” “fag,” “sissy” or anything else that came up are inappropriate. Try to think about why these particular words are used, and encourage students to discuss specific examples.)
 5. In your notebook or journal, write a letter based on the discussion you had as a class. You may want to imagine you are writing to a school newspaper, to the principal or to a bully. Write your opinion about name-calling in school, why it happens, and how you and your classmates might be able to put a stop to it.
 6. In small groups, share and discuss the letters you wrote.

Actions

Develop a handbook of rules and guidelines for your school, with the goal of preventing name calling and creating a safer school environment. Your handbook should include specific rules about using appropriate language, such as the use of the phrase “that’s so gay.” You can also be creative with it, incorporating stories, illustrations or even comics to communicate why “that’s so gay” is inappropriate and how it, as well as other types of name-calling, can hurt others.

POWER + PREJUDICE = OPPRESSION

Grade Level

9-12

Objectives

To recognize the ways in which power influences discrimination and change.

Materials

Chart paper, tape, crayons, markers, *Where Do I Have Access to Power?* worksheets, index cards, envelopes

Student Activities

1. Have participants, in groups of 4-6, brainstorm on a sheet of paper a list of people who have power in a school. (5-10 minutes).
2. Each group will read their list and post their brainstorm sheet on a wall.
3. On a separate sheet of chart paper, instruct participants to draw what prejudice looks like in their school or organization.
4. Each group will share their illustrations and then discuss them within the larger group, finding common symbols that the drawings share.
5. Explain that power + prejudice = oppression. Explain that power + understanding = acceptance. Have participants individually complete the *Where Do I Have Access to Power?* worksheet.
6. Whole group will share the experience of completing the worksheet. Was anything surprising? Participants do not need to share the specifics of the information they wrote on their worksheets.
7. Participants will work in pairs to discuss one promise each person can do to help promote change within the next six months.
8. Participants will write that promise on an index card.
9. Partners will witness each others' card-writing by signing that person's card.
10. Participants will place the card in an envelope and write their home address on the outside.
11. Facilitator will mail cards to participants in six months.

*Developed by Eileen Browning and Alan Horowitz as part of the Common Threads Youth Empowerment Project.

WHERE DO I HAVE ACCESS TO POWER?

Multiple Identities	Empowered	Disempowered
Ethnicity/Race: African American, White, Latin@, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native, You Define: _____		
Gender: Ciswoman, Transwoman, Cisman, Transman, Gender Queer, Questioning You Define: _____		
Sexual Orientation: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer, Heterosexual, Asexual, Questioning You Define: _____		
Religion: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindi, Pagan, Atheist, Agnostic, Nature Based You Define: _____		
Ability: Physical/Mental/Emotional/ Multiple Impairments You Define: _____		
Age: Youth (0-21), Middle Aged (22-65), Mature		
Education: Junior High, High School, College, Graduate School, Post-Graduate Studies		
Class: Upper, Middle, Lower, Below Poverty		
Location: (Where did you grow up?/Where now?)		
Size: Large or small frame, short or tall, over/underweight		

RIDDLE SCALE

Grade Level

9-12

Objectives

1. Use the Riddle Scale in noting the various ways people deal with difference.
2. Examine their own attitudes and beliefs about sexual orientation and gender identity in the context of social justice.

Materials

Prepare 7 sheets of paper, each with one of the following written in large computer type, so they are easily readable from the back of the classroom. Make the first word bold. Put each into a clear document protector.

Repulsion: This is wrong. LGBTQ people are bad, sick and immoral.

Pity: LGBTQ people need our help to become more normal (like us.)

Tolerance: I'll leave them alone as long as they leave me alone.

Minimizing differences: "I don't think of you as LGBTQ. To me you're just you."

Support: Everyone deserves equal rights, no matter how I may feel about them.

Admiration: I admire the strength it takes to deal with this. I'm willing to work on my negative attitudes.

Nurturance: This is an important part of our diversity. I'm open to good relationships with LGBTQ people and willing to speak up for fair treatment.

Student Activities

1. Mix up the order of the prepared sheets and hand them out to any 7 students in the room. Have them stand in front of the room, holding the papers in front of their chests, so all students in the room can see them.
2. Explain that the bold words are feelings that people may have about anyone different from themselves—these differences might include race, religion, country of origin, etc. For today's discussion, the differences focus on a range of possible reactions to LGBTQ people. The job of the people in the class is to arrange those with papers so they form a continuum from what they would least like others to feel about them to what they would most want others to feel about them.
3. Read the sheets aloud in random order. Start by asking students what the worst reaction would be and proceed from there.
4. Once the continuum has been completed, ask the class, which point best, Represents what they see as the climate in their school. (Many classes say, "I'll leave them alone, as long as they leave me alone.") Ask what they see and hear that makes them feel that way.
5. Ask: What helps people move along this continuum to become more respectful of LGBTQ people? (Education is often part of the answer.)

DEMOGRAPHIC GUESSING GAME

Grade Level

4-12

Objectives

1. Students will attempt to guess things about a person by his/her appearance.
2. Students will work in cooperative groups.
3. Students will observe that judgement about a person based on their appearance is most often speculative and untrue.

Materials

- 1 chart labeled A-E & 1-7 per 4 students (see illustration to the right)
- Easel
- Index cards
- Pencils
- Bell
- 5 chairs
- 5 sheets of paper labeled "A"- "E" for panelist to hold
- Flip chart with 7 questions (see *Student Activities*)

	A	B	C	D	E
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					

Teaching Suggestions

1. Five panelists will sit in the front of the room before the lesson begins. Each will hold a sign labeled A, B, C, D, etc. In advance of the lesson a diverse mixture of panelists should be selected. Differences can include ability, age, race, nationality, sexual orientation, occupation, etc. Panelists should be instructed to answer questions honestly and succinctly.
2. In order for this lesson to be most effective students should not be prepped. In this way, they'll not be able to form any preconceived ideas before the lesson.
3. This is not a lesson about sexuality. It is about cultural diversity and difference. Since sexual content is never discussed in this lesson it is not necessary to receive parental consent.
4. It is important that staff is aware of the contents of the lesson before presentation so that everyone will be aware of the lesson's objective.
5. The lesson can be done in groups as large as 70. All lessons should be timed as close together as possible so there is no cross talk in between lessons.
6. It is best that the lesson be presented to entire grade levels instead of individual classes.
7. To facilitate easy management, the location of each group should be determined before the lesson begins. As students enter the room they can count off into groups and go to designated spaces around the room. One person in each group will be handed a crayon/marker. He/she will be the designated recorder.

Opener

1. Review ground rules for cooperative learning (i.e. respect, listen).
2. Ask: “What can you tell about a person by looking at them? Do you sometimes assume things about people because of the way they look?”

Student Activities

1. Directions to the students: “There are 4-5 people sitting on this panel. You will need to work with your group to guess 7 things about the people here. You will have two minutes to answer each question. There are no right answers. Work together to answer the questions. At the end of two minutes a bell will ring. By that time the recorder should have all answers written down.” Present the questions one at a time. They are as follows:
 - How old is the panelist?
 - What is the panelist’s favorite singer or musical group?
 - What is the panelist’s occupation?
 - What is the panelist’s race/ethnicity?
 - What is the panelist’s gender identity?
 - What is the panelist’s sexual orientation?
 - What is the panelist’s favorite hobby/recreational activity?
2. Have students share their impressions about panelist A. Panelist A will then tell about themselves. Repeat for the rest of the panelists. Post guessing boards around the room as the lesson proceeds.
3. Say: “Some of your answers or some of the questions may have surprised you. This is because often you cannot guess things about people just by the way they look. You can ask panelists questions about themselves. Write a question on an index card.”
4. Collect index cards. Facilitate the asking of questions. Screen inappropriate questions. Try and vary the questions between panelists.

Closure

1. It is important to have closure with the panelists without the students present. Schedule a 15-30 minute block of time for debriefing.
2. Encourage students to continue talking in their classes.
3. Revisit the lesson in a week or two. See if there are any questions/comments.

Feedback

Have students write a 1-2 paragraph assessment of the lesson. What did you learn? Did anything surprise you? Make you uncomfortable?

Modifications

- Large group discussion
- How did you make your guesses?
- Were you surprised about any of your answers?
- Were your judgements fair?

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

Grade Level

K-3

Objectives

1. Students will recognize that a family is a group of people who live together and support one another.
2. Students will recognize that family structures are different.

Materials

Drawing paper or guideline drawing paper, crayons.

Student Activities

1. Students will draw a picture of their family and write one sentence beginning with: My family...
2. Students will share their drawings by reading sentences and describing drawings.
3. Students and teacher discuss what do all of their drawings/families have in common. Write responses on a comparison T-chart on the board.
4. Students and teacher discuss what is different about their drawings/families. Write responses on the comparison T-chart.
5. Discuss the comparison T-chart.
6. Ask students to describe other possible family structures.

Extensions

The class can use their drawings to create a follow up presentation by making a big book, multimedia presentation, diorama display, puppet shows, etc.

Feedback

1. Observe students reading and writing.
2. Evaluate students' understanding of concepts based on oral responses to discussion.

HOW TO BE A SUPER ACTIVIST AND/OR ALLY

Grade Level

Middle School - High School

Materials

Newsprint and markers; handouts, *14 Ways Homophobia and Transphobia Affect Everyone* and *Ways to Be a LGBTQ Ally or Activist*; Leader's Resource, *Ways to Fight Homophobia and Transphobia*

Student Activities

1. Ask the group how they think homophobia and transphobia affect LGBTQ youth—write the participants' responses on newsprint on the board. (Help them to think of answers such as: they hurt them; they can cause depression; they make LGBTQ youth think that they aren't as good as other people; they can lead to drug and alcohol use, etc.)
2. Next have participants count off so they can form into groups of four or five. Say that they will have about 10 minutes to discuss whether or not homophobia and transphobia affect straight youth. If they think that the answer is yes, ask them to come up with 5-6 examples.
3. Bring the groups back together and ask them to share some of the things they came up with. Record their answers on the newsprint.
4. Distribute and discuss the handout *14 Ways Homophobia and Transphobia Affect Everyone*.
5. Ask participants to get back into their groups. Tell them they are now going to spend about ten minutes discussing ways that LGBTQ youth and their straight allies can fight homophobia and transphobia. Distribute the handout, *Ways to Be a LGBTQ Ally or Activist*. Ask participants to first spend about five minutes filling in the handout individually. Tell them you will let them know when the five minutes are up.
6. Once the five minutes are up, ask the participants to talk in their groups about ways they identified to fight homophobia and transphobia. Tell participants that they can add to their original list if someone in their group has a good idea they hadn't already thought of.

7. Ask everyone to reassemble. Ask for volunteers to share ways in which they think they can act as an ally of LGBTQ youth. Write the ideas on a sheet of newsprint. Add checkmarks beside similar or second suggestions that have already been made. Ask participants to add to their own handout any suggestions that they hear for the first time that seem especially good to them. Include the suggestions from the Leader's Resource, *Ways to Fight Homophobia and Transphobia*, if no one suggests them. Ask participants to add asterisks (stars) on their handouts by any action(s) they are willing to take in the future. Ask them to commit to taking those actions consistently (whenever the need arises) and to add their signatures to their handouts if they haven't already done so.

Discussion Questions

1. Did you learn anything today that surprised you?
2. Were you surprised about ways in which homophobia affects your life? The lives of your friends and family?
3. In view of what you know now, will you take action to oppose homophobia and transphobia when you witness them?

HETEROSEXUAL QUESTIONNAIRE ACTIVITY

Grade Level

Middle School - High School

Materials

Handout, *Heterosexual Questionnaire*

Student Activities

1. Students will draw a picture of their family and write one sentence beginning with: My family...
2. Explain to the group that, when lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer youth are beginning to 'come out,' they are often asked questions that are nearly impossible to answer. In order to help participants understand the heterosexist bias in our culture, you will ask them to grapple with these same questions in regard to heterosexuality.
3. Say that you will give them each a handout. They will break up into groups of four or five and try to come up with answers. Say that you want them to try to answer each question as well as to react to the questions as a whole. Irrespective of each participant's sexual orientation, everyone should attempt to answer as though he/she is heterosexual.
4. After about 10 minutes, ask everyone to reassemble in the large group. Ask the participants the following discussion questions:

Discussion Questions

- Did you find the questions hard to answer? Were some harder than others? Which? What, specifically, was so difficult?
- How did the questions make you feel?
- What does it say about our society that lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer youth are asked similar questions?
- What can you do in the future if you hear someone asking such questions?

HETEROSEXUAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

1. What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
3. Is it possible your heterosexuality is just a phase you may grow out of?
4. Could it be that your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of the same gender?
5. If you've had heterosexual sex, how do you know you are heterosexual?
6. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexual tendencies? How did they react?
7. Why do heterosexuals feel compelled to seduce others into their lifestyle?
8. Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just keep it quiet?
9. Would you want your children to be heterosexual, knowing the problems they'd face?
10. A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexual men. Do you consider it safe to expose children to heterosexual males in positions of power?
11. With all the societal support for marriage, the divorce rate is spiraling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?
12. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
13. Considering overpopulation, how could the human race survive if everyone is straight and reproducing?
14. Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don't you fear they might be inclined to influence you in the direction of their own leanings?
15. Heterosexuals are notorious for assigning themselves and one another rigid, stereotyped gender roles. Why must you cling to such unhealthy role-playing?
16. How can you enjoy an emotionally fulfilling experience with a person of another gender when there are such vast differences between you? How can a cisman know what pleases a ciswoman sexually or vice-versa?
17. Shouldn't you ask your obviously straight cohorts to tone it down? Wouldn't that improve your image?
18. Why are heterosexuals so promiscuous?
19. Why do you attribute heterosexuality to so many famous LGBTQ people? Is it to justify your own heterosexuality?
20. There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that might enable you to change if you really want to. After all, you never deliberately chose to be a heterosexual, did you? Have you considered aversion therapy or Heterosexuals Anonymous?

LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

Grade Level

9-12

Objectives

1. Learn community specific definitions around gender identity.
2. Examine their own attitudes and beliefs about gender identity.

Materials

Index cards in several colors, markers, copies of definitions list for everyone from the *Learning About LGBTQ Issues* section

Prep

Copy some of the words and corresponding definitions onto the index cards, use one color for words and another color for the definitions. Select enough words and definitions for each participant to have a least one card. Do not create a definition for “Man” or “Woman,” and do not include a blank definition color card for either of them, as the first defeats the purpose of the exercise and the second tends to be confusing. Shuffle the cards so that the definitions and words are no longer near each other. (If you reuse these index cards, it is useful to keep them matched until the activity is about to begin to ensure that none are missing.)

Student Activities

1. Hand out index cards to each participant. Then give them about five minutes to find the matching cards and definitions.
2. Advise participants that they can ask each other for help as they try to match words to definitions.
3. Once everyone has a match, have each person read the “words” cards (not the definition cards), one at a time. After each word, the facilitator should read the matched definition from the list.
4. If the person made the correct match, take both cards for future use.
5. If the person incorrectly matched the word and definition, have the person who has the correct definition say so, and then collect only the word and correct definition cards, leaving the incorrect definition to be volunteered when the card with the correct word is read.
6. If done correctly, with no cards lost, the word cards for “Man” and “Woman” should have no matches. Ask participants to think for a moment about how there really is no good word-based definition for either man or woman; especially once transgender people are taken into account.
7. Conclude the activity by providing a list of the words and definitions to everyone for future reference, and answer any lingering questions about the meaning of various words.

*Adapted from: GLSEN's *The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide: Where's the "T" in GSA?*

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

Grade Level

Middle-College

Objectives

1. Examine their own attitudes and beliefs about gender identity in the context of social justice.
2. Examine their own privileges around gender and gender identity.

Materials

Sheets of statements, masking tape

Prep

Move any furniture in the room to the perimeter, and mark the center of the room's floor with masking tape. Then mark six lines on both sides of the center line with tape, making the distance between the tape marks about a foot apart.

Student Activities

1. Have people form a line shoulder to shoulder in the center of the room.
2. Ask participants to listen to each statement and follow the instruction at the end if it is true for them; the instructions are either "move forward" or "move backwards."
3. Ask people to stay in a direct line when they move so as not to get in anyone else's way and should only step back or forward on tape mark with each statement. If the statement is not true for them, people should not move from their spot.
4. Read the following statements. You may want to review the vocabulary used before starting the activity.
5. When all the statements have been read, have people look around the room to see where everyone ended up.

Discussion Questions

Then have people break into groups of 3-5 members and discuss the following:

- What did you feel during the activity?
- What were you thinking as each statement was read?
- Did you look around at where other people were standing as more statements were read? Why or why not?
- Have you thought about the issues mentioned in these statements before? if so, why and in what situations?
- What additional statements could be added to the list?
- How do you think this activity is a spatial representation of privilege and oppression?

*Adapted from: GLSEN's *The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide: Where's the "T" in GSA?*

STATEMENTS FOR *LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD*

1. If at a meeting you have ever been asked to make copies or coffee because of your gender, take a step back.
2. If you have never had difficulty filling out the gender boxes on legal documents, take one step forward.
3. If you have ever been accused of using a fake ID because of the gender listed on your ID, take a step back.
4. If you have never been told you have a mental disorder because your gender doesn't "match" your gender assigned at birth, take a step forward.
5. If you have never been harassed in a public bathroom for your gender presentation, take a step forward.
6. If your opinions or feelings have never been dismissed through the statement, "It must be that time of the month," or "Are you're hormone levels off?" take a step forward.
7. If you are planning to pursue a career in a field dominated by people of your gender (for example, law, medicine and military are dominated by cismen, while ciswomen tend to dominate the teaching field), take a step forward.
8. If you have never been told something to the effect of "You're not a real woman" or "You're not a real man," take one step forward.
9. If you can see representations of your gender identity in the media every day, take one step forward.
10. If the pronouns you prefer are used regularly in the books you've read in class, take one step forward.
11. If your gender presentation has ever induced discomfort or confusion in a stranger, take one step back.
12. If the pronouns you prefer are not used by the people you interact with, take one step back.
13. If you have ever lost a job or been told not to go into a certain field because of your gender identity, take one step back.
14. If you have never had strangers assume you are a sex worker because of your gender identity, take one step forward.

THE PRONOUN GAME

Grade Level

Middle-College

Objectives

1. Examine their own attitudes and beliefs about gender identity.
2. Examine use of pronouns and learn more about gender neutrality.

Materials

Flip-chart paper, markers, pronoun definition sheet

Prep

Write several questions on the flip-chart paper. These should be guiding questions about family, pets, interests or jobs that will encourage participants to talk about themselves. Post or give out pronoun definition sheets.

Student Activities

1. First go over the pronoun sheet making sure that everyone understands how they should be used.
2. Divide the people into groups of three.
3. Ask each group member to pick a different set of gender neutral pronouns.
4. Ask each member of the groups to read the statements from the chart, talking about their own experiences, to each other using their set of pronouns.
5. After everyone has shared, bring the group back together and have them share any issues they had with remembering how to use the pronouns.
6. Next each person will introduce one of their small group members using the pronouns that person had used to describe themselves earlier.

Rationale

- Discussions about preferred gender pronouns (PGPs) can be time-consuming and can easily derail an agenda, meeting or conversation, so starting with introductions of names and PGPs can help.
- If the wrong PGPs are used people can feel disrespected or uncomfortable. Correct the mistake immediately, treat transgender people like everyone else.
- It is important to ask people respectfully what pronouns they prefer, or if they reject pronouns and wish to be referred to by name only, do that. Asking someone their PGP is most times seen as much more respectful than asking what their gender or gender identity is.

Pronouns 101

Type	Name	Example
Feminine	She, her, her	She went to the store. I spoke to her . It was her apple.
Masculine	He, him, his	He went to the store. I spoke to him . It was his apple.
Gender Neutral	They, them, their	They went to the store. I spoke to them . It was their apple.
Gender Neutral	Ze, zir/zem, zirs/zes	Ze went to the store. I spoke to zir/zem . It was zirs/zes apple.
Gender Neutral	Ze, hir, hirs	Ze went to the store. I spoke to hir . It was hirs apple.

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language.



I'm seeing Jeremy this weekend. They're going to take me skateboarding. Then I'm going to go with them to the movies.

Brittany brought me to this awesome concert! Ze is so fun. I can't wait to hang out with zir again.



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GETTING IT DONE

Grade Level

Middle-College

Objectives

1. Brainstorm ways to do social justice work around gender identity.
2. Become not just inclusive or open to the transgender community but actually do something to work towards trans liberation.

Materials

Flip-chart paper, pens

Student Activities

1. Brainstorm a list of activities and actions your GSA or class could undertake that would raise awareness of transgender issues. Make sure that transgender people are at the center of this planning; ‘no justice for us with out us.’
2. Make sure that each member of the group or class has come up with at least one idea. Divide up the list into three categories: things to change about your GSA or class; things to change about your school; other ideas.
3. Then have the class discuss which items on the list are priorities and which ones are also plausibly doable with the resources and time you have.
4. Next create an action plan in which you outline goals, objectives and tasks for each priority you’ve set. It may help to break into smaller groups so that students who are interested in working on specific priorities can work together.
5. Now assign tasks to complete before the next meeting or class, make sure that each group writes this information down. Keep these lists for later reference and for checking in on progress at your next meeting.
6. Send reminders messages or post them on a large chart that’s posted.
7. Stress the need for everyone to finish tasks they sign up for and not to overcommit.

Action Ideas

- Launch a campaign to create a gender-neutral all genders or multi-gendered bathroom/s at your school to provide a safe space for transgender and gender non-conforming students, teachers, staff and families.
- Join or create a coalition with transgender advocacy or health groups in your community.
- Show and discuss a feature film or documentary that presents transgender issues well.
- Create a poster campaign to advertise a meeting or rally or to raise awareness about transgender issues.

*Adapted from: GLSEN's *The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide: Where's the "T" in GSA?*

Gender 101

Gender Binary:

The categorization of gender into two distinct, opposite sexes.



Trans*/Transgender:

An umbrella term applied to those whose gender identity is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth.



Cisgender:

Someone who is not transgender.



Genderqueer:

A term applied to individuals who do not identify within the gender binary.



Transition:

The process of changing one's gender expression to match their gender identity.



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'TRANS UMBRELLA'

Trans*/Transgender

Someone who does not identify with their sex assigned at birth

Transfeminine/Transmasculine

Someone who identifies more female than male or more male than female

Trans Man/Trans Woman

Someone who was female at birth but identifies as male/someone who was male at birth but identifies as female

Agender

Someone who does not identify with a gender

Two Spirit

Someone who fills one of the many mixed-gender roles prevalent in Native American communities

Multigender

Someone who identifies with more than one gender (e.g. bigender)

Gender Fluid

Someone whose gender changes

Genderqueer

Someone who does not identify within the gender binary

Identities Not Under The Trans* Umbrella:

Cisgender

Someone who is not trans*

Drag Performer

Someone who wears flamboyant clothes for entertainment value (can be trans*)

Crossdresser

Someone who wears clothes associated with the a different gender (can be trans*)

Intersex

The presence of a less common combination of biological features that generally distinguish male and female (can be trans*)

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Why Support for Trans* Youth Matters

Based on a 2012 study of 433 individuals

Trans* Youth with Supportive Parents

Trans* Youth with Unsupportive Parents



Reported Life Satisfaction

72%

33%

Reported High Self-Esteem



64%

13%



Described Mental Health As "Very Good" or "Excellent"

70%

15%

Faced Housing Problems



0%

55%

Suffered Depression



23%

75%



Attempted Suicide

4%

57%

Travers R, Bauer G, Pyne J, Bradley K, for the Trans POLSE Project; Gale L, Papadimitriou M. Impacts of Strong Parental Support for Trans Youth: A Report Prepared for Children's Aid Society of Toronto and Delisle Youth Services. 2 October, 2012.

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Infographic Design by Landyn Pan Illustrations by Ethan Lopez



Families

» Tips for Educators: Create More School Communities for LGBTQ Families

» How Educators Can Make Classrooms Safer for Students with LGBTQ Parents

» How to Talk to Children About LGBTQ Families

Tips for Educators: Create More School Communities for LGBTQ Families

- Be aware that some children have LGBTQ parents.
 - » Some LGBTQ parents do not attend school functions (or do not share their status, e.g., only one parent may be registered with the school).
- Ensure school forms include place for same-sex couples (e.g., rather than forms with “mother and father” use “Parent or Guardian 1, Parent or Guardian 2,” which is also inclusive of children living with grandparents, etc.).
- Remember to talk with LGBTQ parents about how they want to handle class activities and projects around Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, etc.
- Ensure LGBTQ issues are part of anti-bullying training for all teachers, staff and students in your school.
- Provide other teachers and staff with guidance and support on how to handle both overt and covert insults and anti-gay comments (e.g., “That’s so gay,” “You can’t have two Dads; you have to have a Mom. Everyone has a Mom.”)
- When teaching about parenting, be inclusive of a broad range of family structures including LGBTQ families (same-sex parenting is not so different from other family structures--such as families headed by one parent, or by a grandparent, or by other extended family members).
- Let all parents know that the principal, assistant principal and others are open and respectful about LGBTQ issues (e.g., in newsletters to parents, etc.) so they can trust that administration is inclusive.

- Have books in the library inclusive of LGBTQ experiences and different family structures.
- Acknowledge children of same-sex couples have two equally important parents (the biological parent is not more important).
- For the younger grades, use the term “room parents” instead of “room mom.”
- Inform PTA, school staff, and other organizations associated with schools about LGBTQ families, including but not limited to bus drivers, cafeteria workers, after care workers, providers, etc.



- Principals and teachers must recognize the journey of the child--they are subject to all the externalized homophobic attitudes in the environment--societal, governmental, peer group etc. Children of LGBTQ parent(s) want to be considered as mainstream children –no different from their peer groups. They will experience the same feelings as LGBTQ youth--denial, repression, etc. They need an adult in the school environment to help them feel that their difference as a child of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer parent(s) is as respected, as any other child would expect to be re-



spected.

- Children of LGBTQ parent(s) may feel embarrassed by their difference. They may not want others to know their parents are two moms or two dads and may fabricate a more “normalized” home environment. When their home environment is exposed to others, they may experience the same feelings LGBTQ kids do when they are “outed”--bullying, isolation, etc. Also and conversely, some children will feel comfortable and proud of their family and will talk freely about their two dads, two moms or transgender or gender non-conforming parent(s).
- School administrators should first become aware and sensitized about the journey of the LGBTQ individual because this will help them to more effectively understand the child of an LGBTQ headed household.



HOW EDUCATORS CAN MAKE CLASSROOMS SAFER FOR STUDENTS WITH LGBTQ PARENTS

A GUIDE CREATED BY THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACTION PROGRAM

“In middle school when I made my family tree, my teacher told me it couldn’t have two women. I was told it could either have one of my moms’ sides, or I could “make up a father.” The teacher chose to pass on ignorance and intolerance, instead of using the opportunity to teach my classmates about diversity.”

-14 year old daughter of a lesbian mom

“I wrote a report for school about my friend Stefan who has a lesbian mom and a gay dad. While presenting my report to the class I mentioned his parents’ sexuality and everyone went into an uproar. I slunk ashamedly back to my seat without finishing my report.”

-16 year old daughter of lesbian moms

“When I was in 3rd grade, I was absent one day and my teacher decided to out me to the class. I came to school the next day and was horrified. I was teased for the next 4 years until I moved to a different district.”

-15 year old daughter of a lesbian mom

“One time, some seniors who had seen the rainbow sticker on my mom’s car threw me into a garbage can and called me homophobic names.”

-17 year old son of lesbian moms and a gay dad

In the United States alone, there are millions of people with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ) parent(s). While research shows that there are no significant developmental differences or negative effects on children of LGBTQ parents, these youth do report facing signifi-

cantly more prejudice and discrimination because of societal homophobia and transphobia. Youth report that schools are a key place where they face intolerance—from peers, teachers, school administration, and school systems that are affected by the homophobia in our society. The following tips attempt to introduce teachers to the topic of safety and respect for youth with LGBTQ parents in schools. Developed by a group of youth with LGBTQ parents in the San Francisco Bay Area, these suggestions are first steps in making your classrooms and schools more affirming and safe for students from LGBTQ families, as well as all students affected by homophobia and oppression.

- 1. Always intervene** whenever you hear or see anti-gay language or actions. At the beginning of the year, set classroom rules that include making it clear that racist, homophobic, sexist, transphobic, etc. comments are not welcome in your classroom. Send a clear message that homophobia will never be tolerated. In addition, try to link homophobia to other types of oppression—teach students that hate in all of its forms is wrong.
- 2. Do not make assumptions** about any student’s background. Create a classroom where each student is able to share freely about their identity and families.
- 3. Visually show your support.** On your walls include a poster about supporting diversity and/or other images that show you are an ally to LGBTQ people and issues.



4. Challenge heterosexism in your assignments.

Some examples: In language classes asking youth to describe their families, often youth with LGBTQ parents have been reprimanded for using the wrong gender pronouns. However, often the fact that they are using he and he to describe two dads is correct. If you assign family origin or family tree projects, allow youth from alternative families to make their own decisions about how they portray their families, whether it is two parents of the same gender, or multiple parents who co-parent them, etc.



5. Include Topics about Diversity in your curriculum.

Study different kinds of families and famous LGBTQ people (and when someone you are studying anyway is a LGBTQ person, mention that), have speakers, and use videos and books to show students that diversity is something to be celebrated. Perhaps use events such as National Coming Out Day, Pride Day, or a Unity Week as reasons to incorporate LGBTQ issues positively into your classroom.

6. Never out a student with LGBTQ parents.

Just as you would never out a student, the only person who should make the decision to share about their family is the student when they feel safe and ready to do so.

7. Do not make assumptions about youth with LGBTQ parents.

Youth from alternative families report that people often assume cer-

tain traits will apply to all youth with LGBTQ parents. For example, do not expect that a student who has LGBTQ parents will also be gay. Research shows that there is no higher incidence of homosexuality among people raised by LGBTQ parents.

8. Make your classroom accessible.

Do not rely on forms that ask for signatures from mother and father. Instead use the terms Parent/Guardian. On Back to School night, or during parent teacher conferences, expect and welcome LGBTQ parents.

9. Work with your administration

to make sure your school is safe for students with LGBTQ families. Suggest that the faculty at your school does an LGBTQ sensitivity training, or an in-service about LGBTQ and diverse families. Discuss protocols for dealing with anti-gay or anti-gay family harassment on school-wide or department levels so that all teachers are equipped to address homophobia.

10. Educate yourself.

Learn more about LGBTQ families and issues. Not only will this allow you to be informed when students raise questions or need resources, but it will help you be better equipped to address incidents of homophobia in your school and to include LGBTQ content in your curriculum.

11. Be involved.

If your school has a Gay Straight Alliance or other type of club, attend meetings when possible to show your support. You can also offer to be the faculty advisor for such a club if students are trying to start one in your school. If you are involved in your school's GSA, Rainbow Club, or other diversity club, ensure that LGBTQ family issues are included and that youth from LGBTQ families are welcomed as participants.

HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT LGBTQ FAMILIES

Children under 3 years

Most infants and toddlers will not ask us questions about their families until they are older. At this stage children under three are observing what goes on around them and this will help form their basis of family.

Infants and toddlers are focused on developing relationships. Their families are and will remain the most important relationships they have. Their sense of self is connected to their sense of family, and their way of being in the world is modeled through these early relationships.

During this stage they are focused on “mine” and will question, “Who is mine?” and “Who is yours?” This is a natural part of their development and a good time to begin talking about who belongs to them.

Children need to hear about their families from an early age and be told who is in their family. They never tire of hearing who loves them and how they are wanted.



4 to 7 Years Old

Finding a balance between too much information and too little information is key at this age. Responding to a question with a question often gives us the information we need to determine what it is the child wants to know. Offering honest, simple answers is the best strategy for answering the many questions that children will ask during these years.

An adult may have a hard time discussing things like artificial insemination with children. Preparing simple answers ahead of time to the questions you know are coming can help you feel more comfortable, such as: “Your mommy and I wanted to have a baby. You grew from a special people egg in mommy’s body in a place called a womb.”

Surrogacy can also be handled with a simple explanation: “Your daddies wanted to have a baby. You grew in a woman’s body in a special place called a womb until you were ready to be born. Then daddy and I were able to bring you home to our house.”

“Why does Maria have a mom and a dad?” As children go off to school, they become aware of other families. Children may just be noticing and wanting to talk about similarities and differences. They do not naturally attach value to a particular kind of family.

8 Years Older +

Around age 7, some children no longer want or know how to talk about their families. This is

especially true if their family is perceived to be “different.” Children need others, including adults in authority, to bring up the topic of families and how they are the same or different for discussion within the peer group.

Children also may need to be in charge of who they come out to about their family. They will learn where, when and with whom it is safe to talk about their lives.

It is common for children in this age group to begin to call each other names like “gay,” “faggot,” “lezzy” and “dyke.” Children recognize and are sensitive to attacks on people who are like the people in their families and communities. Our children often feel personally insulted when this name-calling occurs even if it was not directed at them or their family.

This can be a scary time for our children. They need us to give them strategies for responding to the questions or insults of other children such as:

Giving direct responses such as:

- “Yes, she is a lesbian.”
- Ignoring comments.
- Finding a supportive group of friends.

*Adapted from: Talking to Children About Our Families was developed by the Family Equality Council under a grant from the Human Rights Campaign FamilyNet and written by Margie Brickley and Aimee Gelnow

LOCAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES

local organizations

Annex Ten Clinic

Provides low cost, confidential, nonjudgmental sexuality-related health care for adolescents and young adults through age 25.

5810 42nd Avenue North
Robbinsdale, MN 55422
(763) 533-1316
www.annexteenclinic.org

Avenues for Homeless Youth

Emergency shelter, short-term housing, and support services for youth in a safe and nurturing environment. Avenues seeks to help youth achieve their personal goals and find a positive transition into youth adulthood.

1708 Oak Park Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
(612) 522-1690
www.avenuesforyouth.org

The Bridge for Youth

24-hour runaway and homeless youth program serving youth and their families in times of crisis. The Bridge offers a continuum of services including aftercare and support to help youth avoid becoming homeless again.

1111 West 22nd Street
Minneapolis, MN 55405
(612) 377-8800
www.bridgeforyouth.org

Council on Crime and Justice - General Crime Victim Services (GCVS)

An organization striving to discover solutions to reduce the stress associated with crime victimization for over 27 years; Services include lock changes, restorative repairs, emergency funds for victims of general crime as well as easily accessible guidance, advocacy, and support.

822 South 3rd Street, Suite 100
Minneapolis, MN 55415
24 Hour Hotline: (612) 340-5400
www.crimeandjustice.org

Face to Face

A non-profit organization dedicated to fulfilling the needs of youth ages 11–23. Face to Face offers health care, counseling, and programs for homeless youth, including Safe Zone, a youth drop in center.

1165 Arcade Street
St. Paul, MN 55106
(651) 772-5555
www.face2face.org

Family Equality Council - Midwest Office

Across the nation this organization connects, supports, and represents the one million parents who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender in this country and their two million children.

PO Box 3898
Minneapolis, MN 55403
www.familyequality.org

GLBT Kids: Abuse Intervention Program

A program providing resources, referrals, and support for youth who have been physically or emotionally mistreated and for concerned adults.

4123 East Lake Street
Minneapolis, MN 55406
GLBT Kids Youth Resource Line:(877) GLB-TKID
www.thefamilypartnership.org

GLBT Host Home Program

Through Avenues for Homeless Youth, the Host Home Program recruits, screens, trains, and supports adults who open their homes to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender young people ages 16-21 who are in need of stable and safe housing.

1708 Oak Park Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
24-Hour Hotline: (612) 338-3103 x244
<http://www.avenuesforyouth.org/programs-glbthosthome.html>

Lutheran Social Services Metro Homeless Youth Services

A continuum of holistic services offered to run-away, homeless and street dependant youth in the Twin Cities Metro Area.

501 Asbury Street
St. Paul, MN 55104
(651) 644-7739
www.lssmn.org/homelessyouthmetro

Minnesota AIDS Project (MAP)

Leading Minnesota's fight to stop HIV through prevention, advocacy, awareness and services.

1400 Park Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55404
(612) 341-2060
<http://www.mnaidsproject.org>

Minnesota School OUTreach Coalition (MnSOC)

A coalition of Minnesota students, educators, families, community members, and organizations working within the broad context of schools to address the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

4123 East Lake Street
Minneapolis, MN 55406
(877) 452-8543
www.mnschooloutreach.org

Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition's Shot Clinic /Syringe Exchange

Committed to improving health care access and the quality of health care received by trans and gender nonconforming people through education, resources, and advocacy.

3405 Chicago Avenue, Suite 103
Minneapolis, MN 55407
(612) 823-1152
www.mntranshealth.org

Out4Good

A program to support and encourage the academic achievement, full participation, and contributions of GLBT students, teachers, staff, and families in the Minneapolis Public Schools.

1250 West Broadway Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
(612) 668-5482
<http://equitydiversity.mpls.k12.mn.us/out4good>

OutFront Minnesota

Provides programs and services to Minnesota's LGBT and allied communities in the area of public policy, anti-violence, education and training, and the law.

310 38th Street East, Suite 204
Minneapolis, MN 55409
(612) 882-0127
www.outfront.org

PFLAG Twin Cities

An organization supporting parents, families, and friends of GLBT people of the Minneapolis and Saint Paul Metro areas.

P.O. Box 19290
Minneapolis, MN 55419
(612) 825 1660
www.pflagtc.com

Rainbow Rumpus

The world's only online literary magazine for children and youth with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) parents, Rainbow Rumpus provides a safe, fun, and empowering place for young people to create and enjoy art, break through isolation, build community, and take action to make the world a better place.

2901 East 25th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55406
(612) 721-6442
www.rainbowrumpus.org

RECLAIM

Mental health services including individual counseling and various support groups brought to queer youth where they need it, reducing barriers related to finances, transportation, scheduling, and cultural differences. Increasing access to mental health support for LGBT youth so they may reclaim their lives from all forms of oppression.

3217 Hennepin Avenue South, Suites 2&3
Minneapolis, MN 55408
(612) 235-6743
www.reclaim-lgbttyouth.org

Shades of Yellow (SOY)

A Hmong LGBTQ and ally organization that provides support, education, advocacy and leadership development to those in the community.

995 University Avenue West, Suite 215
St. Paul, MN 55104
(651) 300-2373
www.shadesofyellow.org

Trans Youth Support Network (TYSN)

The Trans Youth Support Network is a partnership of youth and community members working

together to support transgender youth in Minnesota.

3405 Chicago Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55407
(612) 208-9762
www.transyouthsupportnetwork.org

Youth and AIDS Project (YAP)

Transmission prevention of HIV by educating high-risk youth and providing care to youth and families living with HIV infection is the Project's Mission.

2929 4th Avenue South, Suite 203
Minneapolis, MN 55408-2465
(612) 627-4335
www.yapmn.com

YouthLink

The place where the END of homelessness and the END of poverty begin for youth served. Empowering youth to shape their futures by providing a safe, supportive, respectful and responsive community of excellence.

41 North 12th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403
(612) 252-1200
www.youthlinkmn.org

national organizations

Families Like Mine

The Official Website for author Abigail Garner's book with the same name; the purpose of the website is to decrease isolation for people with parents who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT), and provide a space for these families to share their experiences.

www.familieslikemine.com

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)

An organization "dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation

of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation."

www.glaad.org

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

The leading education-focused organization in the country ensuring equality within the community by "Creating safe schools for GLBT people."

www.glsen.org

Gay/Straight Alliance Network (GSA)

Through empowering youth activists, this national youth leadership organization connects school-based Gay-Straight Alliances to other local and community resources by providing peer support, leadership development, and training.

www.gsanetwork.org

Human Rights Campaign (HRC)

A National organization advocating for equal rights and benefits within the workplace and fighting for the recognition of all LGBT families and their fair-treatment under the law by increasing support of the community and their allies.

www.hrc.org

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)

“The national progressive organization working for the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.”

www.nglhf.org

Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

The nationwide grassroots network, PFLAG, is the original ally organization in the country. Their commitment is to promote equal rights for LGBT people through support, education and advocacy.

www.pflag.org

Scouting for All

A non-profit organization that advocates acceptance within the scouting movement in America, “Committed to scouting, open to diversity.”

www.scoutingforall.org

Teaching Tolerance

A place for educators to find thought-provoking news, conversation and support for those who care about diversity, equal opportunity and re-

spect for differences in schools

<http://www.tolerance.org>

TransYouth Family Allies (TYFA)

TYFA empowers children and families by partnering with educators, service providers, and communities to develop supportive environments in which gender may be expressed and respected. TYFA envisions a society free of suicide and violence in which ALL children are respected and celebrated.

www.imatyfa.org

Transkids

A website that provides resources for non-gender-conforming or transgender kids, primarily for elementary school teacher and parent use. Resources may be useful for middle & high school teachers as well.

www.transkids.synthasite.com

Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth.

www.thetrevorproject.org