SAFE SPACE KIT

A Guide to Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students in Your School

"When teachers are accepting of you, it means the world to you. You know that things will be OK and that they are there for you."

11th Grade Student, North Carolina

GLSEN®

The *Safe Space Kit*: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students

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GLSEN is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe and affirming schools for all students. GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

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Electronic versions of this guide and other resource materials for educators are available online at **www.glsen.org/educator**.

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Questions About the *Safe Space Kit*

WHAT IS A SAFE SPACE?

A Safe Space is a welcoming, supportive and safe environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students. From GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey*, a biennial survey of LGBT secondary school students, we know that school is not always a safe place for LGBT students. Most LGBT students frequently hear anti-LGBT language and experience harassment related to their sexual orientation and gender expression, and the majority of LGBT students feel unsafe at school and are likely to skip class or even full days of school to avoid the anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment they face on a daily basis. But educators can make a big difference! For many students, simply knowing that allies exist can be a source of support. Research shows that LGBT students with many supportive educators feel safer at school, skip fewer classes, and earn higher grades than students without supportive educators. By using this kit, we hope you will become one of these supportive educators.

WHAT DOES THE SAFE SPACE SYMBOL MEAN?

You might recognize some of the components of the Safe Space symbol, which is a combination of the LGBT pride flag and the gay pink triangle and lesbian black triangle. The history of the pink and black triangles began in Nazi Germany during World War II. Each prisoner in the concentration camps wore some symbol, often a colored inverted triangle to designate their reason for incarceration. The pink triangle was for homosexual men. The black triangles were used to designate prisoners with "anti-social" behavior, including lesbians. In the 1970s, gay liberation groups resurrected the pink triangle as a symbol for the gay rights movement. Similarly, the black triangle was reclaimed by lesbians and feminists.

The LGBT pride flag, or the rainbow flag, first appeared in 1978, when it was flown during the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Freedom Day Parade. The San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker designed the rainbow flag in response to a need for a symbol that could be used year after year. The different colors of the flag symbolize different components of the community: red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sun, green for nature, blue for art, and purple for spirit. A black stripe added at the bottom symbolizes a hope for victory over AIDS.

We've combined both of these potent symbols — the triangles and the pride flag — for the Safe Space symbol displayed on the stickers and posters. The emblem reminds us of the joy of the diverse, accepting community we hope to build through programs like Safe Space, as well as the struggle against oppression we face as we try to make that vision a reality.

WHAT IS THE *SAFE SPACE KIT?*

The *Safe Space Kit* is designed to help educators create a safe space for LGBT students. One of the most effective ways for an educator to create a safe space is to be a supportive ally to LGBT students. The hard copy of the *Safe Space Kit* includes the *Guide to Being an Ally,* ten Safe Space stickers and two Safe Space posters. The downloaded PDF of the *Safe Space Kit* includes the *Guide to Being an Ally*, a printable poster and printable stickers. The *Guide to Being an Ally* provides educators with practical ways that they can be allies to LGBT students and create a safer school environment for all students. By displaying the posters and stickers, you can make yourself a highly visible ally within the school community.

As a complement to the *Safe Space Kit*, GLSEN provides relevant resources for athletic coaches and physical education teachers at **sports.glsen.org**.

WHO SHOULD USE THE *SAFE SPACE KIT?*

The Safe Space Kit is designed for school staff who wish to support LGBT students and create a safe space for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

HOW DO I USE THE *SAFE SPACE KIT?*

GLSEN recommends that you carefully read through the *Guide to Being an Ally* to gain an understanding of how to be an effective ally to LGBT students. This guide will provide practical ways to transform schools into a safer space for all students by supporting and educating students, sharing your knowledge with other educators and advocating for school-wide changes. The "Ask Yourself" questions throughout this guide provide an opportunity for you to consider your own experiences and beliefs about the information provided and how it may relate to your own work in school. Once you have reviewed the guide, you will be ready to make yourself visible as an ally by displaying the Safe Space posters and stickers in your office or classroom. You will also be better prepared to prevent and/or intervene in LGBT based bullying.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE *GUIDE TO BEING AN ALLY TO LGBT STUDENTS?*

The *Guide to Being an Ally* contains four main sections.

- **Know the Issues** gives background information about the experiences of LGBT students and anti-LGBT bias.
- **Support** describes specific actions you can take to be an effective support to LGBT students.
- **Educate** discusses ways to teach students and inform school staff about combating anti-LGBT bias and behavior.
- **Advocate** provides strategies you can use to promote change within your school.

The last section provides additional materials, including definitions of LGBT-related terms and a comprehensive list of resources and referral sources for LGBT youth.

Know the Issues

What is an Ally?

An ally is an individual who speaks out and stands up for a person or group that is targeted and discriminated against. An ally works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for people who are stigmatized, discriminated against or treated unfairly.

For the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, an ally is any person who supports and stands up for the rights of LGBT people. Allies have been involved in almost all movements for social change, and allies can make a significant contribution to the LGBT rights movement. It is important for allies to demonstrate that LGBT people are not alone as they work to improve school climate, and to take a stand in places where it might not be safe for LGBT people to be out or visible. Any educator, LGBT or non-LGBT, can be an ally to LGBT students.

ASK YOURSELF

- Have you seen examples of anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying or harassment in your school?
- How are students affected by anti-LGBT bias at your school?
- Did you see anti-LGBT bias in school when you were a student? How did it affect you?

Why be an Ally?

All students are at risk of being bullied, harassed or called names at school, but LGBT students face particularly hostile school environments. Your visible support for these students can make a real difference in ways that will benefit the whole school.

In order to document the experiences of LGBT students, GLSEN conducts the *National School Climate Survey* every two years. From the survey we have learned that anti-LGBT language fills classrooms, hallways, school buses, gyms, and cafeterias. For example, findings from GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey* consistently show that nine out of ten LGBT students repeatedly hear the word "gay" used in a negative way and three-fourths of students regularly hear homophobic remarks, such as "faggot" or "dyke," in school. Even more serious, LGBT students are routinely called names, harassed and bullied in school and will often skip classes or even full days of school because they feel unsafe. The prevalence of anti-LGBT name-calling, harassment and bullying takes a heavy toll on LGBT students, and can have negative effects on their school performance. The reported grade point average of students who are more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression is almost half a grade lower than for students who were less often harassed.

In addition to the damage it can do to LGBT students, anti-LGBT bias also affects other members of the school community. Anti-LGBT behavior creates a hostile environment and an uncomfortable and unsafe space for everyone. Homophobia and transphobia can be used to stigmatize, silence and, on occasion, target people who are perceived as LGBT, but are not. If certain actions and behaviors are deemed "gay," students may avoid these for fear of being targeted for anti-LGBT behavior. For example,

a male student may avoid drama class, or a female student may decide not to join the automotive club, just to avoid anti-LGBT bias.

In order to protect all students and allow them the freedom to reach their full potential, we must put an end to anti-LGBT bias and behavior in schools. Research shows that having supportive school staff has a positive effect on a student's educational experience. For example, LGBT students with supportive educators were less likely to miss school because of safety concerns and had higher grade point averages than LGBT students with no supportive educators. When school staff effectively intervene in harassment, LGBT students feel safer and are less likely to miss school.

Allies help LGBT students feel safer and more included in school, resulting in a more positive and successful school experience. In addition to supporting individual LGBT students, allies challenge anti-LGBT behavior and work proactively to ensure safer, more inclusive schools for all students.

"I have learned that harassment in schools is a norm. Kids would scream the term 'faggot' as they saw me in the halls. None of the teachers said a word, and that is what scared me… I don't feel safe at my school because I'm gay."

— 11th Grade Student, North Carolina

SNAP SHOT

Anti-LGBT Bias in School

Hector was an 11-year-old, straight-identified, middle school student who just wanted to be himself. His classmates thought he was feminine for a boy and began teasing him and calling him names like "faggot" and asking him why he was gay. Hector told his mother about the bullying at school and she immediately went to the principal's office to have something done. Unfortunately, the school was not helpful and refused to take any action stating "it's just boys being boys." The other students knew his mother had spoken to the principal, which only increased the amount of bullying. Halfway through the school year, Hector told the school social worker that he couldn't endure the constant bullying and harassment anymore, and that he was thinking about ending his life.

Assessing Your Personal Beliefs

People aren't born prejudiced, so where does it come from? From the moment we are born, we are inundated with messages, spoken and unspoken, about different types of people. Often we learn stereotypes and prejudices without even realizing it. Some of these messages may have been about ourselves and what we are "supposed to" or not "supposed to" be.

All of us, LGBT and non-LGBT, have learned messages about LGBT people. What were the earliest messages you received about LGBT people and where did they come from? Were they positive, negative or neutral? Understanding the messages we receive can help us identify our own beliefs and biases that we can then challenge, helping to make us stronger allies. Use the "Check Yourself" Exercise below to explore your own biases.

Check Yourself: Understanding Your Own Beliefs

Anti-LGBT bias is all around us. Yet we tend to overlook the subtle biases — the anti-LGBT jokes, the exclusion of LGBT related-themes in curricula, even anti-LGBT name-calling. Subtle or not, bias has the power to hurt and isolate people. Your work as an ally includes recognizing and challenging your own anti-LGBT bias. Answer each question honestly, and consider how these will affect your work as an ally to LGBT students.

1. If someone were to come out to you as LGBT, what would your first thought be?
2. How would you feel if your child came out to you as LGBT? How would you feel if your mother, father or sibling came out to you as LGBT?
3. Would you go to a physician whom you thought was LGBT if they were of a different gender than you? What if they were the same gender as you?
4. Have you ever been to an LGBT social event, march or worship service? Why or why not?
5. Can you think of three historical figures who were lesbian, gay or bisexual?
6. Can you think of three historical figures who were transgender?
7. Have you ever laughed at or made a joke at the expense of LGBT people?
8. Have you ever stood up for an LGBT person being harassed? Why or why not?
9. If you do not identify as LGBT, how would you feel if people thought you were LGBT?

Recognizing your own biases is an important first step in becoming an ally. Based on your responses to these questions, do you think you have internalized some of the anti-LGBT messages pervasive in our world? How might your beliefs influence your actions as an educator of LGBT students? The more aware we are of our own biases and their impact on our behavior, the easier it is to ensure that our personal beliefs don't undermine our efforts to support LGBT students.

Talking the Talk

One simple yet important way to be an ally is to use LGBT-related terminology accurately and respectfully. The best way to ensure that you are using the proper terminology when referring to an individual is to find out the terminology they themselves prefer.

Language has a huge impact on the way we see others and ourselves, and yet, language is constantly changing. That is why it is important to familiarize yourself and keep up-to-date with LGBT-related terms and concepts. Begin by completing the "Terminology Match-Up" on the next page.

"One of the greatest challenges we face on a daily basis is not what the students do to one another. In fact, sadly, it is what is said by some of my colleagues about the students."

— Alternative High School Educator, Ohio

Terminology Match-Up

How much LGBT-related terminology do you already know? On the left is a set of LGBT-related terms, on the right are definitions of these terms. To test your knowledge, select the matching definition for each term. Then check the *Glossary of LGBT-Related Terms* at the end of this *Safe Space Kit* for more terms and definitions.

ASK YOURSELF

- Which terms were you most familiar with? Which were you unfamiliar with?
- What terms are you most comfortable using? Are there any terms you are uncomfortable using? Why?

ANSWER KEY: 1=B, 2=F, 3=J, 4=E, 5=D, 6=I, 7=K, 8=M, 9= G, 10= A, 11= C, 12=H, 13=L

1. **Sexual Orientation**
2. **Lesbian**
3. **Gender Identity**
4. **Gender Expression**
5. **Transgender**
6. **Gay**
7. **Gender Non-Conforming**
8. **Androgynous**
9. **Bisexual**
10. **Transphobia**
11. **Homophobia**
12. **Heterosexism**
13. **Queer**

A The irrational fear or aversion to transgender people of those who are perceived to break or blur societal norms regarding gender identity or gender expression.

B The inner feelings of who we are attracted or oriented to sexually and emotionally.

C Refers to an irrational fear of or aversion to homosexuality or lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

D An identity of a person whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth and/or whose gender expression is non-conforming.

E An individual's physical characteristics, behaviors and presentation that are linked, traditionally, to either masculinity or femininity, such as: appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.

F A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is female-identified and who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some other females.

G A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some males and some females.

H Applies to attitudes, bias and discrimination in favor of heterosexual sexuality and relationships. It includes the presumption that everyone is heterosexual or that male/female attractions and relationships are the norm and therefore superior. It is the belief that everyone is or should be straight.

I A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some members of the same sex.

J How we identify ourselves in terms of our gender.

K An identity of a person who has gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal gender expectations.

L An umbrella term used to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to heteronormative society.

M Having the characteristics or nature of both maleness and femaleness; neither specifically feminine nor masculine.

Support

One of the key ways to be an ally is to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students in your school. This section describes the dos and don'ts of being an ally and four main ways you can be supportive:

Be a visible ally.

Support students who come out to you.

Respond to anti-LGBT language and behaviors.

Support student clubs, such as Gay-Straight Alliances.

Be Visible

One of the most important parts of being an ally to LGBT students is making yourself known as an ally. In order to come to you for help, students need to be able to recognize you as an ally. Even if students don't come to you directly, research shows that just knowing that there is a supportive educator at school can help LGBT students feel better about being in school. Making yourself visible can be as simple as displaying a sticker. It can also be as involved as demonstrating and modeling supportive behaviors. Below you will find some suggestions of how to be a visible ally to LGBT students.

MAKE YOUR SPACE VISIBLE

Make your classroom or office visible as a safe space for LGBT students. This will help students identify you as someone to come to for support and your space as one where they will be safe.

▼ **Post Safe Space materials.** Display Safe Space stickers or posters in your classroom or office. This will let students know that it is a safe space and that you are supportive of LGBT students.

▼ **Display LGBT supportive materials.** Post supportive materials such as quotes from famous LGBT icons, information about the LGBT community or materials from LGBT organizations. Along with signs for national holidays and months of celebration already in the classroom (e.g., Black History Month or Women's History Month), display information about LGBT History Month in October, LGBT Pride Month in June or GLSEN's Ally Week in September.

MAKE YOURSELF VISIBLE

Making yourself visible as an ally will allow students to easily identify you as a supportive educator.

▼ **Wear a visible marker.** Wear a supportive button or wristband or even a simple rainbow bracelet. These will let students know that you are a supportive ally without saying a word.

▼ **Let other educators know.** In an ideal world, all educators would be supportive allies to LGBT students. But the reality is that you may be one of only a few at your school. Let

other educators know that you are an ally and share with them the important role they too can play in supporting LGBT students.

LET YOUR ACTIONS SPEAK FOR YOU

Sometimes your actions can speak louder than any button or poster. Here are simple actions you can take that will let staff and students know you are an ally.

▼ **Make no assumptions.** When engaging with students, or even other staff and parents, do not assume you know their sexual orientation or gender identity. Don't assume that everyone is heterosexual or fits into your idea of gender roles — be open to the variety of identities and expressions. In our society, students constantly receive the message that everyone is supposed to be straight. Show students that you understand there is no one way a person "should" be.

▼ **Use inclusive language.** Through casual conversation and during classroom time, make sure the language you are using is inclusive of all people. When referring to people in general, try using words like "partner" instead of "boyfriend/girlfriend" or "husband/wife," and avoid gendered pronouns, using "they" instead of "he/she." Using inclusive language will help LGBT students feel more comfortable being themselves and coming to you for support.

▼ **Respond to anti-LGBT behavior.** Responding to anti-LGBT behavior when it occurs or when you hear about it will let students know that you do not tolerate homophobia or transphobia. It sends a strong message that anti-LGBT behavior is not acceptable to you and not allowed in your school.

Support Students When They Come Out to You

As an ally, LGBT students may come to you for support, comfort or guidance. You may encounter a situation where a student comes out or reveals their sexual orientation or gender identity to you. You may be the first or only person an LGBT student comes out to. It is important that you support the student in a constructive way. Keep in mind that the student may be completely comfortable with their sexual orientation or gender identity and may not need help dealing with it or may not be in need of any support. It may be that the student just wanted to tell someone, or just simply to tell you so you might know them better. Below you will find more information on the coming out process and how you can be a supportive ally when students come out to you.

WHAT DOES "COMING OUT" MEAN?

Simply put, coming out is a means to publicly declare one's identity, whether to a person in private or a group of people. In our society most people are generally presumed to be heterosexual, so there is usually no need for a heterosexual person to make a statement to others that discloses their sexual orientation. Similarly, most people feel that their current gender is aligned with their sex assigned at birth, therefore never having a need to disclose one's gender identity. However, a person who is LGBT must decide whether or not to reveal to others their sexual orientation or gender identity.

To come out is to take a risk by sharing one's identity, sometimes to one person in conversation, sometimes to a group or in a public setting. The actual act of coming out can be as simple as saying "I'm gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender," but it can be a difficult and emotional process for an LGBT student to go through,

SNAP SHOT

Anti-LGBT Bias in School

Renisha was a 15-year-old freshman who had just started at the school where her older brother Michael was a junior. Renisha decided that at this new school, she was going to be herself and not hide that she's a lesbian as she did in junior high. Michael's friends had begun to make fun of his little sister and Michael always defended her, telling his friends "leave her alone, she's just being herself." Michael's friends continued to tease Renisha calling her "dyke" from across the lunchroom and defacing her locker with anti-LGBT language. Michael decided that this had gone too far and demanded his friends leave his little sister alone. One of his friends started to tease Michael, asking him if "being queer runs in the family." The words had barely made it out of the boy's mouth before Michael punched him. The other friends backed off and stopped the teasing, but Michael was suspended from school for a week and kicked off the basketball team for fighting.

which is why it is so important for a student to have support. One positive aspect of coming out is not having to hide who you are anymore. However, there can be dangers that come with revealing yourself. A student who comes out may be open to more anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment, yet they may also feel more comfortable and free to be themselves. One of the most important things you as an ally can do for an LGBT student is to be there for them in a safe, respectful and helpful way.

"[Reporting] causes more problems. Teachers and staff do not know how to handle the problem anonymously."

— Student, Grade Not Reported, Texas

SHOULD SCHOOL STAFF BE CAREFUL OF DISCLOSING A STUDENT'S SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY TO OTHERS?

Absolutely. School staff must at all times be cognizant of the highly sensitive nature of information regarding a student's sexual orientation and gender identity. School staff must exercise the utmost discretion and professionalism and be respectful of student privacy in discussing these matters.

In contrast to coming out, when a person chooses to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, "outing" occurs when someone else tells others that a particular individual is LGBT without that person's permission. We often don't know what someone's beliefs are or reactions might be, and outing someone may have large repercussions for students. Although it may be hard to believe, there are students whose emotional and physical safety were jeopardized when school staff outed them to other students and even family members.

When a Student Comes Out to You…

When a student comes out to you and tells you they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) your initial response is important. The student has likely spent time in advance thinking about whether or not to tell you, and when and how to tell you. Here are some tips to help you support them.

▼ **Offer support but don't assume a student needs any help.** The student may be completely comfortable with their sexual orientation or gender identity and may not need help dealing with it or be in need of any support. It may be that the student just wanted to tell someone, or just simply to tell you so you might know them better. Offer and be available to support your students as they come out to others.

▼ **Be a role model of acceptance.** Always model good behavior by using inclusive language and setting an accepting environment by not making assumptions about people's sexual orientation or gender identity. Addressing other's (adults and students) biased language and addressing stereotypes and myths about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people also position you as a positive role model. By demonstrating that you are respectful of LGBT people and intolerant of homophobia and transphobia, LGBT students are more likely to see you as a supportive educator.

▼ **Appreciate the student's courage.** There is often a risk in telling someone something personal, especially sharing for the first time one's sexual orientation or gender identity, when it is generally not considered the norm. Consider someone's coming out a gift and thank them for giving that gift to you. Sharing this personal information with you means that the student respects and trusts you.

▼ **Listen, listen, listen.** One of the best ways to support a student is to hear them out and let the student know you are there to listen. Coming out is a long process, and chances are you'll be approached again to discuss this process, the challenges and the joys of being out at school.

▼ **Assure and respect confidentiality.** The student told you and may or may not be ready to tell others. Let the student know that the conversation is confidential and that you won't share the information with anyone else, unless they ask for your help. If they want others to know, doing it in their own way with their own timing is important. Respect their privacy.

▼ **Ask questions that demonstrate understanding, acceptance and compassion.** Some suggestions are:

- Have you been able to tell anyone else?
- Has this been a secret you have had to keep from others or have you told other people?
- Do you feel safe in school? Supported by the adults in your life?
- Do you need any help of any kind? Resources or someone to listen?
- Have I ever offended you unknowingly?

…and Tells You They Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender

▼ **Remember that the student has not changed.** They are still the same person you knew before the disclosure; you just have more information about them, which might improve your relationship. Let the student know that you feel the same way about them as you always have and that they are still the same person. If you are shocked, try not to let the surprise lead you to view or treat the student any differently.

▼ **Challenge traditional norms.** You may need to consider your own beliefs about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender roles. Do not expect people to conform to societal norms about gender or sexual orientation.

▼ **Be prepared to give a referral.** If there are questions you can't answer, or if the student does need some emotional support, be prepared to refer them to a sympathetic counselor, a hotline, your school's GSA or an LGBT youth group or community center.

SOME ADDITIONAL THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN A STUDENT COMES OUT TO YOU AS TRANSGENDER:

▼ **Validate the person's gender identity and expression.** It is important to use the pronoun and name appropriate to the gender presented or that the person requests — this is showing respect. In other words, if someone identifies as female, then refer to the person as she; if they identify as male, refer to the person as he. Or use gender neutral language. Never use the word "it" when referring to a person, to do so is insulting and disrespectful.

▼ **Remember that gender identity is separate from sexual orientation.** Knowing someone is transgender does not provide you with any information about their sexual orientation.

WHAT NOT TO SAY WHEN SOMEONE COMES OUT TO YOU:

▼ **"I knew it!"** This makes the disclosure about you and not the student, and you might have been making an assumption based on stereotypes.

▼ **"Are you sure?" "You're just confused." "It's just a phase — it will pass."** This suggests that the student doesn't know who they are.

▼ **"You just haven't found a good woman yet" said to a male or "a good man yet" said to a female.** This assumes that everyone is straight or should be.

▼ **"Shhh, don't tell anyone."** This implies that there is something wrong and that being LGBT must be kept hidden. If you have real reason to believe that disclosing this information will cause the student harm, then make it clear that is your concern. Say, "Thanks for telling me. We should talk about how tolerant our school and community is. You may want to consider how this may affect your decision about who to come out to."

▼ **"You can't be gay — you've had relationships with people of the opposite sex."** This refers only to behavior, while sexual orientation is about inner feelings.

Respond to Anti-LGBT Language and Behavior

Anti-LGBT behavior comes in all shapes and sizes: biased language, name-calling, harassment and even physical assault. GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey* consistently finds that many LGBT students regularly hear homophobic slurs, such as "faggot" or "dyke," at school, and most students have been verbally or physically harassed in school. Youth who regularly experience harassment can suffer from low self-esteem, high rates of absenteeism and low academic achievement. Educators can make a difference by intervening in anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment every time they witness it. Taking action when you see it occur can help create a safe space for all students. Intervening on the spot will also serve as a teachable moment to let other students know that anti-LGBT behavior will not be tolerated. One of the most effective things you can do as an ally is respond to anti-LGBT behavior.

HOW TO INTERVENE IN NAME-CALLING, BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Follow these steps when you witness anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying or harassment.

1. Address Name-Calling, Bullying or Harassment Immediately.
Concentrate on stopping the behavior in that moment. Sometimes it's a simple response to hearing a derogatory term like, "That language is unacceptable in this classroom." Make sure that everyone can hear you. Never miss the opportunity to interrupt the behavior. Remember: no action is an action — if an incident is overlooked or not addressed it can imply acceptance and approval.

2. Name the Behavior.
Describe what you saw and label the behavior. "I heard you use the word faggot and that is derogatory and is considered name-calling. That language is unacceptable."

3. Use the Teachable Moment (or Create One).
Make sure to educate after stopping the behavior. Decide if you are going to educate in the moment or later, and if it will be publicly or privately. If you decide to educate later you will need to create the teachable moment. You can then take this opportunity to teach one class, the entire grade or the whole school about language and behaviors that are acceptable and those that are not.

4. Support the Targeted Student.
Support the student who has been the target of the name-calling, bullying or harassment. Do not make assumptions about what the student is experiencing. Ask the student what they need or want. You will have to decide whether to do this in the moment or later, and if it will be publicly or privately. Suggest that the student visit with a counselor only if the student requests extra support.

5. Hold Students Accountable.
Check school policy and impose appropriate consequences. Make sure disciplinary actions are evenly applied across all types of name-calling, bullying and harassment.

WHAT DO I SAY WHEN THEY SAY "THAT'S SO GAY?" RESPONDING TO UNINTENTIONAL ANTI-LGBT LANGUAGE

Almost all LGBT students regularly hear the word "gay" used in a negative way at school. Though many downplay the impact of expressions like, "That's so gay" because they have become such a common part of the vernacular and are often not intended to inflict harm, most LGBT students say that hearing "gay" or "queer" used in a negative manner causes them to feel

bothered or distressed. Especially because these expressions are so pervasive in our schools, it is critical that an ally treat this like all other types of anti-LGBT language and address it.

Not all students may understand why this language is offensive, so you may need to educate the students on why this is anti-LGBT language. For example, ask them why they would use "gay" to mean that something is bad or boring. Let them know that it is offensive and hurtful to LGBT people when they use "gay" to describe something as undesirable. When challenged on using this type of language, a common response from students and adults is that they did not mean "gay" to mean homosexual. They may say that it's just an expression and they don't mean any harm by it. The chart below suggests some strategies for dealing with these types of comments, including the benefits and challenges for each strategies.

For free public service announcements, lesson plans, discussion guides and other resources that address anti-LGBT language, visit **www.glsen.org**.

POSSIBLE RESPONSES TO "THAT'S SO GAY"

(excerpted from GLSEN's *ThinkB4YouSpeak Educator's Guide*)

RESPONSES	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
"What do you mean by that?"	**Doesn't dismiss it.**	**Students might not be forthcoming.**
"How do you think a gay person might feel?"	**Puts responsibility on the student to come up with the solution.**	**Student may not say anything.**
"Do you say that as a compliment?"	**Asking this rhetorical question in a non-accusatory tone may lighten things up enough for your students to shake their heads and admit, "No."**	**Students may just laugh off your question, or reiterate that they're "Just joking."**
"So the connotations are negative?" or "So maybe it's not a good thing?"	**Not accusatory. Could open up the floor for discussion.**	**There's always the chance that students will still be reluctant to speak up.**

Support Student Clubs

For many LGBT students, student clubs that address LGBT student issues (commonly called Gay-Straight Alliances or GSAs) offer critical support. These clubs are student-led, usually at the high school or middle school level, and work to address anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment in their schools and promote respect for all students. The existence of these clubs can make schools feel safer and more welcoming for LGBT students. GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey* has found that compared to LGBT students without a GSA, students in schools with a GSA or similar student club:

- Reported hearing fewer homophobic remarks.
- Experienced less harassment and assault because of their sexual orientation and gender expression.
- Were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault.
- Were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender expression.
- Were less likely to miss school because of safety concerns.
- Reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community.

> Only half (50.3%) of students reported having a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar student club at their school.
>
> *— 2013 National School Climate Survey*

GSAs, like all student clubs, must have a faculty advisor. Serving as the advisor for your school's GSA is one important way that you can be an ally to LGBT students. Not only does being an advisor allow you to help the efforts of your GSA, it makes you more visible as an ally to all members of your school community, making it easier for LGBT students to identify supportive school staff.

As an ally, you may also need to advocate for the rights of students to establish a GSA in their school. Although some opponents of GSAs have attempted to restrict the existence of or access to these clubs, the federal Equal Access Act of 1984 requires public schools to allow GSAs to exist alongside other non-curricular student clubs.

Dos and Don'ts of Being an Ally to LGBT Students

DO…

▼ **Listen.** One of the simplest yet most important ways to be an ally is to listen. Like all students, LGBT students need to feel comfortable expressing themselves. If a student comes to talk to you about being harassed, feeling excluded or just about their life in general, keep in mind that you may be the only person they feel safe speaking to. Be there to listen.

▼ **Respect confidentiality.** Effective allies will respect their students' confidentiality and privacy. Someone who is coming out may not want everyone to know. Assume that the person only told you and just wants you to know, unless they indicate otherwise. Informing others can create an unsafe environment for the student.

▼ **Be conscious of your biases.** Effective allies acknowledge how homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism may affect their efforts to be an ally to LGBT people. They continuously work to recognize and challenge their own biases.

▼ **Seek out knowledge.** Effective allies periodically brush up on LGBT-related language and current issues facing the LGBT community.

▼ **Be a resource.** An effective ally will also know when and how to refer students to outside help. The last section of this guide includes a list of LGBT-related resources and referral sources for LGBT youth.

DON'T…

▼ **Think you have all the answers.** Do not feel you must always have the answers. If you are faced with a problem you don't know how to solve, let the student know you will look into the subject to try and find an answer. Sometimes the best thing for you to do is to refer the student to an outside source that may be able to help them. The last section of this guide includes a list of LGBT-related resources and referral sources for LGBT youth.

▼ **Make unrealistic promises.** Be careful not to promise something you may not be able to deliver. This can damage the relationship you have with the student as an ally.

▼ **Make assumptions.** It is important to avoid making assumptions and perpetuating stereotypes. These can be extremely offensive and may turn a student away from you. It is also important to avoid assuming you know what the student needs. Be sure to listen to your student and ask how you can support them.

ASK YOURSELF

▼ Which of these strategies are you most likely to use in your school?

▼ Are there other strategies that you have used when intervening in anti-LGBT language, harassment and bullying in your school?

Educate

As an ally, you have the opportunity to educate about anti-LGBT bias, its effects and ways to combat it in order to create safer, more welcoming school environments. This section discusses how to:

- **Teach students to respect others.**
- **Include positive representations of LGBT people, history and events into your curriculum.**
- **Engage other school staff about anti-LGBT bias and ways to create safer schools.**

Teach Respect

There are many ways to teach students the importance of respecting all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Your school could implement a comprehensive school-wide program like GLSEN's No Name-Calling Week®. Or, you may incorporate individual lessons into your curriculum or group activities. Here are a few resources that educators can use to teach respect and prevent harassment and bullying among students.

"It's amazing how enthralled students will get when there are actual people they can connect with, representing the issues around diversity, discrimination, etc."

— School Counselor, Ohio

- **Changing the Game: The GLSEN Sports Project.** Building safe spaces in athletic and physical education programs is an equally important part of creating a safe and respectful environment in your school. GLSEN's Sports Project assists schools in creating athletic and physical education climates based on the principles of respect, safety and equal access for all. Download and share resources and guidelines with your school's physical education teachers and coaches to help create safe sports spaces where name-calling and bullying are not tolerated and where *everyone* can enjoy the game. For more information, visit **sports.glsen.org**.

- **GLSEN's No Name-Calling Week® Lesson Plans.** GLSEN's No Name-Calling Week® is an annual week of educational activities aimed at ending name-calling of all kinds and providing schools with the tools and inspiration to launch an ongoing dialogue about ways to eliminate bullying in their communities. Nevertheless, the accompanying lesson plans are available year-round and can be used at any time. For information about the program and free elementary- and secondary-level lesson plans, visit **www.glsen.org/nncw**.

▼ ***ThinkB4YouSpeak Educator's Guide.*** GLSEN has created an educator's guide to accompany its public service awareness campaign, created in partnership with the Ad Council, about the hurtful and demeaning term "That's so gay." The guide assists middle and high school educators in facilitating student learning about the negative consequences of homophobic language and anti-LGBT bullying. The core of the guide consists of six educational activities that increase awareness and knowledge of the issues, develop skills for addressing them and promote social action. Each lesson and activity can be used on its own or in conjunction with the others. To download the free guide visit **www.glsen.org**.

Make your Curriculum LGBT Inclusive

LGBT-inclusive curriculum that provides positive representations of LGBT people, history and events helps to create a tone of acceptance of LGBT people and increase awareness of LGBT-related issues, resulting in a more supportive environment for LGBT students. GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey* consistently finds that students with inclusive LGBT curriculum in their schools have a greater sense of belonging to their school community, hear fewer homophobic and transphobic remarks and are less likely to be victimized or feel unsafe at school than those without inclusive curriculum.

There are many ways to include positive representations of LGBT people, history and events in your curriculum. Here are a few suggestions.

▼ **Include LGBT history.** Raise the visibility of LGBT people and communities by providing students with concrete examples of LGBT people in history and LGBT-related historical events. For example, when teaching about the Holocaust or about civil rights movements, be sure to include the persecution, struggles and successes of the LGBT community. You can show documentary films, such as *Out of the Past* or *Gay Pioneers,* or you can use GLSEN's *When Did It Happen: LGBT History Lesson* or *Unheard Voices* to teach about important leaders and events in LGBT history. For resources, visit **www.glsen.org/educator**.

▼ **Include diverse families.** Whenever possible, include examples of diverse families, including same-sex couples and LGBT parents, whenever referencing families in the classroom. Providing students with these examples can help LGBT students and students with LGBT family members feel included in the classroom.

▼ **Use LGBT-inclusive literature.** It is important for students to see themselves reflected in the school curriculum. Using LGBT inclusive literature will help create a welcoming space for LGBT students, as well as promote respect and acceptance among all students. Be sure to use books that feature positive and diverse representations of LGBT characters. You can find appropriate books for your curriculum and literature guides at **www.glsen.org/educator**.

> Only a small percentage (18.5%) of LGBT students were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history or events in their schools. Yet in schools with inclusive curriculum, LGBT students were more likely to report that their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBT people than students in schools without (79.2% vs. 39.6%).
>
> *— 2013 National School Climate Survey*

▼ **Celebrate LGBT events.** Celebrating LGBT events can help LGBT students feel included in the school. Promote LGBT events throughout the school as you would any other cultural celebration. Celebrate LGBT History Month in October and LGBT Pride Month in June by displaying signs, alerting students and recognizing the struggles, contributions and victories of the LGBT community.

Engage School Staff

Creating safe schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression can be a difficult task. There is no reason to go it alone — help other educators become supportive allies for LGBT students. Here are some simple ways you can share your commitment to ensure safe schools and your knowledge about the issues with other educators.

▼ **Be a role model for other educators.** Let your actions as an ally inform others. Use the appropriate terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer or LGBT and correct people when you hear incorrect or derogatory language. Use gender-neutral pronouns and LGBT-inclusive language in school. Intervene when anti-LGBT behavior occurs and show other educators how to advocate for changes within the school.

▼ **Discuss with others.** In the hallways, during lunch or whenever you have a moment, share information with other educators. Tell them about experiences of LGBT students in school, some of the anti-LGBT behavior incidents you have responded to or about the changes in the school you would like to see. Letting other educators know about the concrete things they can do may help make being an ally a realistic option for them. For more ideas, talk with fellow educators about how they are including LGBT people, history and events in their curriculum. To learn what others are doing and share your own ideas, join the Educator Forum on Facebook or register to receive updates as part of the Educator's Network at **www.glsen.org/educator**.

▼ **Distribute information.** Photocopy select pages from this guide (e.g., *Responding to Anti-LGBT Language and Behavior* or *When a Student Comes Out to You*) and give them to school staff at meetings, post them in a staff lounge or put them in the mailboxes of all staff. This will provide a non-threatening opportunity for other educators to learn about the issues and what they can do to make a difference.

▼ **Advocate for professional development.** Work with your principal or administrator to obtain training for staff on the school experiences of LGBT students and anti-LGBT bullying and harassment. Find community organizations that can provide training resources to your school, such as an LGBT community center or a local GLSEN Chapter.

▼ **Give a presentation to school staff.** If possible, secure some time during a school staff meeting to discuss the issue of anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment. Provide staff with information about the problem and ideas for how to handle it. Use the provided outline for a sample 20-minute presentation to help you plan your presentation.

Sample 20-Minute Presentation to School Staff

This is a sample outline for a 20-minute presentation to school staff. With a short amount of time, you have to be sure to share key information that will get other educators interested in taking action to ensure a safe school environment for all students. There are two main points of information you should focus on during your short presentation: 1) The reasons why educators need to take action; 2) Concrete ways educators can respond to anti-LGBT behavior in the school. You can use this sample presentation outline to help focus your message and make the most of your brief presentation.

INTRODUCTION

Let staff know that the purpose of this presentation is to inform them of the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students in schools, discuss ways to intervene when anti-LGBT behavior occurs and things they can do to create a safe school environment. Share why this is important to you personally; why you find it so critical to combat anti-LGBT behavior and ensure LGBT students feel safe and welcome in your school.

THE EXPERIENCES OF LGBT STUDENTS IN SCHOOL

▼ Share information about the experiences of LGBT students in school. Use statistics from research, such as GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey* (you can download all of GLSEN's research reports at **www.glsen.org/research**).

▼ You may want to write out three to four key statistics on flipchart paper or display on a smartboard. These could include the following from GLSEN's *2013 National School Climate Survey*:

- 74.1% of LGBT students were verbally harassed at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation; 55.2% were harassed because of their gender expression (acting "too masculine" or "too feminine").
- The average grade point average (GPA) for LGBT students who were frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression was significantly lower than that of LGBT students experiencing less harassment.
- Approximately 30% of LGBT students reported skipping a class at least once in the past month and missing at least one full day of school in the past month because they felt uncomfortable or unsafe at school.
- Most LGBT students who are harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff. The most common reason they gave for not reporting was that they believed staff would not do anything about it.

▼ Give examples of the anti-LGBT behavior you have witnessed or heard about in your school.

▼ Lead the staff in a brief discussion using these questions:

- Were you surprised by any of the information?
- Have you witnessed anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment in the school?

RESPONDING TO ANTI-LGBT BEHAVIOR

▼ Tell staff that one of the best ways to make LGBT students feel safer and more comfortable at school is to directly intervene in anti-LGBT behavior.

▼ Provide staff with *Responding to Anti-LGBT Language and Behavior* section from this guide (page 16–17).

▼ Give staff a couple of minutes to review the handout silently, or have participants take turns reading it aloud.

▼ Lead the participants in a discussion using these questions:

- Would these tactics work in our school? Why or why not?
- What are some other ways you can respond to anti-LGBT behavior in the school?

CLOSING

▼ Provide examples of other things staff can do to create a safe environment for LGBT students, such as including LGBT people, history and events in their curriculum and supporting a Gay-Straight Alliance student club.

▼ Follow-up with educators and provide them with copies of important information from the *Guide to Being an Ally*. Support them in their efforts to be an ally, and let them know how they can support you. Be sure to tell them that they can download the *Guide to Being an Ally* and other resources at **www.glsen.org**.

Advocate

A key role of an ally is to use the power and influence they have as an educator to advocate for the rights of LGBT students and ensure safe schools for all. In this section, we discuss three measures that you can advocate for in your school:

- **Assessment of your school's climate, policies and practices.**
- **Implementation of comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies.**
- **Promotion of non-discriminatory policies and practices.**

This section also provides some tips for how to talk to your principal, district administration or school board to advocate for these measures.

Assess your School

The first step in advocating for changes in your school is to assess the current state of your school. This will help you focus your efforts and identify areas for improvement. You can examine your school in-depth by learning about people's experiences in your school and examining your school's existing policies, practices and resources.

ASSESS YOUR SCHOOL'S CLIMATE

You can do this by surveying members of your school community — students, staff and parents. Your survey should include questions that ask about the frequency of biased language, harassment and assault, as well as the level of intervention by educators. GLSEN has a tool, the Local School Climate Survey (LSCS), which was designed to help educators and community members conduct a survey to assess the climate of their school or community. Conducting the LSCS can give you detailed data to use when advocating for changes. There are two versions of the LSCS, one to be conducted in a single school and one to be conducted with several schools or a community. The LSCS provides you with a sample participant letter, tips for conducting a LSCS and a survey form. All materials can be downloaded at **www.glsen.org/lscs** for free.

ASSESS YOUR SCHOOL'S POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Understanding how inclusive your school is of LGBT students, families and issues is key to creating a plan of action to ensuring your school is safe and welcoming for all students. To assess your school's policies and practices, note which items in the LGBT-Inclusive School Checklist applies to your school.

LGBT-Inclusive School Checklist

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- ❑ Fairly enforced non-discrimination and anti-bullying/harassment policies that explicitly protect LGBT students.
- ❑ School forms and applications that are inclusive of all identities and family structures.
- ❑ A gender-neutral dress code, including for yearbook photos.
- ❑ Gender-neutral and/or private bathrooms and changing areas.

SCHOOL EVENTS & CELEBRATIONS

- ❑ School dances and proms that are safe for and inclusive of LGBT students.
- ❑ Proms, homecoming and athletic events that allow for gender-neutral alternatives to "King" and "Queen."
- ❑ Valentine's Day celebrations inclusive of LGBT and non-coupled students.
- ❑ Observations of Mother's Day and Father's Day that affirm all family structures.

COURSE CONTENT

- ❑ Health and sexuality education that is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities.
- ❑ Curriculum that regularly includes information about LGBT people, history and events.
- ❑ Library resources and displays that are inclusive of LGBT people, history and issues.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- ❑ Athletic teams and events that are safe for and inclusive of LGBT students.
- ❑ GSA's and other student clubs that combat name-calling, bullying and harassment.
- ❑ School publications that cover LGBT people and issues.

Once you have assessed your school's policies and practices, you should decide which areas of your school need the most work. Collaborate with other educators and administrators to implement realistic changes within the school.

Implement Comprehensive Anti-Bullying/ Harassment Policies

One major step that schools can take to affirm their support for all students' safety is the implementation and enforcement of anti-bullying or harassment policies. These policies can promote a better school climate for LGBT students when sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are explicitly addressed. School officials may not recognize that anti-LGBT harassment and bullying are unacceptable behaviors, or may not respond to the problem due to prejudice or community pressure without the cover of a specific policy. Comprehensive policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression as protected characteristics removes all doubt that LGBT students, and all students, are protected from anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in school.

Some argue that generic anti-bullying/harassment policies without enumerated categories are just as effective as comprehensive ones. Students' experiences indicate otherwise. LGBT students from schools with a generic policy experience similar harassment levels as students from schools with no policies at all whereas students from schools with a comprehensive policy that include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression report a less hostile and more supportive school climate.

As an ally, you should find out whether your school or school district has a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that includes protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. If it does not, advocate with your principal, school board or district administration to adopt one that does. If your school already has a comprehensive policy, be sure that all members of the school community are regularly notified of the policy and consistently implement it. Often times, a policy may exist but students are not aware of it and may not know that they are protected. If students are not aware of the policy or how to make a report of bullying or harassment, then the policy will not be effective.

For more information about safe school laws and policies, including a model school district policy, visit **www.glsen.org**.

Promote Non-Discriminatory Policies and Practices

Homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism can manifest themselves in school policies and practices, creating an unwelcoming, unsafe and hostile environment for LGBT students. Policies and practices that exclude LGBT students, or force them to conform to what is considered by others as "normal" can alienate LGBT students from the school community. There are many ways to make your school's policies and practices LGBT-inclusive.

▼ **Non-discrimination policy.** Many schools have a non-discrimination policy that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Such policies typically apply to all activities that take place within the school and they can apply to both school personnel and students. Check to see if your school has such a policy and if not, advocate for the adoption of one.

▼ **Sports activities.** Work with school coaches, and physical education teachers to combat anti-LGBT language among students and staff, respond when anti-LGBT behavior occurs and create a safe environment within school athletics for LGBT students. Homophobia and heterosexism are often heavily present on

the fields, in the gym, in locker rooms and at sporting events, and sports activities can be one of the most unwelcoming school programs for LGBT students. Some LGBT students, facing harassment or assault, choose to avoid the athletics program altogether. Those LGBT athletes that do participate may learn to feel shame and self-hatred and hide their identities at great psychological cost. For more information about making K–12 sports and physical education inclusive and safe for all, visit **sports.glsen.org**.

▼ **School uniforms and dress codes.** Work to ensure that school uniforms or dress codes are gender-neutral, with the same set of rules and expectations for all students, regardless of gender. School uniforms and dress codes that require students to wear clothing deemed appropriate for their gender can restrict students' gender identity and gender expression, resulting in students feeling uncomfortable or unwelcome in their own school community.

▼ **School events.** Work to ensure that school events are inclusive of same-gender and gender-non-conforming couples. School events, such as proms, that limit student's guest/date choices to those of another gender can make students feel excluded and unwelcome. For example, if a prom limits a student's guest choices to someone of another gender it may make students feel excluded and unwelcome. This may particularly be a problem in cases when they are explicitly told they cannot bring their same-gender guest or are refused entry because of their guest's gender.

▼ **School libraries.** Work with school librarians to include LGBT-themed literature in the school library collection. Go to **www.glsen.org/educator** to access an online list of recommended books and video resources, to find grade-appropriate literature for your school library. School libraries are a wealth of information and provide students with literature on many topics, including multicultural literature. Far too often, even multicultural literature excludes LGBT people and history. Imagine being in your school library full of books about all peoples, except people like you. Leaving out LGBT people, history and events in the library can contribute to LGBT students feeling excluded from their school.

▼ **Internet filters.** Work with your school administrators to ensure that the Internet filters are not blocking students from finding positive and helpful information about the LGBT community. Internet filters are often used in schools to block materials harmful to students, such as violent or pornographic sites, but they sometimes can block useful and necessary information. Students may be denied access to websites that have LGBT-related information, such as research, historical facts or support services for LGBT youth. And in some cases, students may be blocked from positive information but still have access to sites condemning LGBT people.

SNAP SHOT

Anti-LGBT Bias in School

Vincent was an out, gay-identified senior at his town's only high school. Although he had occasionally experienced anti-gay name-calling and bullying in the school, he was well-liked and felt fairly comfortable at school. The senior prom was approaching and Vincent was worried that he wouldn't be allowed to bring his boyfriend and enjoy the special night with his fellow students. Vincent approached one of the teachers on the prom committee with his concerns. She promised Vincent that there wouldn't be a problem. After spending hours preparing and getting ready for the prom, Vincent and his boyfriend were rudely told they would not be allowed in the prom on the grounds that all couples needed to be of the opposite sex, and that they should take their "offensive lifestyle" somewhere else.

What Can I Say to Make an Impact with My Principal or Administrator?

Advocating for changes in your school will undoubtedly lead to a conversation with your principal or administrator. Administrators are notoriously busy people — you'll likely only have a few minutes to get your point across and make an impression. You want to make sure you give your administrator information that will motivate them to take action and support your efforts as an ally. Here are some tips for making the most out of those few minutes.

▼ **Be direct.** Let them know exactly what you're there for. "I'm here today to talk to you about the need to make our school a safe space for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression." Let them know that you are an ally to LGBT students, and there are some changes that can be made in the school to help LGBT students feel included and safe.

▼ **Show them why the change is necessary.** "I think there is a need for a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy (or a training for all staff, a change in the Internet filter software, etc.) in this school because…" Use statistics from GLSEN's *National School Climate Survey* or results from your school's climate survey to inform your principal or administrator about the prevalence of anti-LGBT behavior in schools and its effects on LGBT students. If possible, use statistics from a GLSEN *Research Brief* for your specific state (see **www.glsen.org/research**) or a local school climate survey you have conducted in your school. Give them brief descriptions of the anti-LGBT behavior you have personally witnessed in the school.

▼ **Put the focus on safety.** All school administrators have a responsibility to make sure their schools are safe (physically and emotionally) for the students who attend them. "As you can see from these statistics (or incidents, stories, etc.) the climate in the school is having an effect on the comfort, safety, and sense of belonging of many of the students as well as test scores, attendance and grades." Point out to them the negative effects anti-LGBT behavior has not only on LGBT students, but all students.

▼ **Show them how the school community will benefit from the change.** "These actions will help make our school a safer and friendlier place for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression." Provide information on how this change can results in a more positive school climate and improve student achievement. For example, share research from GLSEN's National School Climate Survey about the benefits of having supportive school staff or a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy.

▼ **Give an overview of how educators can be allies to LGBT students and the changes the school can make.** Briefly share with them specific ways educators can be a supportive ally to LGBT students, such as intervening when anti-LGBT behavior occurs, not assuming the sexual orientation or gender identity of their students (or their parents) and including LGBT people, history and events in their curriculum. Briefly share with them the specific changes that will make your school safer. Use concrete examples like starting a GSA or making the school's anti-bullying policies inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

▼ **Leave information and schedule a follow-up meeting.** Photocopy or print key information from the *Guide to Being an Ally* and leave copies with your principal or administrator. Leave the information that you think will get them to support your efforts. If possible, try and secure some future time to further discuss the issue. Give the principal or administrator time to learn more and digest the information before continuing the discussion.

Make Your Action Plan

Now that you have learned how to be an effective ally to LGBT students, it's time you make your plan of action. By making realistic goals and documenting them, you will be more likely to make the change you seek. Use the questions provided to specify your next steps.

What can I do to support LGBT students?

What can I do to educate students and school staff?

What can I do to advocate for changes within the school?

What further resources, information, or help do I need?

Congratulations!

You are now ready to be a supportive ally to LGBT students. Using the information and strategies in this guide, you can begin enlisting others in a common effort to transform your school into a safe space for all students regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. In the last section of this guide: a list of GLSEN resources, a national referral list for LGBT youth, and other resources that may be useful to you. The national referral sheet will give you helpful information about organizations that you can refer students to, including hotlines and a network of LGBT centers. Be sure to sign up for GLSEN's communications via the Educators Network and check **www.glsen.org** periodically for new and updated resources.

Additional Resources

GLSEN is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe and affirming schools for all students. GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes in creating a more vibrant and diverse community.

GLSEN Resources

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS:

Lessons and Curricula

GLSEN's Education Department offers free curricula and lesson plans for educators to use with elementary, middle and high school students. These resources provide a framework for facilitating classroom discussion and engaging students in creating safer schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
www.glsen.org/educator

GLSEN's No Name-Calling Week®

GLSEN's No Name-Calling® Week is an annual week of educational and creative activities aimed at ending name-calling of all kinds and providing schools with the tools and inspiration to launch an on-going dialogue about ways to eliminate bullying in their communities. Although the program was originally designed for middle schools, there are new resources for elementary and high schools. For lessons, resources and contest information, visit **www.glsen.org/nncw**.

Changing the Game: The GLSEN Sports Project

GLSEN's Sports Project assists schools in creating athletic and physical education climates based on the principles of respect, safety and equal access for all. Find best practices for coaches and physical education teachers, as well as policy recommendations for athletic administrators, all focused on how to make K–12 athletics and physical education safe, respectful and inclusive for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Download and share these resources and guidelines with your school's physical education teachers and coaches.
sports.glsen.org

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION:

Local GLSEN Chapters

There are currently more than 30 accredited local GLSEN Chapters around the country. While some Chapters have full-time or part-time staff, most are entirely volunteer-based. GLSEN Chapters, with the support and guidance of the national office, work to bring GLSEN's programs and visions to their specific communities on a local level. Connect with your local chapter today!
www.glsen.org

Educator Network

Sign up for the Educators Network to stay up-to-date with LGBT-related education news, classroom resources and upcoming events. This regular e-newsletter highlights the resources, tools and information you need to create safer schools for all students.
www.glsen.org/educator

Educator Forum

Join this social networking site designed for educators to communicate and share ideas and resources related to creating safer schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.
www.facebook.com/groups/glseneducatorforum

ADDITIONAL GLSEN RESOURCES:

Jump-Start Guide for Gay-Straight Alliances

This guide consists of eight self-contained sections designed to help students jump-start — or bring fresh and creative energy to — their student club. The resources take you through the process of establishing or re-establishing your Gay-Straight Alliance, identifying your mission and goals, and assessing your school's climate. Jump-Start your school and your GSA and create safer schools for all.
www.glsen.org/gsa

Resources on Policy and Legal Issues

GLSEN believes that a quality K–12 education is a fundamental right of every American. To that end, GLSEN works with elected officials and other policymakers at the local, state and federal level to ensure that the best and most inclusive safe schools policies are considered, passed and implemented.

Policy and legal resources available from GLSEN at **www.glsen.org/policy**.

- *Tools for Developing and Implementing a Safe Schools Campaign*
- *Model District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students*
- *Public Schools and Sexual Orientation Consensus Guidelines*
- *Dealing with Legal Matters Surrounding Students' Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*

Research

GLSEN's Research Department supports the organization's mission by conducting original research, evaluating GLSEN programs and initiatives, and creating resources that document anti-LGBT bias in education (K–12 schools). GLSEN Research reports include the following:

- *National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of LGBT Youth in Our Nation's Schools*
- *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America, A Survey of Students and Teachers*
- *Shared Differences: The Experiences of LGBT Students of Color in Our Nation's Schools*
- *Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools*
- *The Principal's Perspective: School Safety, Bullying and Harassment*
- *Involved, Invisible, Ignored: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K–12 Schools*
- GLSEN *Research Briefs* (includes summary of research on GSAs and state specific information on school experiences of LGBT students).
www.glsen.org/research

Other Resources

Many other national organizations offer resources that may be helpful in your work as an ally for LGBT students.

Advocates for Youth

Advocates for Youth champions efforts to help young people make informed and responsible decisions about their reproductive and sexual health. Advocates believes it can best serve the field by boldly advocating for a more positive and realistic approach to adolescent sexual health.
www.advocatesforyouth.org

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE)

COLAGE is a national movement of children, youth, and adults with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ) parent/s. COLAGE builds community and works toward social justice through youth empowerment, leadership development, education, and advocacy.
www.colage.org

Family Equality Council

The Family Equality Council works to ensure equality for LGBT families by building community, changing hearts and minds, and advancing social justice for all families.
www.familyequality.org

National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME)

NAME celebrates cultural and ethnic diversity as a national strength that enriches a society and rejects the view that diversity threatens the fabric of a society. NAME believes that multicultural education promotes equity for all regardless of culture, ethnicity, race, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, belief system or exceptionality.
www.nameorg.org

National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE)

NCTE is a national social justice organization devoted to ending discrimination and violence against transgender people through education and advocacy on national issues of importance to transgender people. NCTE facilitates a strong and clear voice for transgender equality in the nation's capital and around the country.
www.transequality.org

Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gays (PFLAG)

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. PFLAG provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.
www.pflag.org

The Safe Schools Coalition

The Safe Schools Coalition is an international public-private partnership in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth, that is working to help schools — at home and all over the world — become safe places where every family can belong, where every educator can teach, and where every child can learn, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.
www.safeschoolscoalition.org

Teaching Tolerance

Teaching Tolerance is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation's children. Teaching Tolerance provides free educational materials to teachers and other school practitioners in the U.S. and abroad.
www.tolerance.org

Referral List for LGBT Youth

SUPPORT

Refer your students to these organizations if they are in need of support or counseling. Familiarize yourself with local resources for LGBT students.

The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is a national organization focused on crisis and suicide prevention efforts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth.
www.thetrevorproject.org
Hotline: 866-4Utrevor/866-488-7386

CenterLink

The Community of LGBT Centers exists to support the development of strong, sustainable LGBT community centers and to build a unified center movement. CenterLink's directory of LGBT community centers in the US and internationally is online in a new and improved format.
www.lgbtcenters.org

GLBT National Help Center

Provides free and confidential telephone and e-mail peer-counseling, information and local resources for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth.
www.glnh.org
Hotline: 800-246-PRIDE

TransProud

TransProud is a website for transgender youth offering a wide range of resources available for youth and educators.
www.transproud.com

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Refer students to these organizations if they are in need of legal assistance.

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

The ACLU works to extend rights to segments of our population that have traditionally been denied their rights, including people of color; women; lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people; prisoners; and people with disabilities.
www.aclu.org

Lambda Legal

Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work.
www.lambdalegal.org

The National Center for Lesbian Rights

A non-profit, public interest law firm that advocates for equitable public policies affecting LGBT community, provides free legal assistance to LGBT clients and their legal advocates, and conducts community education on LGBT legal issues.
www.nclrights.org

Glossary of LGBT-Related Terms

The glossary is designed to provide basic definitions of words and phrases commonly used in discussions about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and related issues. All language is constantly evolving; new terms are introduced, while others fade from use or change their meaning over time. This remains true for the following terms and definitions. For terms that refer to people's identities, people must self-identity for these terms to be appropriately used to describe them.

Ableism: A system of oppression that benefits able-bodied people at the expense of people with disabilities.

Ally: A member of the majority or dominant group who works to end oppression by recognizing their own privilege and supporting or advocating for the oppressed population. For example, a straight cisgender person who supports and stands up for the equality of LGBT people.

Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction, but may experience other forms of attraction (e.g., intellectual, emotional). Asexual people may also identify as "bisexual," "gay," "lesbian," "pansexual," "queer," "straight," and many more.

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to two genders. For example, a person attracted to some male-identified people and some female-identified people.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity and expression are aligned with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Classism: A system of oppression that benefits people with high and middle socioeconomic status at the expense of people with lower socioeconomic status.

Coming Out: The ongoing process that an LGBT person goes through, to recognize their own identities pertaining to sexual orientation and/or gender identity and gender expression, and to be open about them with others.

Dyke: A derogatory term directed at a person perceived as a lesbian. It is oftentimes used against women who are gender nonconforming, with the assumption being that their gender nonconformity implies a sexual attraction to women. Many lesbians (of all gender-expressions) have reclaimed the term and use it as an affirming label with which to identify.

Fag/Faggot: A derogatory term directed at a person perceived as a gay man. It is oftentimes used against men who are gender nonconforming, with the assumption being that their gender nonconformity implies a sexual attraction to men.

Gay: A person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to some members of the same gender. "Gay" often refers to a male-identified person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to some other males. "Gay" should not be used as an umbrella term to refer to all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; the term "LGBT" is more accurate and inclusive.

Gender: A set of cultural identities, expressions and roles — codified as feminine or masculine — that are assigned to people, based upon the interpretation of their bodies, and more specifically, their sexual and reproductive anatomy. Since gender is a social construction, it is possible to reject or modify the assignment made, and develop something that feels truer and just to oneself.

Gender Binary: A socially constructed system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two categories, "male" and "female," in which no other possibilities for gender are believed to exist. The gender binary is inaccurate because it does not take into account the diversity of gender identities and gender expressions among all people. The gender binary is oppressive to anyone that does not conform to dominant societal gender norms.

Gender Expression: The multiple ways (e.g., behaviors, dress) in which a person may choose to communicate gender to oneself and/or to others.

Gender Identity: How an individual identifies in terms of their gender. Gender identities may include, "male," "female," "androgynous," "transgender," "genderqueer" and many others, or a combination thereof.

Genderism: A system of oppression that benefits cisgender people at the expense of transgender and gender nonconforming people. Genderism may take the form of Transphobia, bias and discrimination towards transgender and gender nonconforming people.

Gender Nonconforming or Gender Variant: A person who has a gender identity and/or gender expression that does not conform to the gender they were assigned at birth. People who identify as "gender nonconforming" or "gender variant" may or may not also identify as "transgender."

Genderqueer: A person who has a gender identity and/or gender expression that does not conform to the gender they were assigned at birth. People who identify as "genderqueer" may or may not also identify as "transgender."

Heterosexism: A system of oppression that benefits straight/heterosexual people at the expense of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Heterosexism may take the form of Homophobia or Biphobia, bias and discrimination towards lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Homosexual: A person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to some members of the same gender. Many people prefer the terms "lesbian" or "gay," instead.

Identity: Identity is how we understand ourselves, what we call ourselves and often who we connect to and associate with. Each of us has a unique diversity of social identities based on our sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion and other important parts of who we are. Those identities develop over time, intersect with each other and help give meaning to our lives. Below, you'll find many common terms that people use to identify themselves, especially in relation to their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. It's important to remember that these terms are about self-identification; no one can tell anyone else how to identify or what terms to use.

Intersex: An umbrella term used to describe a variety of conditions in which a person is born with reproductive and/or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the medical definitions of female or male.

Lesbian: A person who is female-identified and who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to some other females.

LGBT or LGBTQ: An umbrella term referring to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. Sometimes the acronym is written as LGBTQ, with the "Q" referring to those who identify as queer and/or questioning. The acronym can also include additional letters, in reference to other identities that do not conform to dominant societal norms around sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

Oppression: Systems of power and privilege, based on bias, which benefit some social groups over others. Oppression can 1) take many forms, including ideological, institutional, interpersonal and internalized; 2) be intentional and unintentional; 3) be conscious and unconscious; and 4) be visible and invisible. Oppression prevents the oppressed groups and individuals from being free and equal. Many people face oppression based on more than one of their identities, creating a unique complexity of challenges and resilience.

Pansexual: A person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to some people, regardless of their gender identity.

Person of Color: A person who identifies as African-American/Black, Latino/Hispanic, Native American/First Nation, Asian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern and/or having mixed ancestry may also identify as a "Person of Color."

Preferred Gender Pronouns (PGPs): The pronoun or set of pronouns that a person would like others to call them by, when their proper name is not being used. Traditional examples include "she/her/hers" or "he/him/his." Some people prefer gender-neutral pronouns, such as "ze/hir/hirs," "zie/zir/zirs," "ey/em/eirs," "per/per/pers," "hu/hum/hus," or "they/them/theirs." Some people prefer no pronouns at all.

Queer: An umbrella term used to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms. While it is used as a neutral, or even a positive term among many LGBT people today, historically "queer" was used as a derogatory slur.

Questioning: A person who is in the process of understanding and exploring what their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and gender expression might be.

Racism: A system of oppression that benefits white people at the expense of people of color.

Reclaimed Words: As language evolves, some individuals and communities choose to identify with terms that had previously been used as slurs against them. The words are "reclaimed" and given new meaning, often imbued with a sense of pride and resilience. Examples include, "queer," "dyke," and "tranny," among others. It's important to remember that identity is unique to each individual; not all members of a community readily accept the use of reclaimed words, as they may still find them offensive and hurtful.

Sexism: A system of oppression that benefits male-identified people at the expense of female-identified people.

Sexual Orientation: The inner feelings of who a person is attracted to emotionally and/or physically, in relation to their own gender identity. Some people may identify as "asexual," "bisexual," "gay," "lesbian," "pansexual," "queer," "straight," and many more.

Straight or Heterosexual: A person who is emotionally and/or physically attracted to some members of another gender (specifically, a male-identified person who is attracted to some females or a female-identified person who is attracted to some males).

Tranny: A derogatory term directed at a transgender person. Some transgender people have reclaimed the term and use it as an affirming label with which to identify.

Transgender: A person whose gender identity and/or expression are not aligned with the gender they were assigned at birth. "Transgender" is often used as an umbrella term encompassing a large number of identities related to gender nonconformity.

Notes

Notes

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