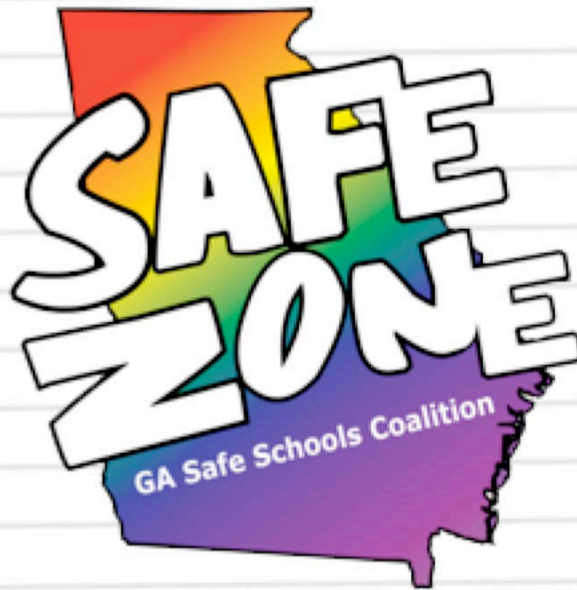# LGBTQQ Youth 101

## A Comprehensive Manual for School Counselors



## Georgia Safe Schools Coalition

*Creating a school climate where <u>all</u> students feel safe, supported and empowered*

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# A Student's Call to Action

This time last year, I was another gay student trapped in the proverbial closet. Silenced by the hostility of my peers and the indifference of my teachers, I became invisible. I sacrificed the authenticity of my emotions for a false sense of acceptance. In spite of my pain and isolation, denial seemed easier than the alternative. It was familiar and safe. Yet even in denial, my sexuality was questioned. I was bullied and called a "faggot." I faced harassment in the hallways and was forced to change my route to class.

In the midst of these experiences, I knew that something had to change- not just for me, but for all the other students at my school who, because of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, were too afraid to be themselves. I also knew that change, no matter how much one hopes for it, does not happen on its own; it requires activism, persistence and deep-seated conviction. I certainly had conviction; what I lacked, however, was the confidence to effectively challenge the status quo. Discouraged, I crawled back inside and my closet. Change, I decided, would have to wait.

Several days later, I stopped by the school counseling office to inquire about my schedule. As I walked passed the office of one of the counselors, I noticed a *Safe Space* sticker on her door. Although presumably insignificant to most students, this sticker gave me a feeling of safety I had never before experienced at school and it reignited within me that familiar hunger for change. With this new sense of hope and support, I asked the counselor to consider being the sponsor for a Gay-Straight Alliance; she excitedly complied. This partnership sparked a movement I could have never anticipated. Since that fateful afternoon, I have helped launch several successful campaigns at my school including the Day of Silence, Think B4 You Speak and a modified *Safe Space* training for faculty members. I have taken my message for safer schools to college classrooms, town hall meetings and academic symposiums, calling on educators to step up as advocates for LGBTQQ youth. I am also working with a local middle school to develop a mentoring program for LGBTQQ students and a workshop for faculty members. This October, I will be honored as GLSEN's first-ever Student Advocate of the Year at the Respect Awards in Los Angeles. And to think, it all started with a sticker.

This story is a testament to those seemingly "little" things that can ultimately make a significant difference. In the words of my friend, Dr. Anneliese Singh, "school counselors do not empower students; they merely create a space where students feel safe enough to empower themselves."

To all the educators who help create that space, I extend my deepest gratitude. Your support means more than perhaps you will ever know.

-Austin Laufersweiler
GSSC Board Member
GLSEN Student Advocate of the Year, 2009

# What is Georgia Safe Schools Coalition?

**Who We Are:** Georgia Safe Schools Coalition is a partnership of educators, community organizations, and safe school activists dedicated to raising awareness about issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQQ) youth and families. GSSC works with educators and community organizations to help Georgia's schools become safe and affirming environments for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression.

**Mission Statement:** The purpose of Georgia Safe Schools Coalition (GSSC) is to eliminate heterosexism and homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying in Georgia schools by educating school personnel on issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQQ) students and families. GSSC works to address the intersections among various systems of oppression, understanding that one cannot eradicate transprejudice and heterosexism without simultaneously working to end all forms of injustice. GSSC will serve as a resource for Georgia educators as they strive to foster a safe and affirming school climate for *all* students. In doing so, GSSC seeks to improve academic achievement and engender positive social growth among Georgia's youth.

**What We Do:** GSSC helps foster safe and affirming school environments for Georgia's LGBTQQ youth and families by:

- Providing training, support, and resources to Georgia schools, counselors, administration, faculty and staff
- Raising awareness among families, parents and members of the community
- Providing resources to help support safer, more affirming schools at the local, district, and state level
- Consulting with schools and personnel in developing safer, more positive school climates
- Offering support and resources to Gay-Straight Alliances

# Introduction

The role of school counselor is integral to creating an environment where all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression, feel safe and accepted at school. School counselors may feel hesitant to address issues affecting LGBTQQ students and families because they lack experience or awareness in working with LGBTQQ youth or children of LGBTQQ parents.  Others may work in environments where they feel powerless to change the status quo or to address a discriminatory school climate.  Between scheduling, parent-teacher conferences, classroom guidance lessons, and a heavy caseload, it is often difficult for school counselors to find the time necessary to proactively address LGBTQQ issues - such as bullying or prejudice in schools.

GSSC is here to help- which is why we created *LGBTQQ Youth 101: A Comprehensive Manual for School Counselors,* specifically tailored to address issues affecting Georgia students*.*  Whether you are a seasoned school counselor or fresh out of graduate school, this complimentary manual will assist you in better serving LGBTQQ students.

Thank you for your commitment to safer schools for all students!


Sincerely,
Georgia Safe Schools Coalition


*Note: In speaking about people from the LGBTQQ&A (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Ally) communities, it is important to recognize that the terms and categories commonly used across numerous populations and environments, are still developing.  There is no uniform way that such acronyms are written; this variation has led to the reference of gay/queer acronyms as "alphabet soup."  To maintain consistency, GSSC will use the acronym LGBTQQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning) throughout this manual unless another organization's resources are being cited.  Please refer to the glossary for a comprehensive list of terminology.*

# Risk Factors

*As a school counselor, it is important to be aware of the many risks faced by youth who are, or are perceived to be LGBTQQ.  Such risk factors, listed below, are often the result of bullying, harassment and isolation.*

**Feelings of Difference**
- LGBTQQ youth experience a sense of feeling "different" from a young age.
- LGBTQQ people are, for the most part, invisible in our culture, further contributing to this feeling of difference.
- Heterosexuality is always assumed.
- Because the LGBTQQ community is so often invisible in our culture, youth often feel as though there is no one else like them.

**Lack of Social Support**
- Parents of LGBTQQ youth are often not supportive and may even disown their children.
- LGBTQQ youth report feeling unsafe at school.  Other students are not "out"; sexual orientation and gender identity/expression are generally not discussed.

**School Performance**
- 64% of LGBT youth feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and 39% feel unsafe because of their gender expression.
  - Source: GLSEN, 2003. The 2003 National School Climate Survey: The School Related Experiences of Our Nation's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth.  New York: GLSEN.
- Because LGBTQQ youth face a higher incidence of bullying and harassment, they do less well in school, miss class more frequently, are more likely to drop out and are less likely to attend college than their heterosexual and/or cisgender counterparts.

**Homelessness**
- An abusive home often leads LGBTQQ youth to run away from home.
- Many LGBTQQ youth are evicted from their home and disowned by family.
- Many LGBTQQ youth report being victimized and harassed at group homes and foster homes.
- LGBTQQ youth are more likely to be homeless than their heterosexual, cisgender counterparts.

**Substance Abuse**
- LGBTQQ youth are more likely to develop a substance abuse problem than their heterosexual, cisgender peers.

**Suicide**
- LGB youth are 4 times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers.

- Source: The Centers for Disease Control and the Massachusetts Department of Education, 2001. The Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Study.

# Legal and Ethical Implications

# Your Role as a School Counselor

- School counselors are legally and ethically obligated to protect the rights and welfare of all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression. In order to do so effectively, counselors must understand issues faced by LGBTQQ youth.

- The preamble of the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA, 2005) ethical codes expressly states school counselors are ethically obligated to implement a school counseling program that:

  - "advocates for and affirms all students from diverse populations regardless of sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression…."

- Furthermore, ASCA's position statement on LGBTQQ youth states the following:

  - "Students may face bullying, harassment and name-calling based on real or perceived sexual orientation/gender identity. Professional school counselors realize these issues may infringe upon healthy student development and limit their opportunities in school and community."

*Ethical standards for school counselors, (2004).* Retrieved June 28, 2009, from
http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=17.
*Position statement: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth.* (2005). Retrieved June 28, 2009, from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?contentid=217

# ACA Code of Ethics: Confidentiality and Privacy*

*The following ethical codes regarding confidentiality and privacy should be considered when working with LGBTQQ students:*

A.1.a. Primary Responsibility: The primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and to promote the welfare of clients.

A.2.d. Inability to Give Consent: When counseling minors or persons unable to give voluntary consent, counselors seek the assent of clients to services, and include them in decision making as appropriate. Counselors recognize the need to balance the ethical rights of clients to make choices, their capacity to give consent or assent to receive services, and parental or familial legal rights and responsibilities to protect these clients and make decisions on their behalf.

B.1.b. Respect for Privacy: Counselors respect client rights to privacy. Counselors solicit private information from clients only when it is beneficial to the counseling process.

B.1.c. Respect for Confidentiality: Counselors do not share confidential information without sound legal or ethical justification.

B.2.d. Minimal Disclosure: To the extent possible, clients are informed before confidential information is disclosed and are involved in the disclosure decision-making process. When circumstances require the disclosure of confidential information, only essential information is revealed.

# ACA Code of Ethics: Bullying

*The following ethical codes should be considered in working with LGBTQQ students who are experiencing bullying:*

A.1.a. Primary Responsibility: The primary responsibility of counselors is to respect the dignity and to promote the welfare of clients.

A.4.a. Avoiding harm: Counselors act to avoid harming their clients, trainees, and research participants and to minimize or to remedy unavoidable or unanticipated harm.

A.6.a. Advocacy: When appropriate, counselors advocate at individual, group, institutional, and societal levels to examine potential barriers and obstacles that inhibit access and/or the growth and development of clients.

C.5. Nondiscrimination: Counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination based on age, culture, disability, ethnicity, race, religion/ spirituality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status/ partnership, language preference, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law. Counselors do not discriminate against clients, students, employees, supervisees, or research participants in a manner that has a negative impact on these persons.

# Legal Considerations

*The following legal provisions should be considered when working with LGBTQQ students:*

**Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment:**

- All students have a federal constitutional right to "equal protection" under the law.

- That means schools are legally obligated to provide the same protection against harassment to LGBTQ students as they would heterosexual or cisgender students.

- Nabozny v. Podlesny, 1996
    - Landmark case which used the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment as a basis in arguing the school's legal responsibility to protect students from antigay physical and verbal abuse.
    - The appellate court decision made it clear that schools can be held accountable for failing to protect students from homophobic abuse.
    - The school district was not held liable.
    - Nabozny was awarded close to $1 million.

**Title IX:**

- Title IX states that, "No person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal aid."

**How does Title IX apply to bullying against LGBTQQ students?**

- Although Title IX does not specifically prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, it does prohibit harassment that is sexual in nature. It also prohibits harassment that stems from *perceptions of stereotyped notions of femininity or masculinity*.
- Wagner vs. Fayetteville School District
    - This case marked a milestone in civil rights for lesbian, gay and bisexual students.  It was the first time a complaint had been filed under Title IX on behalf of a gay student experiencing harassment.  The complaint came after a student, William Wagner, experienced severe anti-LGBTQQ bullying and harassment between eighth and tenth grade.  His mother, Carolyn Wagner contacted the school several times; however, the issue was never properly addressed.   Lambda Legal stepped in and the district agreed to alter its policies and provide training for students and school personnel.

## 1st Amendment:

- "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

## What does this mean for LGBTQQ students?

A transgender student has the right to dress in accordance with his/her/hir's gender identity. The First Amendment also limits school officials from censoring a student's freedom of speech.

## Equal Access Act (EAA)

- The Equal Access Act (EAA) requires any public "secondary school" that receives federal money *and* has a "limited open forum" to allow LGBTQQ-oriented clubs formed by students the same access to facilities as other student clubs. Under the EAA, student clubs addressing LGBTQQ issues (e.g., a gay-straight alliance) must be treated the same as other clubs.
- Conditions of the Equal Access Act:
  - Clubs must be requested at the request of students.
  - EAA only applies when the school has a "limited open forum," meaning the school recognizes other "non-curriculum-related" support groups
- Pride v. White County School District
  - When students in White County, Georgia attempted to start a Gay-Straight Alliance club, the school board reacted by announcing it would ban all non-curricular student groups the following academic year. In spite of this announcement, other non-curriculum clubs continued to meet on campus. In response, the ACLU of Georgia filed a lawsuit against school officials for illegally banning the GSA (under the EAA). The ACLU reached an agreement whereby the school board would enact an anti-harassment policy to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students from bullying. School officials also agreed to provide faculty members with annual training sessions designed to prevent anti-LGBTQQ bullying.

## Right to Privacy: "Outing" Students

- As counselors, we are both ethically and, to an extent, legally obligated to uphold a student's right to privacy. Sexual orientation is a deeply private matter and, therefore, should not be revealed to a student's parents or other school personnel.
- Nguon v. Wolf, 2005, California

- A U.S. District Court judge ruled that a lawsuit filed by the ACLU on behalf of Charlene Nguon, age 17, against Principal Ben Wolf of Garden Grove Unified School District could proceed with the claim that Wolf violated her Constitutional right to privacy by revealing her sexual orientation to her parents without her permission.

*Note: If a student is in danger of harming him/her/hirself as a result of sexual orientation or gender expression, "outing" the student to parents would be appropriate.  In such an instance, the student's safety would outweigh the right to confidentiality and privacy.*

American Civil Liberties Union. (2005, December 1). *Federal judge rules that high schools cannot out lesbian and gay student.* Retrieved August 5, 2009, from http://www.aclu.org/lgbt/youth/22068prs20051201.html

American Civil Liberties Union.  (2006, February 27).  *Pride v. white county school district- Case profile.*  Retrieved August 11, 2009 from http://www.aclu.org/lgbt/youth/25917res20060227.html

Lambda Legal. (1998, June 22).  *Complaint by gay student trigger historic civil rights agreement.*  Retrieved August 16, 2009 from http://www.lambdalegal.org/news/pr/complaint-by-gay-student.html?log-event=sp2f-view-item&nid=73258584

National School Boards Association (2004).  Dealing with legal matters surrounding students' sexual orientation and gender identity.  Washington, D.C.

*Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972, Section 1681.* Retrieved July 17, 2009, from U.S. Department of Labor web site:  http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleix.htm

# Legislative Activism

The aforementioned laws are broad and vague with regard to protection of LGBTQQ students. State laws that specify enumerated categories for this group provide more protection.

As such, school counselors should seek to create and/or enforce such policies in their states by engaging in legislative activism.

**What you can do…**

- Write your Senator and/or congressional representative.
- Participate in a lobbying day at a state or federal level.
- Check to see if your district has a comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment policy. If not, advocate for one.
- Encourage students to get involved.
- Collaborate with LGBTQQ-friendly organizations (refer to the resources section).
- Educate school personnel and encourage them to get involved.

# Gender Identity and Expression

*For further definitions of the terms related to this section, please refer to the glossary.*

# Transgender Awareness

Broadly conceived, transgender people are those for whom gender identity and/or expression does not match the stereotypical gender norms associated with the sex/gender assigned to them at birth.   Some individuals who fit the aforementioned definition identify as transgender; some do not.  The transgender community is not a monolithic group and should not be treated as such.  What is key is that **all people have the right to self-identify**.  It is also important to note that what is considered acceptable to some may be viewed as restrictive or offensive to others.  Be mindful of language!  If you are unsure about an individual's gender identity/ expression or appropriate gender affirming pronouns, ask politely and privately; never assume. If you should misspeak, correct yourself and move on; a drawn-out apology can be embarrassingly unnecessary for everyone.

## Gender Identity and Expression

Within the construct of gender exists gender identity and gender expression. Gender identity can be defined as one's psychological sense of self, regardless of social constructs; these identities include male, female, androgynous, fluid or other. Gender expression describes the way in which one communicates gender: what one wears, hair style, chosen name, gender affirming pronouns, etc.

## Dispelling Common Myths and Misconceptions

### Sex vs. Gender

Sex and gender, although both socially constructed, should not be used interchangeably.  Sex, as defined by Lambda Legal, is "a term used historically and within the medical field to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male." In contrast, gender is "a set of social, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other."

Transgender is **NOT…**

**Intersex** (formerly hermaphrodite)*
- 1 in every 2,000 children
- Nature does not always produce individuals with strictly "male" or "female" bodies; a person born may be born with anatomical or chromosomal variance that differs from culturally ideal norms; differing from medical and scientific data used to define female and male.
    - *Note: "Hermaphrodite" is an outdated term that was once used to describe intersex persons. It is now considered derogatory, unless claimed by an individual with DSD [disorder of sex development].*

- For the most current information on intersex variations and the struggles they face, visit www.accordalliance.org *or* www.isna.org.

**Sexual Orientation**
One's natural attraction to sexual partners.
- Identities: gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, asexual, or heterosexual.

# What is Transgender?

*A category of identity that must be chosen by the individual. Not all people who fall under the categories below necessarily identify under the trans umbrella, though they may.*

- **Genderqueer**
- **Gender Variant**
- **MTF (male to female)**
- **Androgynous**
- **Boylesque**
- **Drag Queens**

- **Drag King**
- **Transgender**
- **Cross Dresser**
- **FTM (female to male)**
- **Other[s]**

**\* Identities and categories can, and do change, based on context, culture, geography, and an individual's place in their life journey.**

## How Does Your School Measure Up?*

*The following questions will help you understand your school's policies regarding transgender youth. Teachers should either be able to answer these questions or help you locate the information through a principal or your local school board. If your school doesn't measure up, contact Lambda Legal.*

- Is transgender or gender identity included in your school's non-discrimination policy?
- Are there resources available for transgender youth?
- How often are gender issues discussed?
- Do students experience prejudice or intimidation due to their gender identity?
- Are there any unisex bathrooms?
- Is there a school dress code?
- Are teachers, counselors and staff trained on LGBT youth issues?
- What referrals do counselors make for transgender youth?
- Do transgender youth feel safe in school?

*\*Reprinted with permission from Lambda Legal*

# How to be a Trans Ally*

- **Don't make assumptions:** Just as you shouldn't make assumptions about someone's sexual orientation, you also shouldn't make assumptions about a person's gender or gender identity. Exploring gender (and sexuality) is a healthy expression of growing up and developing as a person.  No one ever benefits from being labeled.
- **Create a safe and open environment:** Work toward creating an affirming environment where individual gender expression is supported and where there is room for dialogue and discussion. Challenge homophobic and transphobic remarks and jokes. Use inclusive, supportive, non-gender-specific language. Support others who challenge inappropriate behavior. "What are you" is not an OK question to ask. "What pronoun do you use?" is an example of a better question.
- **Be informed and examine your own biases:** We are all products of a society with rigid gender roles. We are taught what is feminine and masculine, female and male, and told not to blur these categories. Recognize your level of comfort with different types of gender expression, and see how this can affect your interactions with your friends, classmates and others. Read reliable sources, attend workshops to educate yourself about gender issues and talk to people in the know.
- **Understand what gender identity means:** Each person's gender identity is natural to that person. Gender may not be experienced solely as female or male.  Educate yourself about sexual identity and social stereotypes. Most importantly, understand that sexuality and gender identity are only two aspects of a whole person.
- **Walk the walk:** Support your friend or family member's gender explorations and encourage healthy dialogue and development. For many youth, accessing an LGBT youth community may be their first chance to explore gender identity and nontraditional gender expression. Actions beyond creating safe space may be important in empowering youth to ask for support with gender identity issues. Be personally accountable when mistakes are made and model active support for gender-nonconforming expression.

*Reprinted with permission from Lambda Legal*

# Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools*

In addition to looking at comparisons between transgender and non-transgender students, Harsh Realities specifically examines the experiences of the 295 transgender students who took the National School Climate Survey.

**Key findings of Harsh Realities include:**

*Biased language:*

- 90% of transgender students heard derogatory remarks, such as "dyke" or "faggot," sometimes, often or frequently in school in the past year.
- 90% of transgender students heard negative remarks about someone's gender expression sometimes, often or frequently in school in the past year.
- Less than a fifth of transgender students said that school staff intervened most of the time or always when hearing homophobic remarks (16%) or negative remarks about someone's gender expression (11%).
- School staff also contributed to the harassment. A third of transgender students heard school staff make homophobic remarks (32%), sexist remarks (39%) and negative comments about someone's gender expression (39%) sometimes, often or frequently in the past year.

*School Safety and Experiences of Harassment and Assault:*

- Two-thirds of transgender students felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation (69%) and how they expressed their gender (65%).
- Almost all transgender students had been verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened) in the past year at school because of their sexual orientation (89%) and gender expression (87%).
- More than half of all transgender students had been physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) in school in the past year because of their sexual orientation (55%) and gender expression (53%).
- More than a quarter of transgender students had been physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked or injured with a weapon) in school in the past year because of their sexual orientation (28%) and gender expression (26%).
- Most transgender students (54%) who were victimized in school did not report the events to school authorities. Among those who did report incidents to school personnel, few students (33%) believed that staff addressed the situation effectively.

*Impact of Victimization on Educational Outcomes:*

- Almost half of all transgender students reported skipping a class at least once in the past month (47%) and missing at least one day of school in the past month (46%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Transgender students experiencing high levels of harassment were more likely than other transgender students to miss school for safety reasons (verbal harassment based on sexual orientation: 64% vs. 25%, gender expression: 56% vs. 32%, gender: 68% vs. 38%).
- Transgender students who experienced high levels of harassment had significantly lower GPAs than those who experienced lower levels of harassment (verbal harassment based on sexual orientation: 2.2. vs. 3.0, gender expression: 2.3 vs. 2.8, gender: 2.2 vs. 2.7).

### *Engagement with the School Community:*

- Transgender students who were out to most or all other students and school staff reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community than those who were not out or only out to a few other students or staff.  The majority (66%) of transgender students were out to most or all of their peers, yet less than half (45%) were out to most or all of the school staff.
- Most transgender students had talked with a teacher (66%) or a school-based mental health professional (51%) at least once in the past year about LGBT-related issues. Transgender students were also more likely than non-transgender lesbian, gay and bisexual students to talk with school staff about these issues.

### *In-School Resources and Supports*:

- Although transgender students were not more likely to report having a GSA in their school, they did report attending GSA meetings more frequently than non-transgender LGB students.
- Although most transgender students (83%) could identify at least one supportive educator, only a third (36%) could identify many (six or more) supportive staff.
- Only half (54%) of transgender students reported that their school had an anti-harassment policy, and only 24% said that the school policy included specific protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

GLSEN (2009) Harsh realities: The reality of transgender youth in our nation's
        schools.  New York: GLSEN

# LGBTQQ Students of Color

# Diversity Matters*

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) identified youth are a diverse group with varying life experiences and realities. Recognizing the cultural context within which they live their lives is essential for understanding how they negotiate their identity. As an example, LGBTQ youth who have membership in other socially marginalized groups (women, people of color, lower socioeconomic status, and non-confirming gender identity) experience different realities that compound the negative effects of heterosexism (Brooks 1981).

Several key aspects of diversity that should be taken into consideration when working with LGBTQ identified youth and their families include racial identity, gender, religion, and family structure.

## Racial Identity

*Dual and Dueling Identities*
For many LGBTQ youth of color, their racial and ethnic identities are established before their sexual and gender identities as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. Social support and a sense of shared community with larger LGBTQ communities vary as they may feel a lack of identification to a community traditionally perceived as white and westernized (Greene 2000). However, identifying with LGBTQ community may also be interpreted as a rejection of their own racial identity and ethnic community (Greene 1998; Loiacano 1989). Homophobia experienced in their own ethnic communities leave many LGBTQ youth of color with feelings of shame or the need to conceal this portion of their identity from family and friends in order to not face social stigma or alienation.

- LGBTQ youth of color report feeling pressure to choose between their ethnic and their sexual identities; these youth are less likely to be involved in gay social and cultural activities than their white counterparts (Rosario et al 2004; Dube & Savin-Williams1999).

*"Don't ask, Don't tell"*
Many lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals of color report a "silent tolerance" of their sexuality by family members (Hidalgo & Hidalgo-Christensen 1976; Hidalgo & Hidalgo-Christensen 1979). This "silent tolerance" suggests that these individuals can maintain ties with their families and ethnic community if they "silence" their sexual identities. For many, maintaining ties to their family is crucial for economic support, but also for maintaining a sense of pride and cultural connectedness in a society hostile to their ethnic identities. Consider this;

- Youth of color are significantly less likely to have told their parents they are lesbian, gay, or bisexual: one study found that while about 80 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual whites were out to parents, only 71 percent of

Latinos, 61 percent of African-Americans, and 51 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders (APIs) were out to parents (Grov & Bimbi 2006).

*Distinct Challenges*

In sum, many LGBTQ youth of color face distinct challenges to developing a positive LGBTQ identity, including discrimination within their racial and ethnic communities (Greene 1994; Jackson and Brown 1996; Loicano 1989), discrimination within the gay community (Zamoro-Hernandez and Patterson 2001), limited social support (Jackson and Brown 1996; Loicano 1989), few and limited access to same-sex resources (Greene 1994; Jackson and Brown 1996; Loicano 1989), as well as a lack of healthy role models (Green 1994).

- One study found that African American same-sex attracted youth were more likely to have low self esteem and experience suicidal thoughts than their counterparts of other ethnicities. African American same-sex attracted young men were also more likely to be depressed (Consolacion et al 2004).

## The Importance of Gender

Gender also matters a great deal. Different cultural groups have strong cultural assumptions about women and men's roles in the family and values transmitted by gender about sexual behavior. Assuming a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity goes against both mainstream and culturally prescribed gender and sexuality roles. As Nagel (2000) points out, "[a]cross a wide variety of ethnic groups' appropriate enactments of heterosexuality are perhaps the most regulated and enforced norms". For example;

- Asian American and Pacific Islander LGBTQ youth often feel that they have shamed their families when they diverge from cultural expectations to marry and have children (Wade S et al.1991).

In addition to not being seen as a respectable sexuality, assuming a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity is seen as a rejection of males' roles as masculine heads of households, and women's roles as wives and mothers.

## Religion

Religious communities promote individual characteristics such as faith, spirituality, yet are notoriously cited as the reason many justifiably condemn lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (Herek & Capitanio 1995; Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera 2006; Lewis 2003). Studies have shown that much of the dissention toward homosexuality within African American and Latino cultures is on moral grounds rooted in strong religious traditions of Protestantism and Catholicism respectively (Carballo-Dieguez 1989; Greene 1990; Loiacano 1989).

- In a large survey of attendees of Black Pride events, over half reported that their churches or religion viewed homosexuality as "wrong and sinful" (Battle 2006).

It is important to recognize that connections and feelings toward religious communities might be associated with feelings toward larger ethnic and racial communities because the church is a staple ethnic institution for many ethnic and racial minorities.

**Family Structure**

Family can be a source of protection and conflict. Many racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be raised in close knit cultural communities (Greene 1990; Hidalgo & Hidalgo-Christensen 1976). While close familial tie are common in ethnic minority communities they can be detrimental if family is not accepting or supportive of their non-heterosexual relative.

- After coming out to their family or being discovered, many LGBTQ youth are thrown out of their home, mistreated, or made the focus of their family's dysfunction (Savin-Williams 1994).

On one hand families provide a source of sameness and security by racial identification, but they also are the source of homophobic and heterosexist ideals to LGBTQ youth.

**Supporting Parents and LGBTQ Youth**

Parents experience a multitude of emotions in realizing that their son or daughter is LGBTQ (Adelson, 2003; LaSala, 2000; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). Shock is a typical first response for parents, eventually may evolve to feelings of acceptance by parents. Fontaine and Hammond (1996) discuss how working with parents requires a degree of patience as they go through their own coming out process dealing with their LGBTQ youth, taking this into consideration, they offer several helpful intervention strategies for working with parents and LGBTQ youth;

1. Assist family and adolescents in redefining differentness, discourage premature labeling, and attempt to normalize feelings.

Parents and adolescents when first working through the coming out process may both attempt to deny a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity or prematurely label behavior. During this stage it is helpful to discourage families from forcing or denying labels, and rather focus on working through their children's' feeling of being different. It is equally as important to discourage parents from speech or actions that might stigmatize their child's LGBTQ identity.

2. Help both families and adolescents locate healthy and appropriate support systems.

Social isolation and alienation are part of the coming out experiences for both adolescents and families alike. Helping both find support systems will decrease feeling of secrecy and shame and reinforce the idea that they are not alone in this process.

3. Facilitate discussions on coming out and offer insight to resources on the identity formation process.

Families might have difficulty communicating with their sons or daughters. During this time, teens might experience a variety of negative experiences while trying to get comfortable with their lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity, which is a trying time for both families and youth. Fontaine and Hammond (1996) recommend encouraging communication that helps with interpreting negative experiences, developing interpersonal skills, and addressing fears of exposure.

4. Help ease parents and adolescents panic, fears, and stereotypes about homosexual behavior.

Lack of accurate information often leads both parents and LGBTQ youth to default on stereotypes of homosexual behavior, namely sexual behavior and gender roles. Sex and general is often a difficult topic of discussion between parents and teens. These fears are often exacerbated among parents of LGBTQ youth as they worry about their teen's sexual risk taking. Encouraging discussion and providing access to accurate resources can help dismiss and discourage adults and youth from defaulting to negative sexual stereotypes about same-sex intimate behavior.

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## Shared Differences:
## The Experiences of LGBT Students of Color*

The report documents the experiences of over 2,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) middle and high school students of color who were African American or Black, Latino/a, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American, and multiracial, using 2007 data collected as part of GLSEN's biennial survey of LGBT students, the National School Climate Survey, along with results from in-depth individual and group interviews

The report also provides descriptions of the experiences of LGBT students of color in their own words.

"You could very well on any day hear someone yelling across the hall, 'fag,' etc," said a 10th grade Latino male student in the report. "I've heard it before. ... It's hurtful because it's just not something that you say. And it's just generally hurtful. And I know that I'll just be walking in a hallway, and someone will just say under their breath with a group of friends, "fag" ... and hearing things like that in my school - it kind of brings me down almost. It kind of negates any hope that I have for our school to be a better place."

Key Findings:

- Across all groups, sexual orientation and gender expression were the most common reasons LGBT students of color reported feeling unsafe in school. More than four out of five students, within each racial/ethnic group, reported verbal harassment in school because of sexual orientation and about two-thirds because of gender expression. At least a third of each group reported physical violence in school because of sexual orientation.
- More than half of African American/Black, Latino/a, Asian/Pacific Islander, and multiracial students also reported verbal harassment in school based on their race or ethnicity. Native American students (43%) were less likely than other students to report experiencing racially motivated verbal harassment.
- About a quarter of African American/Black and Asian/Pacific Islander students had missed class or days of school in the past month because they felt unsafe. Latino/a, Native American, and multiracial students were even more likely to be absent for safety reasons - about a third or more skipped class at least once or missed at least one day of school in the past month for safety reasons.
- Native American students experienced particularly high levels of victimization because of their religion, with more than half reporting the highest levels of verbal harassment (54%), and a quarter experiencing physical violence (26%).
- Less than half of students of color who had been harassed or assaulted in school in the past year said that they ever reported the incident to school staff. Furthermore, for those students who did report incidents to school staff, less than half believed that staff's resulting response was effective.

- Native American (57%) and multiracial (50%) students were more likely than other students of color in our survey to report incidents to a family member.
- Performance at school also suffered when students experienced high levels of victimization. Students' overall GPA dropped when they reported high severities of harassment based on sexual orientation and/or race/ethnicity. Students experiencing high severities of harassment also reported missing school more often.
- The report also looks at differing experiences based on the racial/ethnic make-up of students' schools. For all groups, LGBT students of color who were minorities in their school were much more likely to feel unsafe and experience harassment because of their race or ethnicity than those who were in the racial/ethnic majority.

GLSEN (2009) *Shared differences: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students of color in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN
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# "If These Were Racial Slurs, Teachers Would Be Stopping Them" …Three Activists Object*

*By: Beth Reis, Mona Mendoza and Frieda Takamura: July 2000*

Race and racism and racial harassment: how do we discuss them when we are working to end homophobia in schools?

The authors know what we don't want people to say in the name of ending homophobia: "If these were racial slurs, teachers would be stopping them."

Why do we find that approach so offensive?  Well first, because it's a lie. At least it is a major exaggeration. And second because it alienates some of our own and some of our allies, making them choose between two wrongs to right.

## First, how is it a lie or, at best, an exaggeration?

Racial harassment is still a major problem in schools. According to a 1995 study (Seattle's Teen Health Risk Survey of 8,000+ youth) 43% of students have been the target of "offensive racial comments" or attacks at school or on the way to or from school. That's nearly half the students in an urban, racially diverse district!

Perhaps you say, "But our district is not as racially diverse, so it can't be as big of a problem here." Maybe it isn't as bad for European-American (White) children, but it may be even worse to be a youth of color in your mostly European-American school. A 1997 study of the whole state of Wisconsin (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) found that 9% of students been "threatened or hurt because of [their] race or color," with ethnic groups reporting varying rates of harassment, from 6% among European-American students to 50% among Asian/Pacific Islander students. There's that pesky "half" again.

Is it happening in front of teachers and other adults? Maybe less often than thirty years ago.  Do adults respond when they are made aware of it? Probably more often than they once did, but if they always treated these incidents with the gravity they deserve, racial harassment in schools would have slowed to a trickle by now. It is not a trickle!

## Why does it alienate people of color, GLBT and straight alike, when GLBT activists make this argument? And why does it anger some White educators?

The implication of the statement is that racism is solved and it is time to move on to homophobia.   As long as children with Spanish accents and Asian faces are told to go back where they came from … as long as African-American kindergartners hear, "you can't play with us; you're Black" (Beth's granddaughter heard it in 1997) … as long as American Indian & Native Alaskan young people hear, "The only good

Indian is a dead Indian" (the daughter of a colleague heard it in 1999) … and, yes, as long as European-American students are told you can't wear that/play with us/sit here because you are White … we will need to work on racial prejudice in schools.

**We mustn't choose which wrong to right. Fairness and safety aren't finite commodities we have to divide up.**

One child doesn't have to get less fairness for another child to get more. One child doesn't have to be less safe for another to be more. It's our responsibility to ensure that everybody is made welcome and safe at school.

Everybody.

**Well, can we *never* bring up one form of oppression or one civil rights movement in helping to explain another? Sure, as long as it's done without comparing hurts.**

In fact, we should bring up all forms of oppression, but with careful thought. We can say first, "We are indebted to the heroes of previous generations … to Mohandas Ghandi and Harriet Tubman and Susan B. Anthony and Bayard Rustin and Cesar Chavez and Malcolm X and all the others who taught us about dignity and fought for human rights."

When someone says, "Why do you have to be so visible?" we can say,

> "Remember when women were invisible in the curriculum? Remember how we figured out that we were cheating girls AND boys by denying them women as role models?"

This doesn't imply that girls are no longer being made to feel less capable by teachers' unconscious expectations. But it points to one step we took as a culture to begin to right the wrong.

When someone says, "Why do you need to be listed explicitly in a policy, when all harassment is wrong?" we can say,

> "For the same reason we needed to list race and religion and disability: because listing a specific form of discrimination declares that even the heretofore acceptable, commonplace forms are wrong."

> "Besides, policies can make invisible people visible. Some people don't even realize there are GLBT people in their schools."

When someone asks, "Why are we focusing just on anti-gay harassment?" instead of asserting that teachers always intervene in racial harassment, we can say,

> "Teachers and other school staff have more experience and training in how to address racial and general sexual harassment than in how to address anti-gay harassment. That's why we are focusing on anti-gay harassment here. Not because racial and religious and disability-based harassment isn't terrible. Not even because adults always intervene in it. Simply because the time has come to talk about one more form of hurt, which hasn't been spoken about much in the past."

When we feel frustrated, instead of asserting that homophobia is the "last socially acceptable form of bigotry in schools," we can just say,

> "Homophobia is rampant in schools. Too often, students and staff alike aren't remotely aware of the pain caused by such blatant slurs as 'sissy' and 'punk' and, especially, the ever- present insult, 'That's so gay!'"

When a child blurts out the word "faggot!" we can say,

> "Whoa, stop it right there. That is mean and you can't do it here! If you want to discuss it, we can, but use respectful language and don't use it as a put-down."

**You really do not have to use the weapon of a racial or religious slur to make your point.**

And jabbing at the child with a counter-slur is like hitting a child to make him or her stop being violent: it doesn't work. If we must use examples, let's use ones that apply to ourselves… Catholic slurs if you are Catholic, fat slurs if you are fat, slurs about your parents not being married if yours weren't.

**Finally, it is inappropriate to compare degrees of hurt. Every form of bias is uniquely hurtful, even as all bias has some things in common.**

You say, "But homophobia is worse because people don't even try to hide it."

Sure, racism has become somewhat less overt over the years. And the majority are increasingly appalled by the use of racist symbols like a burning cross. And people try, at least, to hide their dislike of people of other races when the company is mixed.

But hidden bigotry isn't a whole lot less wearing on the hated than open bigotry. Sometimes it takes an even greater toll. You can't prove it and if you try to explain it you are accused of being over-sensitive. Even others who were there might not have noticed that the teacher called on you less often than on European-American classmates or that your peers assumed your answers are wrong.

You say, "But racism is worse because you can't hide your race; you can't ever rest."

Well, some people of color who get frequently mistaken for European-American might disagree about "resting." Similarly, many gay and lesbian people who are assumed to be straight hate the assumption. If you feel tired and you let the assumption ride, you feel guilty for "passing."  And if you speak up you risk being labeled as flaunting or as having a chip on your shoulder.

Still, it is true that never being able to rest can be truly tiring for those whose race is very visible. You rarely can know when good things happen, if they're happening because you deserved them or just because someone is bending over backwards for you. And you rarely can know when bad things happen whether the person was just in a foul mood or if it was about your race.

Some heterosexuals may not realize that there are sexual minorities, too, who never get to rest. They never chose to walk or talk or stand or sit differently. They were born gender-different.  Some spent years trying their damnedest to "act straight," forcing themselves into painful masks. To hide your genuine gender-role is to live in shame. Nobody should have to live a lie or pretend to be someone they are not.

You say, "But homophobia is worse becauseyou don't even have your family to confide in."

Well, sometimes children of color protect their parent or guardian from knowing how bad the harassment is, too.

But it is true that many GLBT youths are afraid to confide in their families, sometimes for good reason, and that the cost of that isolation is very high. That's why schools need to help children who are different to feel less isolation. We need to offer them role models and support systems, whether the "difference" is their learning disability, their race, their minority religion, or their sexual orientation.

You say, "But racism is worse because you don't choose your race."

Well, most sexual minority people will tell you that they didn't choose their sexual orientation or gender identity either … although they may be very happy being who they are now. A growing body of scientific evidence is pointing toward biological contributions to people's orientations and gender identities.

Besides, racial identity is chosen in some ways.  Many people of mixed ancestry identify with a particular culture, rather than all their cultural roots.

But even if people have chosen to think of themselves as Latina or Lesbian, for example, they have a right to be safe at school. Our laws protect people from discrimination based on biological differences (such as sex) and also from discrimination based on chosen differences (such as religion). Children who are not safe at school due to bias-based harassment are being denied a public education

based on their identities, whether they chose those identities or not. Denying them an education is wrong.

**Bottom line: racial and homophobic harassment and discrimination makes school hell for too many children and youth.**

Some of you are afraid that, if we acknowledge how much work is still needed in terms of racial or general sexual harassment, schools will put less energy into ending orientation-based harassment. Or that, in order to make palatable their work on homophobia, they will give it a one-sentence nod in curriculum and training that is mostly about other forms of harassment.

We can say a vigorous "no" to that approach. There's ample evidence that orientation-based harassment and discrimination are extremely grave problems, linked to students' missing school due to fear and even to physical and sexual assaults and suicide attempts. And few people would argue that staff and students alike understand very little about gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people. Sexual diversity clearly deserves its own place at the table and we must never accept less.

Some people are equally concerned that, if we acknowledge the problem of anti-gay harassment, schools will put less energy into conquering racism. Or that the small gains we've made against racial discrimination in schools will even be lost in the shuffle.

We can say a vigorous "no" to that approach as well. There is a clear body of evidence, from test scores to discipline rates, that racial discrimination is alive and well in schools. Even when controlling for poverty, children of color fare less well in school than European-American children. That is unacceptable and schools must continue to root out the reasons and put resources into solutions.

**Besides, don't forget, some children are both GLBT and of color. They deserve not to be carved up in response to adults' fears.**

Addressing one way in which they get hurt at school, and at the same time under-estimating the other, is worse than useless. The goal ought to be education and social justice for all! "Social justice for some" is an oxymoron. The movements to end racism and homophobia and all the other forms of oppression do not have to compete. We can all acknowledge their interconnectedness.

**And, even if many of us make one or the other the focus of our energies, we can refuse to minimize its evil accomplices.**

# LGBT Families:

**Creating an Inclusive Environment for Children of LGBT Parents**

# Census Data
*(The Williams Institute, GLSEN and the US Census Bureau)*

GLSEN estimates that more than seven million school-aged children have at least one LGBT parent.  Given this statistic, counselors should recognize the probability that such youth are present at their school.  More importantly, counselors should learn how they can support the children of these families, straight or not, who may face discrimination among their peers.

Many counselors might think this is not an issue that will ever apply to them; however, according to the US Census Bureau, same-sex couples reside in every county across Georgia. Some counties have more same sex couples than others, of course, and not all of these couples have children. If there are currently no such families in your school, the likelihood of a same sex couple with kids becoming a part of your school community increase every year.

Based on the data, and the trends both statewide and nationally, these numbers will continue to grow. The needs of LGBT families must always be considered as issues of discrimination arise.

# Bullying among Children of LGBT Parents*
*(GLSEN)*

- Nearly a quarter (23%) of students felt unsafe around other students at school due to others' negative attitudes toward people with LGBT parents.

- 42% of students said they had been verbally harassed at school in the past year because their parents were LGBT. Over a third (37%) of students reported that they had been verbally harassed because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and nearly a third had experienced verbal harassment because of the way in which they expressed their gender (32%).

- Nearly a quarter (22%) of students said that a teacher, principal or other school staff person had discouraged them from talking about their family at school, and more than a third (36%) had felt that school personnel did not acknowledge their LGBT family (e.g., not permitting one parent to sign a student's form because s/he was not the legal parent/guardian). Furthermore, 28% said they heard teachers or other school staff make negative comments about LGBT families.

# State Laws and Policies

When issues of discrimination surface at school, counselors need to remind themselves of their legal responsibilities and how the State legally views this issue.

Georgia' anti bullying statutes do not clearly define bullying and harassment. Moreover, they do not include enumerated categories to protect students from

bullying on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race, religion, ethnicity or disability.  Anti-bullying legislation will be introduced in 2010.  To find out how you can help, visit www.georgiaequality.org.

Students of LGBT parents are also granted "equal protection" from discrimination under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.  Ethically speaking, counselors are obligated to ensure the well-being children of LGBT parents and advocate for their needs.

# School Assessment
*(GLSEN)*

At the beginning of every school year, counselors are challenged to learn about new students, their academic strengths and weaknesses, past behavioral issues, physical or medical considerations, students' home life and so much more. Taking this into account, it can be beneficial to provide parents with tools to make sure any individual considerations are made aware to the counselor and that each family understands the school's climate and is comfortable with it. By taking a proactive approach, counselors may be able to prevent problems from occurring.

# Resources for Families
*(GLSEN)*

Counselors are not expected to be experts on every study, every piece of data, every strategy, every policy, and every resource regarding LGBT families. Nevertheless, counselors should have information readily available for students and families.

# Character Based Programming
*(Human Rights Campaign – Welcoming Schools)*

There are many character based education programs that can have very powerful and long lasting positive impacts on students, the school, and the community at large. Programs addressing diversity can also be used to help counselors address LGBTQQ issues. Even if there are not many "out" students at a given school, there very well may be a child who is being raised in a same-sex household. This should be taken into consideration when addressing LGBTQQ issues.

These types of matters, like most issues of diversity and tolerance, can and should be addressed in an age appropriate manner. Welcoming Schools, a character based program organized by the HRC, helps counselors find age appropriate material to use with students and share with same-sex families. There are books of fiction that address inclusiveness for LGBT family members and highlight diverse family structures.

# Age Appropriate Definitions
*(Human Rights Campaign – Welcoming Schools)*

Same sex families often struggle to explain the world- good and bad, as it relates to their family structure- to younger children more than they would with older ones. Character based education programs can provide terminology and ways in which to explain those definitions to young children. Having these resources available for LGBT parents is an important tool for school counselors.

GLSEN, 2008.  *Involved, invisible, ignored: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents and their children in our nations k-12 schools.*  New York: GLSEN.

# Georgia's Report Card

# Key Findings from GLSEN's From Teasing to Torment: A Report on School Climate in Georgia*

**Biased language was frequently heard in Georgia schools:**

- A majority of Georgia students reported hearing homophobic remarks, such as "that's so gay" (82%) or derogatory terms such as "faggot" or "dyke" (75%), from students in their school. A majority (80%) also reported hearing sexist remarks in their schools.
- Negative remarks about a person's gender expression, such as a girl acting "too much like a boy," were also commonly heard in Georgia schools — two-thirds (66%) of respondents heard negative comments about gender expression from their peers.
- School authorities did not consistently intervene when hearing biased language in school. Less than a third of Georgia students reported that teachers or other school staff frequently intervened when hearing homophobic (23%), racist (26%) or sexist (30%) remarks in school.
- Students heard biased language from school staff as well — almost a quarter (22%) reported hearing faculty or other school staff make sexist remarks, and nearly a fifth heard homophobic (18%) or racist (18%) remarks from school staff.

**Bullying, name-calling and harassment were serious problems in Georgia schools:**

- Nearly half (49%) of Georgia students reported bullying, name calling and harassment to be serious problems in their school, which was higher than for students nationally (36%). Only a third (34%) reported feeling very safe at school.
- Almost half (46%) of the students reported feeling at-risk at school because of at least one personal characteristic, such as their physical appearance or sexual orientation.
- Students reported that physical appearance and sexual orientation were the most common reasons students were harassed at school. About half reported that students were frequently victimized based on their physical appearance (52%), and 48% said students were frequently bullied or harassed based on sexual orientation.
- Georgia students were more likely to report that their peers were bullied, called names or harassed based on sexual orientation, physical appearance, academic ability and family income than students nationally.
- Reports of verbal harassment, particularly because of one's physical appearance, were not uncommon among Georgia students. Five out of ten (50%) youth had been verbally harassed in the past year because of their physical appearance, and a quarter (24%) had been physically harassed or assaulted based on this characteristic.

**Incidents of harassment and assault were often not reported to teachers or other school staff.  When reported, responses of school staff were often inadequate:**

- More than a half (54%) of students who had been harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to a teacher, principal or other school staff person, often because they believed that reporting incidents would make the situation worse or that school personnel would not take action to resolve it.
- Among students who did report incidents of harassment or assault, only a third (33%) said that school authorities took immediate action to address the situation.


**LGBT students lacked access to resources and supports:**

- Only 9% of students reported that their school had a GSA or other type of student club addressing LGBT student issues, which was much lower than the national percentage (22%).
- Students at schools with a supportive student club were much less likely to say that bullying and harassment were serious problems in their school (17% v. 52%) and were less likely to report that they felt unsafe in their schools (3% vs. 7%).
- Only half (51%) of Georgia students reported that they were protected by a comprehensive school anti-harassment or safe schools policy that explicitly mentioned sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. More than a quarter (29%) were unsure whether or not their school had a protective policy of any kind.
- Students at schools without comprehensive safe schools policies were more likely to have been harassed than those at schools with these types of policies. For example, youth at schools without a comprehensive policy were six times as likely to have been verbally harassed based on their sexual orientation (55% vs. 9%).


**Recommendations**

- Teachers and other school staff need training to address the inconsistency in their responses when hearing students make derogatory remarks and when learning of incidents of harassment and assault in school. In addition, schools should establish and enforce "no tolerance" policies regarding the use of biased language by school staff.
- Students who attended Georgia schools that had a student club addressing LGBT student issues, such as a Gay-Straight Alliance, reported a safer learning environment. Given this finding, every effort should be made to support students who seek to improve school climate by starting and sustaining these clubs in their schools.
- Given only a half of Georgia students reported being protected by comprehensive anti-harassment policies in their schools, state-level safe school legislation that provides specific enumerated categories, such as sexual orientation and race, must be adopted.

- Given that more than a quarter of Georgia students did not know if their school had an anti-harassment policy of any kind, school staff and administrators must ensure that students are made fully aware of any anti-harassment protections provided by their school.

GLSEN (2006). *From teasing to torment: A report on school climate in Georgia.* New York: GLSEN
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# Georgia's Anti-bullying Statutes

*Although Georgia has some laws regarding bullying in public schools, there have been efforts over the past several years to strengthen anti-bullying provisions for all students, especially those who are subject to bullying due to real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.*

*As school counselors, your advocacy plays a critical effort in strengthening legislation and policies on both a local and statewide level.*

*If you are interested in knowing the latest on efforts to pass anti-bullying legislation or to become involved in this work, please contact Georgia Equality at* www.georgiaequality.org

**O.C.G.A. § 20-2-145**

- As part of a comprehensive character education program for grades K-12, this statute encourages schools to address methods that discourage bullying and violent behavior against other students.

**O.C.G.A. § 20-2-751.4**

- This statute defines bullying as, "Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so" or "Any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm."  It also states that local school boards should adopt policies for students in grades 6-12 that prohibit bullying and that middle and high schools should include these prohibitions in the students code of conduct.

**O.C.G.A. § 20-2-751.5**

- This statute addresses student codes of conduct.  More specifically, it encourages the inclusion of certain provisions intended to address the behavior of students at school and during school functions.  Bullying, both verbal and physical is included among the aforementioned behaviors needing to be addressed.

Retrieved July 12, 2009 from http://www.lexis-nexis.com/hottopics/gacode/
Retrieved July 12, 2009 from http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2007_08/sum/sb461.htm

# A Plea for Activism: The Tragic Suicide of Jaheem Hererra

Eleven year-old Jaheem Herrera of Dunaire Elementary School in Dekalb County was a sweet young boy.  He enjoyed dancing and loved his family.  Despite his sunny demeanor, Jaheem had difficulty making new friends.  He was called "ugly" and bullied for his skin color.  The other students taunted him for being "too feminine" because he carried a pink backpack.  He was frequently called "gay" by other students, even though he never identified as such.

In response to the bullying, Jaheem's mother, Masika Bermudez, complained to school officials; no action was taken.  She addressed the issue seven or eight more times but to no avail.  On the evening of April 16, 2009, Jaheem had finally had enough.  His younger sister found him hanging from a closet door, belt strapped to his neck.  According to Bermudez, Jaheem was tired of getting picked on, tired of being ignored by the teachers, administrators and counselors at his school.  In his mind, suicide was the only way out.



Jaheem's tragic death speaks to the severity of anti-LGBTQQ bullying and the need for schools to intervene on behalf of targeted students.  Unfortunately, Jaheem's story is not an isolated case.  Students who are bullied for real or perceived sexual orientation are far more likely to commit suicide than those who are not.  It also points to the fact that homophobic bullying is not just a "gay" issue but an issue that harms students of all ages and sexual identities.  Children learn from an early age that anti-LGBTQQ rhetoric is an effective weapon in tormenting other students.  As such, straight students are often the targets of anti-LGBTQQ language and behavior.

Jaheem's death was preventable; his story cannot be forgotten.  It must serve as a wake-up call for educators to stand up against homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism and work to create a safe learning environment for <u>all</u> students.

# Georgia in Action:
**Reflections of Advocacy and Case Scenarios**

# Scenarios: Responding in Real Life

## General Guidelines for Counselor Advocacy

Before looking at some specific scenarios, it is important to consider what the counselor's role is as an advocate for all students. As counselors, we have two primary roles in school leadership:

### Building bridges
- Counselors are one of the few in the school building trained in bringing people together to confront challenging issues. Counselors build relationships and encourage all stakeholders in a school including students, faculty, administrators and parents.

### Drawing Lines
- Counselors are sometimes called to step forward as advocates for students. While confrontation is not pleasant, it is often an integral part of advocacy. Refer to the section on effective messaging for more information.

## Before a Situation Arises: Questions to Consider

Before we can respond to scenarios, it is important to have a foundation from which to work. By considering these areas before a specific situation arises, the counselor will be more confident and prepared to handle unique situations.

### Needs
- Do LGBTQQ student really need support? Does their treatment in schools affect their emotional, educational and physical well-being? Do I need more information?

### Personal Biases/Personal Risks
- What are my feelings regarding LGBTQQ students? Am I prepared to serve *all* of my students equally or am I in need of more education?
- Are others influencing how I act or what I believe?
- How did it feel when I was bullied or taken advantage of in a situation?

### Philosophy
- What does the school (or system) mission statement say about supporting students, the dignity of all students or having all students achieve?

### Professional responsibilities
- What do our professional organizations (ASCA, ACA, PTSA, etc) say on the topic of supporting LGBTQQ students?

**Legal Implications**

- What are the legal rights of LGBTQQ students and the legal responsibilities of schools?

## When a Situation Arises: Questions to Consider

In order to address the needs of an increasingly diverse population, school counselors are trained to be multi-culturally competent.  Until recently, however, we received little, if any, training on issues affecting LGBTQQ students.  As a result, many of us feel ill-equipped to handle such issues.  This model helps establish a more multicultural approach by exploring the parallels that exist among various marginalized populations.  The following questions will assist us in better serving all students:

- Am I aware of my own cultural biases and values?
- Do I possess the skills and knowledge to handle the situation competently?
- How would I respond if this were "any other student" or a student in a privileged group?
- Are there any unique considerations that pertain to the LGBTQQ student?

In working with diverse populations, it is important to examine our cultural biases.  How do our experiences and identities position us in the world, particularly in relation to those who have contrasting identities and experiences?  What impact does this have on our counseling relationships?

As counselors, we must also recognize the limits of our multicultural competence.  If at any point we feel ill-equipped to handle situations involving diverse populations, we should consult with other counselors and/or seek out relevant sources that will assist us in better understanding the cultural experiences of our students.  In situations where we feel our biases may negatively impact the counseling relationship, we should consider referring the student to another counselor.

That being said, personal beliefs should never affect our ability to advocate for *all* students; the welfare of our clients should always be our first priority.   The question often arises that, "if I am opposed to homosexuality and think it is wrong, why should I have to put up with gay people?"  The response might be to look at how we treat religious differences.  If we had Muslim, Christian and Jewish students, what would be our level of expectation for how they might behave toward one another, regardless of religious differences? Most counselors and schools see quite clearly that we expect all students to be treated fairly and feel welcome, regardless of religious beliefs.   The same approach can be applied to LGBTQQ students.  We should anticipate a level of fair treatment and safety for all of our students, regardless of how we view sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression. We must also understand that oppression, no matter its form, is rooted and sustained by power.  And while every marginalized population faces unique challenges, they must each grapple with the same "mechanisms" of oppression.

Draw from your previous experiences in challenging institutions such as racism, sexism and ableism: What was your reaction? Were you successful? Build on your successes and learn from your setbacks.

On the other hand, there are times when our approach might need to be different based on the specificity of LGBTQQ issues. An example is the degree of acceptance exhibited by an LGBTQQ student's family. Lack of familial support is common among LGBTQQ youth and must be considered in our approach to counseling such students. Remember: this is *not* about granting certain populations "special" privileges; rather, it is about ensuring that *all* students feel safe and supported at school.

## Example Scenarios
The scenarios that follow take into account the aforementioned questions as they offer some practical suggestions for action. They are suggestions about possible responses. There are, of course, other options. One should always assess personal bias and consider the degree of competency for handling such situations.

**1. A student is out to a school counselor and is asking for help to communicate to the parents.**
As with all students, the counselor remembers that parents have key roles in a student's life. The student, however, is the primary client while the counselor considers developmental and safety issues.
- Help the student to assess possible family reactions. Consider family patterns and past actions. It is also important to discuss the benefits and risks of coming out.
- Help the student to determine any possible safety issues (physical, emotions, financial) that may arise from telling the parents. If the potential for these is high, the student may need to reconsider telling the parents at that time.
- Offer relationship tips (e.g., never tell when angry; avoid coming out when both parties will be forced to remain in each others' presence, as in a car ride).
- Offer to have the parents come into the office and have the counselor present if the student chooses.
- Remind the student that it has taken him or her number of years to reach a place of personal acceptance. The parents may need a little time. Try to hold loosely anything they say negative during the first 48 hours. Have PFLAG resources if the parents request outside help at a later time.

**2. A student approaches you and wants information on how to sponsor and start a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA).**
- Again, take a moment to feel good that you have created a safe counseling environment for this student to approach you with this request. Then, start getting prepared to act.

- There are many national resources on how to start a GSA. GLSEN's "*Jump-Start Guide to Starting a GSA"* at: http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/2226.html?state=tools&type=student.
- Also, the Safe Schools Coalition, out of Washington, has a very good "Q & A" for students wanting to start a GSA that can be found at: http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/youth/gay-straight-alliances.html.
- Once you have provided the student with resources that are online and national, it is also important to connect them with local Georgia resources, such as YouthPride, and the names of other schools that have local GSA's. The Center for School Safety at Georgia State University is a valuable resource for connecting with local GSAs: schoolsafety@gsu.edu
- If the student has been told they cannot start a GSA, consider a legal consultation with Ben Littrell at Lambda Legal (see Resource section for his contact information). There have been case precedents set in Georgia where students who were told they could not start a GSA sued the school administration, including the school principal, were represented by ACLU and won the right to meet as a GSA. An article by a local Georgia newspaper about one of these cases can be found at: http://www.whitecountynewstelegraph.com/articles/2006/12/21/news/news02.txt.

## 3. A student wants to participate in a GSA but says the parents won't allow this.

In this instance, it is important to consider context; do not make assumptions and UNDERLINE KNOW YOUR RIGHTS! Consider the following:
- Depending on the relationship the student has with the parents, the counselor might ask the student if he/she can offer to meet with the parents. It is likely the parents have a number of concerns. Hence, the opportunity to speak with a counselor might be a bridge for alleviating some concerns.
  - Counselors might want to remember that the "coming out" process for parents is similar to that of students; they go through stages.
  - Use PFLAG as a resource for the parents if possible; sometimes their talking with another parent can be helpful for opening doors.
  - As always, be careful not to disclose a student's sexual orientation if he/she/zie is not "out" to their parents.
- Although parents can prohibit participation from an organization (parental notification law, opt-out provision), students are not required to provide a signed parental consent form in order to participate in a club. That is, students do not need to make parents aware of their participation in a GSA so long as the club existed at the beginning of the school year. If the club was formed *during* the school year, the local school board should require written permission prior to a student's participation (parental notification law, opt-in provision).
- In an effort to block GSAs, some schools will require parental consent for participation while not applying the same standards for other clubs. Schools

may also attempt to utilize the opt-in provision when it does not apply.  In either case, you are encouraged to report the incident to Lambda Legal (www.lambdalegal.org).

**4. A school counselor overhears students making homophobic, biphobic, and/or transphobic remarks.**
Response to these comments can take place on several levels
- With an individual, the counselor can first stop the action.
- Assessing whether this is a deliberate attempt to harass someone or an ignorant use of the language is important in determining next steps.
- If a direct verbal assault, then working with the harasser as one would in any situation may be necessary. It is important to remember that those students least comfortable and least secure with their own heterosexuality may be more likely to be aggressors.
- If it was an ignorant use of the language, the counselor might want to use counseling skills to educate, enlighten, and even therapeutically warn the perpetrator.
- If there is a direct target, the counselor may need to arrange later conversations with that student.
- The counselor can lead in changing the school culture as a whole by leading or participating in the schools GSA, Day of Silence, No Place for Hate week, and faculty/student trainings.
- Depending on the level of harassment, the counselor may need to notify the administration and then check the follow up of the referral.

**5. A transgender student feels uncomfortable using the bathrooms and locker rooms in school.**
- The major issue for the school counselor in this scenario is to keep the student safe and comfortable. Carefully assess the student's experiences of harassment, bullying, and any other form of violence and/or discrimination she/he/ze is experiencing as a transgender student. Provide the student with a copy of transgender youth resources, including Lambda Legal's *Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Youth*. Let the student know that every student has the right to feel safe using the bathroom, including her/him/hir. Ask the student what would help her/him/hir feel safest so you are aligned with the student's goals. Then, speak with the principal and/or other school personnel to ensure a safe resolution is arrived at for this student.
- The following are some actions you may support the student in, taken from Lambda Legal's *Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Youth* (*Permission granted to reproduce from Lambda Legal*):

  1. *Organize and petition to have gender- neutral or transgender-friendly bathrooms created in your school.* You may want to begin your petition drive by promoting it with an article in your student paper. (For more information, see the National Center for Lesbian Rights website at www.nclr.org.)

2. *Speak up when you see teasing or harassment* in bathrooms, locker rooms or anywhere on school grounds.

3. *Talk to your teachers about your needs and why it's important to have a safe space to change clothes.* When changing is a necessary requirement for graduation (e.g., gym class), the school should make every effort to accommodate you, instead of simply instructing you to use the locker room that corresponds with the gender you were assigned at birth. If you've faced the challenge and outrage of others who assume you're in the wrong restroom, you may think twice about putting yourself in the same position again. Some transgender people avoid public restrooms altogether, which can lead to health risks if physical needs are constantly ignored. Also, negotiating the locker room can be difficult when you have to change clothes at school. Many colleges and universities have already taken the lead in offering multi-stall gender-neutral bath-
room and shower areas. See the Sylvia Rivera Law Project's website (www.srlp.org) for a list of these schools and for other resources that might help you advocate for trans-friendly bathrooms and locker rooms at your school."

**6. You are asked to speak in front of the school board on why LGBTQQ issues are important to integrate into both the curriculum and classroom guidance presentations. You want to have a good school-wide plan to propose to them, and you want to make sure it doesn't appear you are the "only one" advocating for these issues.**

- You already have much of the information you need.
  - This is a perfect time to reflect upon your building of bridges with allies (see the previous **General Guidelines for Counselor Advocacy**) and
  - The information you gathered under **Before a Situation Arises: Questions to Consider** (needs, personal biases/risks, school philosophy, professional expectations, and legal responsibilities)
- Do not "reinvent the wheel." Use the resources and agencies provided in this manual. GLSEN, PFLAG, ADL, Lambda Legal and others have done this many times before. Contact them.
- Approach people in the school and system you know to be your allies or at least supportive of you and students in general. Meet with them to educate them and hear their suggestions.
- Like any professional presentation, make sure you are prepared. Appropriate handouts and presentation materials can help.
- Conduct a school climate survey on a variety of marginalized, harassment, bullying issues. Sometimes seeing the data in one's own system can make a difference. If this is not possible, use the GLSEN report on Georgia climate, or similar reports.
- Bring in student examples (maintain confidentiality, of course); real life examples can change minds and hearts.
- Host a screening of *Be There for Me: Collective Memories of LGBTQ Youth in High School*

- Do not expect everyone to agree; this is not always necessary.

**7. You have seen teachers repeatedly ignore and not address comments such as "that's so gay", "fag", and "dyke". You don't feel like you have the support to intervene, and you aren't sure what are the first steps you should take.**
Responses might include the following:
- Approach the teacher in a non-threatening, non-accusatory time and place.
- Offer education and insights in appropriate ways.
- Offer to come in and lead a classroom guidance lesson.
- As with any work in this area, the relationships the counselor develops with faculty and administration is the core of all work. If counselors have already shown themselves to be supportive and professional, they have built important bridges for just such a situation.
- Perhaps the most difficult thing to remember is that the primary client and responsibility is the student. If efforts to make a change through conversation do not work, then it is the counselor's duty to make sure harm does not occur and thus inform administration.

**8. The coach at your school denies a transgender girl from participating on the girl's volleyball team.**
- The major issue here is school counselor advocacy on behalf of the transgender student. Pat yourself on the back because the student felt safe enough to approach you as the school counselor!
- You will need to engage in education and advocacy with the coach and potentially other school personnel and administrators. Consider starting with your school mission statement and other school statements about sports participations.
- Next, consult ethical and legal sources (refer to Lamba Legal's Beth Littrell in the Resources section) to ask specific questions. It is quite likely the coach needs some basic education and information on transgender students and the importance of their ability to be able to participate on sports teams – in addition to feeling able to do so safely.
- A checklist for assessing the safety and inclusivity of coaches and sports teams at schools can be found as a 5-page hand-out by Pat Griffin called "Creating a Safer Environment for LGBT Athletes and Coaches" at: http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/home/index.html.

> The following is from Lambda Legal's *Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Youth* (Permission granted to reproduce from Lambda Legal):
> 1. *Talk to coaches, bandleaders and cheerleading personnel about transgender youth* and how they can be included in activities.
> 2. *Support individuals in their efforts to participate* in sports and activities according to their gender identity.
> 3. *Strive for cultural awareness and exchange.* Have art classes,

create an exhibit, sponsor a creative writing session about gender or encourage the drama department to produce a play that explores gender nonconformity and fighting for equality in sports teams and school activities. In general, students should be able to play on school sports teams according to gender identity. Honest questions about fair competition can be considered on a case-by-case basis. The same goes for other school club associations and activities. But many schools have never considered integrating trans students into all areas of school life, so be prepared to educate and advocate and take action.

**9. A student asks to speak with you and tells you he thinks he might be gay and doesn't know what to do.**

The following is adapted from *Understanding Homosexuality* by Arthur Lipkin.

- Express gratitude for the confidence
- Assure confidentiality. (This may not be possible where reporting of suicide or substance abuse is mandated.)
- Asses whether the student needs immediate extended, <u>supportive</u>, counseling or if disclosure is enough for the time being.
- Make sure to see the student again, but do not assume that sexuality must be the focus of every subsequent interaction.
- Refer to the positive aspect of being gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (solidarity, loving relationships, perseverance, diversity of the community, rich history and culture).
- Guide the student to sources of information and confirmation regarding these happy prospects.
- Find out the extent of disclosure to others and explore the consequences of coming out in various settings.  These may include safety and shelter issues, reporting of harassment, stigma management, and possibilities for further support like referral to school or community-based groups.
- Ask about relationships with family, teachers, and peers.
- Explore feelings about lost heterosexual identity and expectations.
- Discuss relationships, including courtship and breakup.
- Both straight and LGBTQQ youth are often sexually active, so discussing safe sex practices and motivations may be important.

**10. You heard your principal make an anti-LGBTQQ remark in a meeting.**
The response to this is going to be almost identical to #7. The only difference is the level of risk for the counselor. The following are actions a counselor may take at various personal risk levels. The following is adapted from *Understanding Homosexuality, Changing Schools** by Arthur Lipkin:


**Creating a Safe and Equitable School**
- ▪ LOW RISK ACTIONS
  - • Be a role model of acceptance

- Challenge name-calling and harassment
- SOME RISK
  - Work to establish policies protecting gay/lesbian students from harassment, violence, and discrimination.
  - Call for the inclusion of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals in diversity presentations.
  - Work to form a gay/straight alliance and/or support group for gay/lesbian students.
    - Call for faculty and staff training in gay/lesbian youth issues (including crisis intervention and violence prevention).
    - Call for counseling services for gay/lesbian/bisexual youth and their parents.
- GREATER RISK
  - Invite gay/lesbian/bisexual and transgender speakers to your school.
  - Join/start a gay/straight alliance.
  - Call for and develop a gay/lesbian/bisexual awareness day.
  - Work with the PTSA and other community-based support groups regarding the educational and health needs of gay/lesbian students.
  - Solicit the cooperation of gay/lesbian/bisexual alumni/ae in motivating the school to meet the needs of students who have succeeded them.
  - If you are gay/lesbian/bisexual, come out.

**11. You are advocating for LGBTQQ students' safety and rights in your school. Your assistant principal takes you aside and says your job might be in jeopardy because parents are getting upset about "focusing on gay issues". You start to feel scared about losing your job.**
- First reread response # 10 and #7. There is a need for:
  - Education,
  - Bridge/ally building
  - Careful analysis of the risk level one is willing to experience.
- Talk privately with the administration to find out the details.
- Ask that the information be sent to you in writing, or follow up with an email stating your understanding of the situation and explain the importance LGBTQQ issues. Having written documentation of correspondence may prove helpful later.
- Contact the appropriate professional support services including HR, GLSEN, professional organizations (ASCA), Lambda Legal, etc. for advice.
- Find out what kind of legal/professional protections you have.
- Job performance in other areas may play a factor, so being professional in other job responsibilities is necessary.
- Use good self-care. Contact friends/allies who can be supportive of the emotional strain you may feel.

- Review your responses to the above **Before a Situation Arises**
- **Questions to Consider**. It is time to reflect on the reasons you thought this a need area in the beginning, your level of risk commitment, what your professional organizations expect of you, you school's philosophy and your legal responsibilities.

Lipkin, A.  (1999). *Understanding homosexuality, changing schools.*  Boulder: Westview Press.

## Voices from the Field: School Counselors as Advocates for LGBTQQ Youth

**Georgia school counselors were asked to reflect on their experiences as advocates for LGBTQQ students.  The following is how they responded:**

*"Believe it or not, anti-LGBT bullying is an issue in elementary school.  I can't tell you the number of times I hear students say the phrase, 'that's so gay' and 'you're so gay.'  It's important to address this behavior early on so it does not escalate to more severe bullying.  It's not about teaching sexuality; it's about cultivating a culture of respect.  That's what I always tell parents.  With regard to addressing gender expression, I always avoid dividing students by gender (that is, 'boys line up over here' and 'girls line up over there') and I avoid using phrases like, 'girls shouldn't do this' and 'boys shouldn't do that.'"*

-Elementary School Counselor

*"I'm a high school counselor in a fairly conservative area where homophobic bullying is all too common.  In an effort to decrease the rate of such behavior and create awareness on the issue of anti-LGBT bullying, I recently implemented a modified version of GLSEN's 'Safe Space' training for school personnel.  In approaching the administration to ask for permission, I presented data regarding bullying and academic achievement.  To get the teachers on board during the workshop, I made sure to stay on message (i.e, all students deserve to feel safe at school) without getting political or accusatory.  Some members from our school's Gay-Straight Alliance even volunteered to share their stories.  Needless to say, the training was a huge success.  I noticed a significant change in school climate."*

-High School Counselor

# Voices from the Field: LGBTQQ Students' Perspectives

**LGBTQQ students in Georgia were asked to discuss their relationship with their counselor and describe what school counselors should do to better serve LGBTQQ students. The following is how they responded:**

*"School counselors should provide resources and referrals such as support groups, support organizations and even hotlines for students who are in need of support."*

*"I wouldn't go to my counselor because of judging. I would like more resources and possibly a list of other GLBT people that choose to be known."*

*"I would like school counselors to address self-esteem issues concerning LGBTQIQ youth. Perhaps, they could offer empowerment services or support."*

*"I wouldn't go to a counselor but they should make a list of resources easily accessible. Perhaps, just many ways people could get support."*

*"Counselors should give workshops for faculty on the topics of homophobia and transphobia. Then, give workshops to students on homophobia and transphobia."*

*"I think that counselors should be much more educated in gender theory and in how gender roles relate to sexuality, especially in sexual prejudice and heterosexism. My issue is not nearly as much about sexuality as gender and non-queer specific issues. My school counselors were almost entirely focused on academic matters. I would never go to them for personal issues. I do not feel as though many, if any, cared or were talented."*

*"At the moment, I would not go to my school counselor. I don't feel like my counselor is unbiased. I would like special training for LGBT issues and more assurance of privacy."*

*"I would not go to my counselor because I don't feel as though they would accept me being gay due to the area I live in. To improve, school counselors should be more accepting of LGBTQIQ youth and show that they care."*

## *Be There For Me*:
## Collective Memories of LGBTQ Youth in High School
## DVD Facilitator's Guide

*Executive produced by: Dr.'s Anneliese Singh and Corey W. Johnson*
*Produced and Filmed by Jyoti Kaneria and Rishi Kaneria*
*Curriculum & Research Written by: Dr.'s Anneliese Singh and Corey W. Johnson*

### Project Rationale and Description

The recent brutal murder of gender variant adolescent, Lawrence King, by his 14-year old classmate shows the dire need for research on effective youth interventions designed to reduce homophobia and heterosexism in schools. This homophobic hate crime happened in Oxnard, CA; however, Athens has its own challenge of addressing LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) bullying. On March 4, 2008, three youth circled a 17-year old gay student at Cedar Shoals and punched him in the back of the head, while shouting anti-gay epithets at him. The very next day, the same student who was attacked rode the bus with his three attackers, peers at his very own high schools. To say schools continue to be unsafe for LGBTQ students is an understatement. Rather, in truth, LGBTQ students live in a war-zone when they attend schools, and there are very few community interventions designed to keep them safe.

Bullying towards LGBTQ students has long been a challenge in schools; however the issue has been gaining more attention from scholars recently (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Maha, Varjas, Dew, Meyers & Singh, 2007). A recent 2005 school climate survey of 3450 students who identified as LGBTQ, age 13-18 years old, (Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005), found that 75.4% of students reported hearing anti-gay epithets, such as "faggot" or "dyke." Over half of the students have experienced physical harassment due to their sexual orientation or gender expression, with almost 30% of youth in the survey reporting being physically assaulted due to the same reason. The survey also demonstrated that LGBTQ youth are five times more likely to skip school due to bullying. For those in the survey experiencing the highest levels of bullying, the students demonstrated lower grade point averages in high school and were two times more likely to not attend college. Survey results concluded that LGBTQ students feel unsafe at school at a rate three times that of their heterosexual peers. In a matched sample of 97 high school students, LGBTQ youth reported similar higher rates of bullying and sexual harassment due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

These statistics of school bullying and violence toward LGBTQ youth are alarming when considering that research in general has shown a decrease of school bullying and violence in general (Youth Risk Behavior Survey as cited by Orpinas & Horne, 2006). Researchers conclude this increase of LGBTQ bullying is due to school personnel (e.g., teachers, counselors, psychologists) "looking the other way" when heterosexist incidences of bullying occur (Mahan et al., 2007; Singh, Orpinas, & Horne, in press). In a qualitative study urban service provider's responses to LGBTQ

bullying incidences, LGBTQ advocates reported school personnel asserting that there were not LGBTQ students who attended their school; therefore, there was not a "problem" of LGBTQ-bullying. In addition to denying the existence of LGTBQ students, school personnel did not hold students perpetrating LGBTQ bullying accountable because anti-gay sentiments—such as "that's so gay"—were socially accepted norms in the schools. Although research, interventions, and evaluation of specific LGBTQ bullying prevention programs are lacking (Mahan et al., 2007), research has demonstrated that LGBTQ students report feeling a greater sense of safety and reporting fewer instances of LGBTQ bullying in schools where LGBTQ-bullying has pointed out the failure of school administration protest LGBTQ students, or those perceived to be LGBTQ (D'Augelli, Pilkington & Hershberner, 202; Mahan et al., 2007; McFarland & Dupuis, 2001; van wormer & McKinney, 2003).

Despite the ethical and legal duty to keep students who are LGBTQ or are perceived as LGBTQ safe (McFarland, 2001), school personnel have made few strides in doing so. This lack of progress seems not to be due to a lack of studies showing the need to reduce LGBTQ-bullying, but rather to the insidious nature of heterosexism and homophobia within school systems. Heterosexism has been defined in the literature as the socio-political valuing of heterosexuals as normative; it has also been name the "root" of homophobia (Herek, 1996; Corteau, Lark, & Lance, 2005). These systems of discrimination and prejudice appear to be main obstacles in implementing school personnel training on heterosexism and homophobia (Singh, Orpinas, & Horne, in press). Heterosexist and homophobic values of school principals and other school personnel is also used to stop students who want to form GSA's; even literature on intervention efficacy data has demonstrated that GSA's contribute to a more positive school climate for not just LGBTQ students, but for *all* students (Szalazha, 2003). Considering the negative school climate for LGBTQ students and the lack of progress in reducing LGBTQ-bullying due to heterosexist and homophobic attitudes of school personnel, the proposed study becomes even more critical as a way to investigate alternative approaches to reducing LGBTQ-bullying.

Using the qualitative approach of collective memory work, this study sought to explore how lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth made meaning of their sexual identity through their high school experiences. Our guiding research questions included: What high school experiences positively informed student's sexual and/or gender identity? What high school experiences negatively informed student's sexual and/or gender identity? How do individuals learn to negotiate the experiences of high school when they are marginalized sexual and gendered identities? What can school administrators, teachers, and counselors learn from the experiences of marginalized youth in order to make schools safer for LGBT youth?

Dr. Singh and Dr. Johnson recruited participants from LGBT resource centers in the state of Georgia. After consent was secured, the participants were asked to write about one positive and one negative memory that impacted their sexual identity

development. Once the stories were written they were collected and distributed to be read prior to the focus group session.

During the focus groups lasting 1-2 hours in length, the researchers guided the participants to express opinions and ideas about each story, look for similarities and differences in each story and identify generalizations and overarching themes regarding sexual and/or gender identity. In addition, the researchers focused the discussion around questions: How do we define sexual identity? How do we define gender? How has school experiences influenced our understandings of these terms? How do these stories (discuss one at a time) influence our attitudes and understandings sexual identity and gender in schools?

Each focus group session was tape recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by researchers and written up for both academic and practitioner based publications. In addition, five of the twelve participants volunteered to share their positive stories in this documentary and make suggestions and recommendations about what needs to be done to create safer schools for LGBTQ youth.

**Using the Documentary**
- Preview the video once or twice prior to showing it to your participants
- Review this facilitation guide to determine which discussion questions you will pose to the participants and be prepared for a variety of answers and emotional reactions
- Review your Georgia Safer Schools Coalition resource binder to familiarize yourself with appropriate terminology, ethics, law, and strategies for support.
- You may also consider adding activities that compliment each section. Many of these activities can be located at in the "further information" section provided for each chapter.
- Encourage active listening and create a safe space for discussion. To achieve these goals facilitators should develop and use processing skills that are explicitly designed to empower participants to apply their learning to social action and transformation, recognizing their ability to act to create a more humane social order, and become effective voices of change within their social world. These goals may seem lofty, and it is often difficult for participants to know how to effectively contribute to discussions where many and different ideas are valued. Therefore, some simple guidelines are offered to help construct a safe and supportive environment for the exploration and sharing of ideas while maintaining ownership of what can be learned. While these guidelines are important to incorporate it may take some practice.
  - Respect each other and try to hear what every person is saying.
  - Attempt to dismantle power relationships in the group so that everyone has the opportunity to be heard. Older or more vocal participants do not necessarily have better things to say. Every participant should have the opportunity to be heard.
  - Respect the privacy of those who participate and keep the discussion in the space; transfer the learning

- Share responsibility for the learning process and learning products of the discussion.
- Do not to blame ourselves or others for the inaccurate information we have learned in the past but accept responsibility for not repeating it.
- Do not blame victims for the conditions of their lives but instead look at the social conditions that have created those individuals existence.
- Agree to combat myths and stereotypes by challenging them
- Speak from your own position and realize that nobody is a spokesperson for an entire group of people.
- Recognize that while tolerance may be a step toward acceptance it does not necessarily unmask or challenge the larger issues of misunderstanding that exist in marginalization and discrimination
- Be prepared to direct participants toward additional resources for curiosity or support
- Be prepared to direct participants toward advocacy and activist activities if they are inspired to become more involved.

## Chapter 1: LGBTQ Youth

*Central points*
- Many youth are tormented and ostracized according to sexual identity before they have even considered it
- Youth are very conscious of how adults behave, ignore or intervene around issues of sexual identity
- Adults have a responsibility to educate and create safer schools for LGBTQ youth
- There are LGBT youth in every community and need our support and their voice needs to be heard
- Some people in school settings <u>are</u> doing things to support LGBTQ youth

*Discussion Questions*
- What stories do you have about how LGBTQ youth have victimized, marginalized, or ostracized in your school?
- What did the adults (the coach and/or dean) do or not do to support Joe in this story?
- What terminology have you heard that you are both comfortable and uncomfortable with?
- Do you think that your school and the people in it do an effective job at creating a safe environment for LGBT youth? Why or why not?
- Why do the researchers feel it is so important to honor the voices/stories of the LGBTQ youth?

*Further Information*
Savin-Williams, R.C. (2005). *The new gay teenager*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.

## Chapter 2: Lacking Support

*Central points*
- Similar to their counterparts, LGBTQ youth are developing important relationships during adolescence, however, they have to balance those feelings against the reactions of heterosexual others, both supportive and unsupportive (friends, parents, etc.)
- Youth often do not have the script/terminology to describe their experience as a result of essentialized heterosexuality (heteronormativity)
- Adults have authority and youth look to them for support; frequently LGBTQ youth do not find it
- Victimization can occur from both heterosexual and non-heterosexual youth as a result of fear

*Discussion Questions*
- Considering the developmental processes of relationship building (dating, kissing, etc.) in youth how might the heterosexual and LGBTQ be similar? How might they be different?
- What external forces might complicate this developmental process for LGBTQ youth?
- What internal forces might complicate this developmental process for LGBTQ youth?
- Why might parents react negatively toward learning their child is involved in a same gender relationship?
- Why might other school personnel react negatively toward learning that youth in their school are involved in same gender relationships?

*Further Information*
Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. GLSEN's 2005 national school climate survey sheds new light on experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students. 2006 [cited 30 June 2008]. Available from http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1927.html

## Chapter 3: Faith

*Central points*
- Conflict and tension often exists for students in relation to their faith and sexual identity
- Reconciling the conflict and tension between LGBTQ identity and communities of faith can create additional guilt, shame, and fear in the lives of youth
- LGBTQ people <u>can</u> be people of faith
- Communities of faith <u>can</u> be supportive of LGBTQ identities
- *Discussion Questions*

- Why do youth experience such conflict and tension related to their faith and sexual identity? Why did Ande?
- Do faith and sexual identity have to be at odds with one another?
- Are you familiar with unsupportive faith communities related to LGBTQ identity?
- Are you familiar with supportive faith communities related to LGBTQ identity?
- How does your faith community treat people who identify as LGBTQ and how do you reconcile that with supporting LGBTQ youth?

*Further Information*
Helminiak, D. A.(1994). *What the bible really says about homosexuality*. Tajique, NM: Alamo Square Press.

## Chapter 4: Race + LGBTQ

*Central points*
- People of color may experience coming out and LGBTQ identity differently than white people as a result of the intersection of racial and sexual identities.
- LGBTQ people of color face marginalization from the white community, the heterosexual community and their own communities.
- African-American communities often use a "don't ask, don't tell" message as a way of managing LGBTQ identity

*Discussion Questions*
- Why might youth of color feel compelled to choose between their ethnic and sexual identity?
- How does silent tolerance (don't ask, don't tell) support a person of color's LGBTQ identity development?
- How does silent tolerance (don't ask, don't tell) impede a person of color's LGBTQ identity development?
- What are some of the outcomes you believe are associated with this double bind of marginalization and discrimination related to LGBTQ youth of color?

*Further Information*
Robinson, T. L., & Howard-Hamilton, M.F. (2000) *The convergence of race, ethnicity, and gender: Multiple identities in counseling*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

## Chapter 5: Finding Support

*Central points*
- Coming out can be a positive and validating experience for LGBTQ youth if done is a safe environment.
- Being out (adults and peers) and or showing support helps LGBTQ youth feel comfortable coming out.

- One sentence or smile can make a difference. Both adult's language and reactions are important.
- The presence of GSA's (Gay, Straight Alliances) mark a more supportive campus

*Discussion Questions*
- What positive stories do you have about how LGBTQ youth have been supported in your school?
- What did the adults in these stories or the stories from the film do too create a safe and welcoming environment of LGBTQ youth?
- Are adults and youth at your school "out" in terms of their sexual identity? Why or why not?

*Further Information*
The Trevor Project offers a 24-hour crisis and suicide prevention helpline for LGBTQ youth. www.thetrevorproject.org

PFLAG- Atlanta (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) provides support and resources to family members and friends of LGBTQQ people.  They also offer confidential support to LGBTQQ youth who may be struggling with how to come out their family and friends.  More information can be found at http://www.pflagatl.org/

## Chapter 6: Becoming Allies

*Central points*
- Start with love, be someone LGBTQ youth can talk to and listen
- Mark your classroom or office with a safe space sticker
- Honor exploration and difference in each individual's LGBTQ identity development/experience, especially considering faith and race
- Be a role model for LGBTQ youth in all your actions, take situations seriously, intervene when necessary
- Help LGBTQ youth see role models for healthy relationships
- Support the creation of GSA's in your schools
- Know your community, know the resources
- Talk about sex, sexual identity, and gender presentation across the curriculum
- Create school policies to prevent LGBTQ discrimination and to protect all youth

*Discussion Questions*
- What can and are you willing to do to create a safer school environment for LGBTQ youth?
- Does your school have a GSA? What would be the reactions/challenges to starting one in your school from the students, administrators, and parents? How would you overcome these challenges?

- What resources are available in your community to support LGBTQ youth and provide them with healthy role models?
- Where could you integrate discussions of sexual and gender identity in your school's curriculum to make it more inclusive?
- What policies exist or could be created to protect LGBTQ youth and make your school safer for all youth?

*Further Information*
The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) is a national organization dedicated to creating safer schools for all students. For more information, visit http://www.glsen.org/

The Gay-Straight Alliance Network provides information on starting a Gay-Straight Alliance. Visit http://www.gsanetwork.org for more information.

## Chapter 7: The Research

*Central points*
- Accessing LGBTQ participants is challenging as a result of long-term marginalization and a lack of trust
- Build partnerships to respond to the needs of LGBTQ youth in an honest and sincere way
- Never forget the stories of LGBTQ youth, they are in your schools and need you to change how people think and feel about this issue
- Conversations around LGBTQ issues are hard to have
- Allies need to stand up

*Further Information*
Additional products of this research project are in progress and will be posted to the Georgia Safe Schools coalition website at: www.georgiasafeschoolscoalition.org as they become available.

# Effective Messaging

**Communicating with Parents and School Personnel**

# The Basics of Effective Messaging

- **Know your audience**. The manner in which you approach the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression will largely depend on the person to whom you are speaking; be mindful of this.

-   **Be respectful.**  Although you may disagree, it is important to show respect and acknowledge any concerns.

- **Find common ground**.  Although sexual orientation and gender identity/expression are often controversial matters in school, most educators and parents can agree on at least two points: (1) all students deserve to feel safe and supported at school and (2) when students feel safe, academic performance improves.  Finding common ground is a good place to start.

- **When applicable, share a personal experience**.  Data and statistics, although important, are abstract; personal experiences are concrete and, therefore, tend to produce a significantly different response.  If you decide to share a personal experience, be sure to protect the confidentiality of others involved.

- **Be mindful of language.**  Words are powerful; one word can significantly alter the way in which others react to a statement.  Choose your words carefully.

- **Develop a primary message and supporting messages.**  Doing so will allow you to maintain focus.  In discussing safe schools, an effective overall message might be, "anti-LGBTQQ bullying negatively impacts *all* students."  With regard to supporting messages, you could mention legal and ethical implications, introduce data which demonstrate how bullying negatively impacts academic achievement and mention that anti-LGBTQQ bullying also affects heterosexual students who are often targets of homophobia and heterosexism.

- **Reframe the conversation.**  Maintain control of the conversation by bringing it back to the primary message.

- **Consider opposition framing.**  Prior to speaking with parents or school personnel, consider commonly held oppositional perspectives and develop effective responses (refer to "Addressing Difficult Views or Questions" page).

- **Practice and preparation!**  Practice delivering your message.  Be prepared with statistics and data; you'll be taken more seriously.

# THE BEN MARION INSTITUTE
## FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, INC.

# A Framework For Collaborative Negotiation*

The Ben Marion Institute For Social Justice, Inc. believes that kindness, empathy, personal responsibility and respect for others are the essential values that assist adults and children in leading humane and productive lives.

One of the guiding principles of The Ben Marion Institute is listen first for understanding, then for being understood. Most of us do not realize that many of the things we say communicate a lack of acceptance of the others' point of view and therefore make them less likely or willing to have a conversation. In all our work around communication and conflict we have found most people do not listen with the intent to understand but rather with the intent of replying. We are either speaking or preparing to speak. We are filtering everything through our own lens. This section is just a reminder of what you as counselors have already learned and hopefully have put into practice.

## Conflict Resolution Tips:

| Stages | Tasks (examples) |
| --- | --- |
| Planning: | Decide if the conflict is negotiable. Separate (Needs) from positions (Wants). Try to see the other side's point of view. |
| Creating climate for negotiation: | Establish trust and rapport |
| Informing and questioning: | Use "I" statements and inform the other side as to your needs. Ask about the other side's needs. |
| Finding common ground: | Identify problems that affect both sides. Try to consider the issues in terms of shared needs. |

Brainstorming:                                Freely suggest ideas for solving the problem, withhold judgment.

Choosing solution:                       Narrow down suggestions for solutions to the most promising ones for a lasting resolution.

**Conflict Resolution procedures:**
1. Find a good time and place to talk
2. Discuss the problem:
   Get the facts
   Use Active Listening- show interest; ask questions, pay attention, repeat back to make sure you have it right.
   Use "I" messages to say how you feel.
   Focus on the problem, not the person.
   Avoid communication blockers:
3. Brainstorm for solutions.
4. Choose a solution that works for everybody.
5. Try the solution. If the solution doesn't work: go back to Step Three

**Flow of Communication:**
A. **At the Beginning**, mediator is talking first, setting the ground rules, clarifying everyone's role, and nurturing the trust of participants in the mediation.
B. **During the middle** of the process, communication is focused on clarifying each person's position.
C. **The conclusion** of the process involves very precise oral and written communication as specific details are set down in an agreement.
D. **Controlling The communication**
   ● Be in command of the process
   ● Allow for feelings
   ● Nurture trust
   ● Be tough
   ● Demonstrate respect for all parties in the dispute by demonstrating active listening; be reluctant to respond to interruption; communicate a sense of time without pressure; and
   ● Respond readily to questions
E. **Be Yourself**
F. **Be aware of Communication Blockers**

*Below are some examples of communication blockers and how they may be characterized:*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Ordering:** | "You must…"   "You have to…"   "You will…" |
| **Threatening:** | "If you don't…"   "You better or else…" |
| **Lecturing:** | "You ought to…"   "Don't you realize…" |
| **Judging:** | "You are just crazy.."  "You are lying.." |
| **Denying:** | "I don't see the problem…"   "Why are we even here…" |
| **Laying Blame:** | "It's your fault…"   "If he had done his job…" |
| **Focus on Self:** | "My problems are much worse than yours…" |

## Specific Techniques of Active Listening

These following techniques foster a language of resolution and help to model effective communication skills.

1. **Summarize:**    State *exactly* what a person has said.

2. **Paraphrase:** Summarize the *essence* of what a person has said.

3. **Reflect Feeling:** Verbalize a feeling you are hearing.

4. **Reframe:** Turn a negative statement into a positive one and place the focus on the speaker instead of the one spoken about.

5. **Validate:** Acknowledge emotions and willingness to work on solutions.

6. **Reality Test:** Question unrealistic outlooks or demands.

7. **Probe:** Ask open ended questions to obtain further information.

Remember that many times when people are in conflict, they will communicate in a way which can dissolve or "block" effective communication, therefore:

1. **Never make** assumptions about the issues.

2. **Be aware of your personal biases**, they can distort your perception of people and what is happening. Try to start at point zero (with an open mind) at the beginning of any negotiation.

3. **Maintain an atmosphere of respect** use your own behavior and attitude as an example.

4. **Accept the values** (beliefs of what is true, moral or correct) and perceptions   (mindset that shapes what we see and hear based on our experiences) that are presented.
   - **Don't give in to the temptation to impose your own!**

5. **Along with the other parties in the negotiation**, you, as the counselor, are also responsible for the process, as well as the outcome or outcomes (there sometimes can be more than one outcome!).

# Safe Schools Talking Points*

- All students are affected by homophobia, and the learning environment is negatively impacted as a result.  Open homophobia is often the first symptom of an environment where bullying and harassment are allowed to flourish.
- Homophobia is the first weapon of choice against those who somehow don't "fit in", and homophobic remarks and taunts often have nothing to do with a student's real sexual orientation.  Instead, homophobia is an unscientific, blunt and cruel- but sadly effective- weapon against anyone who is different.  It reinforces collective stereotypes and lowers the self-esteem of those who don't somehow "fit in."
- Homophobia also affects non-gay students who are perceived to be gay but may not conform to accepted gender norms.
- The average high school student hears 25 anti-gay slurs daily.
- 97 percent of high school students regularly hear homophobic remarks
- According to a 2005 survey, 90% of LGBT students polled (vs. 62 percent of non-LGBT teens) say they have been harassed or assaulted in just this past year.  The startling results come from a Harris Interactive poll conducted on behalf of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).  "From Teasing to Torment" is the first national survey on bullying in American schools to include questions about anti-gay harassment.
- This harassment takes its toll: Gay students are far more likely to skip classes, drop out of school and/or commit suicide.
- In a report released in October 2004 by the National School Boards Association, it is noted that:

  - Like all other individuals, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) students are guaranteed equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution and free speech and association under the First Amendment.
  - Like other student clubs, GLBT-related student groups, often called GSAs, are guaranteed equal treatment and access under the Equal Access Act.
  - Additionally, some courts have held that Title IX offers protections to GLBT students in certain circumstances; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits gender-based discrimination in educational programs that receive federal funding.  Although Title IX does not protect against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation generally, GLBT students may be able to sue under Title IX for a school district's failure to protect them from harassment.

*Information replicated with permission from PFLAG (www.pflag.org)*

# Addressing Difficult Views or Questions*

What follows are some arguments that are commonly used by school administrators, policy makers and vocal community critics to block efforts to make schools safe for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) youth, along with information that will be helpful in addressing these arguments.  Use these suggestions with your personal stories and those of your friends and loved ones to address objections.

**There are no people like that in our school.  This is not a problem here.**

This myth accepts the stereotype that all GLBT people are somehow always obvious.  It places the problem of harassment on the shoulders of those who are being harassed rather than on a school climate or system that tolerates homophobia.  Make clear that all GLBT students are probably in every classroom, every day, in every school, and that *all* students face intense peer pressure; pressure that often takes the form of anti-gay name-calling and harassment whether they are GLBT or just perceived to be, and it is bad for everyone.

Youth who violate norms for gender expression, including those who are transgender, may be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or still questioning their sexual orientation.  Regardless of their actual sexual orientation, their visible challenge to our society's notion of what it means to be a man or a woman, male or female (the effeminate boy or the tomboy girl) makes them targets of abuse.  Other targets include children, siblings and friends of GLBT people.

Emphasize that whether adults know who they are or not, GLBT youth deserve a safe learning environment just as much as non-GLBT students.  Our goal is to make schools safer for all students, *including* GLBT youth or those who are erroneously perceived to be.  Try countering this argument by linking issues that GLBT students face to a broad array of safe schools issues.

*Note: Same-sex sexual orientation and transgenderism are not the same thing, though prejudice and hostility toward either characteristic is usually undifferentiated. It is erroneous to assume a person dealing with same-sex orientation is also dealing with transgenderism, or that a transgender person is therefore homosexual or bisexual.  Sexual orientation is someone's sexual and affectional attraction for others of the opposite sex, the same sex, or either sex.  Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being masculine or feminine, male or female regardless of sex.*

**These issues have no place in our schools.  We are here to teach the basics, not to teach homosexuality.**

This position ignores the rampant anti-gay climate that already exists inside and outside of schools.  When students observe, participate in, or are targets of anti-gay or anti-trans hostility, harassment and abuse, and when there is no official policy in place with education professionals trained to enforce it, the message is very clear:

this kind of abuse is acceptable.  Working to change the hostile climate in schools is the only way to challenge and change this lesson.  The argument also attempts to sidestep a key responsibility of all education professionals: to create and maintain a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students, regardless of any personal prejudices.

The phrase "teaching homosexuality" or similar language is cleverly crafted to confuse the issue.  At best it suggests a profound misunderstanding of how most people come to understand and express their sexual orientation and gender identity, and at worst it is a deliberate attempt to cause uncertainty about legitimate discussions of policy and academic content.  It is designed to stir up baseless fears and mythologies about "causes" of homosexuality.  It assumes that to implement appropriate policies, to have accurate information available, or to establish student GSAs will express an official approval of homosexuality, which will somehow lead young people to decide to become gay.  It underscores how much inaccurate and unexamined information is out there about sexual orientation and gender identity, how it gets misused, and how important it is to bring accurate information to light. This is intentional manipulation of language takes away from the real issues and work ahead: making schools safe for all students.

**We need to provide "balance" on this issue.**

This strategy is used to try to apply negative opinions about the morality of homosexuality to policy decisions, counseling guidelines and currilcula content. People will have differing views on this, but policy, counseling practices and curricula should be based on the best researched and professionally reviewed information available, not personal opinion.  This argument disregards the fact that through both systemic omission of accurate information about GLBT language and behaviors, there is currently a severe *imbalance* in affirmatively addressing sexual orientation and gender identity.  Organizations that have invested significant resources in the promotion of "reparative therapy" and "transformational ministries," which have been widely discredited by all major medical and health professional associations, also encourage this call for "balance."

*Information replicated with permission from PFLAG (www.pflag.org)*

# Creating a Safe Zone

# 10 Ways to Make Schools Safer*

1. **Learn the Facts:** Students report hearing antigay epithets and enduring hostile environments on an almost daily basis.
2. **Understand the language:** Before we can act we need to understand terminology and show respect.
3. **Stop Bad Behavior:** There are three key things every adult must do to stop disruptive behavior and model respect in school: 1. Don't ignore discriminatory behaviors, 2. Don't excuse discriminatory behaviors, and 3. Don't be immobilized by fear.
4. **Set the Policy:** A strong and inclusive anti-harassment policy not only protects students, it also protects the school.
5. **Plan School-Wide Activities:** There are simple, and important, ways to educate the school community about why respect for everyone must be the rule, and not the exception.
6. **Be Public:** Let students know that you are their advocate and ally.
7. **Cyber Bullying:** Know about high-tech harassment and what to do to help those who are targets.
8. **Train and Educate Everyone:** Ask for faculty to be trained to respond to bullying in the most effective, helpful way.
9. **Work for Comprehensive Health Education:** Comprehensive and age-appropriate health education is essential for every student, and especially those who are LGBT.
10. **Resources, Resources, Resources:** Educate yourself on where to go to have questions answered for appropriate referrals.

# Creating Systemic Change

*In addition the aforementioned list, we have included more detailed suggestions that will facilitate positive systemic change within your school.*

- Work with your principal and/or school board to include a comprehensive non-discrimination and anti-bullying policy, one that protects <u>all</u> students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/ expression. Refer to the effective messaging section for tips on approaching administrators.

- Sponsor a Gay-Straight Alliance (consider a name change, one that is inclusive of transgender, bisexual and questioning students).

- Let students know your office is safe. Place a "Safe Zone" sticker on your door and encourage others to do the same.

- Encourage media specialists to carry books that are inclusive of LGBTQQ people and issues.

- Always remember that the real experts on LGBTQQ youth are LGBTQQ youth; students are an integral part of transforming school climate and should be involved in creating sustainable systemic change.

- Incorporate diversity and social justice into your classroom guidance lessons. For lesson plans, visit www.tolerance.org

- Be inclusive of LGBT families.

- Avoid dichotomizing gender (e.g., using phrases like, "boys aren't supposed to…).

- Address school personnel on issues affecting LGBTQQ students or request a training from Georgia Safe School Coalition

- Encourage your school to participate in various GLSEN campaigns:

    - Day of Silence
    - Think B4 You Speak
    - No Name-Calling Week
    - Ally Week

    *For more information, visit www.glsen.org*

# Gay-Straight Alliances

**What is a Gay-Straight Alliance?**

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) are student-led clubs that provide a safe and affirming environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning students and their heterosexual allies.  They are like any other school club: they hold meetings, have faculty sponsors, engage in fundraising activities, plan events and are open to all students on campus.

**Quick Facts about GSAs:**

- Gay-Straight Alliances are protected under the Equal Access Act of 1984 which states that if a school allows one non-curricular club, it must allow all others.
- According to GLSEN*:
    - The presence of GSAs may help to make schools safer for LGBT students by sending a message that biased language and harassment will not be tolerated.
    - Having a GSA may also make schools more accessible to LGBT students by contributing to a more positive school environment.
    - GSAs may help LGBT students to identify supportive school staff, which has been shown to have a positive impact on their academic achievements and experiences in school.
    - Most students lack access to GSAs or other student clubs that provide support and address issues specific to LGBT students and their allies.
- Research conducted by GLSEN* also shows that:
    - Students in schools with GSAs are less likely to hear homophobic remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" in school on a daily basis than students without a GSA (57% compared to 75%).
    - LGBT students in schools with GSAs are less likely to miss school because they feel unsafe compared to other students: a quarter (26%) of students in schools with GSAs missed school in the past month because they felt unsafe compared to a third (32%) of students at schools without GSAs.
    - Students in schools with a GSA are more likely to report that school faculty, staff and administrators are supportive of lesbian, gay and bisexual students (52% compared to 32%).

*For more information on establishing a GSA, visit www.glsen.org*

# Zero Indifference
## A Guide to Stop Name-Calling & Bullying

A "Zero-Indifference" response to name-calling means that members of the school community take collective action to not tolerate name-calling and bullying. Although there is no one right way to intervene, consistent intervention is key to establishing a school environment where all students feel safe and respected.

**Three things that you should avoid:**

- Ignore the incident.

- Excuse it.

- Allow yourself to become immobilized by fear or uncertainty.


**Effective interventions consist of two steps:**

1. *Stop the behavior immediately.*

Some sample responses:

|  | **LESS TIME / PUBLIC SPACE** (between periods, at dismissal, during recess) | **MORE TIME / PRIVATE SPACE** (during class or practice, after-school activities) |
|---|---|---|
| **IN A STRUCTURED SETTING** (a classroom, library, etc.) | ■ That is unacceptable in this room. <br> ■ You know the class ground rules. <br> ■ Please apologize. <br> ■ Leave the room. <br> ■ Leave him/her alone! | ■ What did you mean by what you said? <br> ■ That was a stereotype. <br> ■ Stereotypes are a kind of lie and they hurt people's feelings. <br> ■ That was a putdown, and I don't think it belongs here at our school. <br> ■ You may not have meant to be hurtful, but here's how your comment hurt… |
| **UNSTRUCTURED SETTING** (hallway, locker room, cafeteria) | ■ Cut it out! Using language like that is no joke. <br> ■ That's out of line! <br> ■ Keep your hands to yourself! <br> ■ Go to the office! | ■ That's bullying. It's against the school rules. <br> ■ We don't harass people at this school. It could get you suspended. <br> ■ That was really mean. Why did you say that? <br> ■ Do you know why that was |

■ Stop it right now!          hurtful?

## *Educate those involved.*

The determining factor about whether to educate on the spot or privately, immediately or later, should be the needs of the targeted student. Both options have advantages and disadvantages.

| EDUCATING ON THE SPOT | EDUCATING LATER PRIVATELY |
| --- | --- |
| ■ Provides immediate information and support | ■ Allows harasser to "save face" |
| ■ Models taking a stand | ■ Prevents possible embarrassment of target |
| ■ Reassures others that the school is a safe place | ■ Allows you to cool down |
| ■ Sets a compassionate tone | ■ Allows more time to explore and discuss the facts |

■ **Distinguish between what feels right and what is best for a given student or situation.**

Incidents of name-calling and bullying can be complex, calling for educators to use thoughtful, critical judgment in each situation. You may want every student within fifty feet to hear you loud and clear when you reprimand the tormenters of a targeted student, so that students will get the message that your school will not tolerate name-calling. This response, however, may cause targeted students to cringe at the attention your public intervention draws, and to increase their concerns for their safety on the way home, when no one will be there to protect them.

■ **Ask targeted students what they would like you to do.**

As a teacher, you may feel you need to take charge and determine on your own what's best for all students. Instead, you can stop the name-calling immediately, and set aside a time to educate harassing students later. Establish a time to meet privately with targeted students and discuss what they think might work best for them. Determine whether targeted students have a history of being harassed in general, whether offending students have a history of harassing other students, and whether the involved parties have a history with each other.

# Some Considerations for Forming Effective Responses

*Where and when did the incident occur?*

An effective response to name-calling and harassment is dependent on where the incident occurred and the time available at the moment. Choices you make about intervening as you walk down the hall on your way to your next class will differ from those you make when you have the time and structure of the classroom to support your decision.
If "time and place" allow for only punitive or reactive responses, or if you believe the needs of the targeted student will be better served by speaking to the offending student(s) later, be sure to schedule a future "time and place" to deal with the situation. Education is more effective at changing students' future behaviors than punishment alone!

*Was the incident isolated or part of a pattern?*

A one-time transgression can be dealt with swiftly, but a persistent pattern on the part of any of the involved students requires more intensive intervention. If a student has a history of harassing other students, in addition to stopping the behavior and making decisions about educating those involved, consistently apply and enforce existing school rules and policies and take disciplinary action, when appropriate. If a student has a history of being picked on, a guidance counselor can assist the student in dealing with the considerable emotional strain of being targeted. Targeted students need support and should never be given the impression that they "deserved" or "provoked" the attack.

*What was the harassing student's intent?*

Consider the ages of the harassing student(s), their understanding of the meaning and impact of their behavior, and the existing relationships between the involved students. Are the students best friends? Is it possible they are only repeating language they have heard someone else use? Is the harassing student older or substantively bigger than the targeted student? Are the students developmentally able to understand the meaning and impact of their behavior?

| **ELEMENTARY STUDENTS** | **MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS** |
|---|---|
| ■ Ask if they know the meaning of the derogatory word(s) they used. | ■ Consider the history, age, and intent of parties involved. |
| ■ Explain, in age-appropriate language, the possible origins, meaning, and hurtful impact of the word(s). | ■ Determine whether to educate publicly on the spot or later, in private. |
| ■ Clarify school and/or classroom rules and policies about the behavior. | ■ Firmly communicate the seriousness and consequences of the behavior, and that you do not want to hear or see it again. |
| ■ Communicate that, regardless of | |

the original intent, the word is a put-down, and that you do not want to hear the student use it again.

■ Take steps to insure the safety of the targeted student.

■ Refuse to sanction behavior as joking or "fooling around."

■ Take steps to insure the safety of the targeted student.

Although individual circumstances may require educators to occasionally make judgment calls that violate their sense of what "feels right," name-calling and bullying provide daily opportunities for "teachable moments" for educating students to show respect for all people.

# Glossary, Resources & Acknowledgements

Georgia Safe Schools Coalition recognizes that the importance of choosing the least restrictive language is paramount to maintaining a safe climate, one that is conducive to learning. Such language is consistent with the concept of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), mandated under federal law when discussing Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and PL-142.

In speaking about people from the LGBTQQI&A (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Ally) communities, it is important to recognize that the terms and categories commonly used, across numerous populations and environments, are still developing.  There is no uniform way that such acronyms are written; this variation has led to the reference of gay/queer acronyms as "alphabet soup."  To maintain consistency, GSSC will use the acronym LGBTQQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning) throughout this manual, unless another organization's resources are being cited.

Anti-bullying programs routinely require school personnel to address incidents of prejudice and bias, but often lack the vocabulary and understanding of issues related to sexist and anti-LGBT fodder. Whether teasing/bullying is done with malice or without much thought, a lack of response by school personnel is a form of bystander assault that reinforces the message that school is not always a safe place to be.  In order to create a more respectful school climate, staff and teachers must be equipped with, and have a working knowledge of, proper use of key terms associated with LGBTQQ youth. Since verbal assaults are the most common form of bullying, it is critical that there be access to language that can open up dialogue around the harmful use of certain terms. Sometimes, knowing which words to use can be confusing, however, a best practice is to listen to the terms used by an individual to identify or categorize themselves.
*[Note: There may be negative connotations for some words that have been positively re-claimed by some individuals (e.g., "queer"); however, some reclaimed terms are not appropriate for use in the school environment].*

The GSSC preferred glossary of terms recommended for use in describing people from the LGBTQQ community will continue to evolve. It is important to recognize that the terms and categories are commonly used – across numerous populations and environments, and are still developing. While there are many LGBT advocacy organizations who offer glossaries, one must carefully examine these resources and their often limiting view, keeping in mind how damaging restrictively asserted language can be. Presumably, there are terms among diverse communities that are not yet listed; we should all keep an ear to the ground as we build our knowledge of vocabulary pertinent to keeping schools a safe and nurturing environment, which is necessary for optimal learning.

Please be advised that GSSC will make revisions and periodic updates of the most appropriate glossary of terms for use in speaking about people from LGBTQQ communities.  Contact GSSC as you encounter new terms that you find to be informative, derogatory or least restrictive in relation to describing LGBTQQA individuals/communities.  Email Mr. Jesse McNulty, M.Ed. At Plandestiny@gmail.com; please put GSSC glossary in the subject line.

*The following is a growing list of some of the least restrictive terms available, as reviewed by GSSC, from numerous LGBTQQ resources:*

**Lambda Legal—free publication:**
*Bending the mold*: **an action kit for transgender youth.**
*Source: http://data.lambdalegal.org/publications/downloads/btm_glossary.pdf*

**Glossary**
Here's a quick reference for some of the most commonly used terms in the transgender community. Remember that people defy labels and not everyone will fit into a definition, label or box, no matter how large we make it.

ableism: a system of institutionalized practices and individual actions that benefits able-bodied people over people with disabilities.

biological sex, sex: a term used historically and within the medical field to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male.

classism: a system of institutionalized practices and individual actions that benefits people who have wealth and power.

crossdresser: a person who, on occasion, wears clothing associated with another sex, but who does not necessarily desire to change his or her sex. Many crossdressers identify as heterosexual but can have any sexual orientation.

drag king / drag queen: a performer who wears the clothing associated with another sex, often involving the presentation of exaggerated, stereotypical gender characteristics. The performance of gender by drag queens (males in drag) or drag kings (females in drag) may be art, entertainment and/or parody.

FTM (female to male), transgender man: terms used to identify a person who was assigned the female sex at birth but who identifies as male.

gender: a set of social, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal  expectations, that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other.

gender binary: the concept that everyone must be one of two genders: man or woman.

gender expression: The outward manifestation of internal gender identity, through clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms and other characteristics.

gender identity: the inner sense of being a man, a woman, both or neither. Gender identity usually aligns with a person's sex, but sometimes does not.

gender dysphoria: an intense, persistent discomfort resulting from the awareness that the sex assigned at birth and the resulting gender role expectations are inappropriate. Some consider gender dysphoria to be a symptom of Gender Identity Disorder, a health condition recognized by the American Psychiatric Association. Many transgender people do not experience gender dysphoria.

genderqueer: a term used by some people who may or may not identify as transgender, but who identify their gender as somewhere on the continuum beyond the binary male/female gender system.

gender-nonconforming: behaving in a way that does not match social stereotypes about female or male gender, usually through dress or physical appearance.

gender role: the social expectation of how an individual should act, think and feel, based upon the sex assigned at birth.

gender transition: the social, psychological and medical process of transitioning from one gender to another. Gender transition is an individualized process and does not involve the same steps for everyone. After gender transition, some people identify simply as men or women.

hormone therapy: administration of hormones and hormonal agents to develop characteristics of a different gender or to block the development of unwanted gender characteristics. Hormone therapy is part of many people's gender transitions and is safest when prescribed and monitored by a health care professional.

MTF (male to female), transgender woman: terms used to identify a person who was assigned the male sex at birth but who identifies as female.

oppression: the acts and effects of domination of certain groups in society over others, caused by the combination of prejudice and power. Systems of oppression include racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

post-op, pre-op, non-op: terms used to identify a transgender person's surgical status. Use of these terms is often considered insulting and offensive. Surgical status is almost never  relevant information for anyone except a transgender person's medical providers.

privilege: social and institutional advantages that dominant groups receive and others do not. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it.

racism: a system of institutionalized practices and individual actions that benefits white people over people of color.

sex reassignment surgery (SRS): any one of a variety of surgeries involved in the process of transition from one gender to another. Many transgender people will not

undergo SRS for health or financial reasons, or because it is not medically necessary for them.

sexism: a system of institutionalized practices and individual actions that benefits men over women.

transgender or trans: an umbrella term used to describe those who challenge social gender norms, including genderqueer people, gender-nonconforming people, transsexuals, crossdressers and so on. People must self-identify as transgender in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

transphobia: the irrational fear of those who challenge gender stereotypes, often expressed as discrimination, harassment and violence.

transsexual: a person who experiences intense, persistent, long-term discomfort with their body and self-image due to the awareness that their assigned sex is inappropriate. Transsexuals may take steps to change their body, gender role and gender expression to align them with their gender identity.

**Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network [GLSEN] terminology:**
*Source: www.dayofsilence.org/transaction.html*

genderism: Related to sexism, but is the systematic belief that people need to conform to the gender role assigned to them based on a gender binary system which includes only female and male. This is a form of institutionalized discrimination as well as individually demonstrated prejudice.

**Gender Expression**

androgynous: Used to describe a person whose gender expression and/or identity may be neither distinctly female or male, usually based on appearance.

butch: Used to describe people of all genders and sexes who act and dress in stereotypically masculine ways.

femme: Used to describe people of all genders and sexes who act or dress in stereotypically feminine ways.

drag king/drag queen: Wearing the clothing of a gender that one may not often present as, often involving the presentation of exaggerated, stereotypical gender characteristics. Individuals may identify as drag kings (in drag presenting as male) or drag queens (in drag presenting as female) when performing gender as parody, art or entertainment.

**Trans Derivatives**

transgender (or trans): a term used to describe people who transgress social gender norms; often used as an umbrella term to include transsexual, genderqueer, gender nonconforming or cross-dressers. People must self identify as transgender in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

transsexual: Someone who experiences intense, persistent, long-term discomfort with their body and self-image due to the belief that their assigned gender is inappropriate. Transsexuals may be pre-op, post-op or non-op (op=operative, referring to top and/or bottom surgery) depending on medical and financial circumstances. People must self-identify as transsexual in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

two-Spirit: Native Americans who fulfill one of many mixed gender roles found traditionally among many Native Americans and Canadian First Nations indigenous groups. Traditionally the roles included wearing the clothing and performing the work of both male and female genders. The term usually implies a masculine spirit and a feminine spirit living in the same body and was coined by contemporary gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Native Americans to describe themselves and the traditional roles they are reclaiming.

**Medical Terms**

intersex: A person born with an anatomy or a physiology that differs from societal ideals of female or male. Intersex people may be born with "ambiguous genitalia" and/or experience hormone production levels that vary from those of societal "ideal" females and males. While there is some overlap between transgender and intersex communities, intersex is not the same as transgender.

Gender Identity Disorder (GID):  A clinical psychological diagnosis, that offends many in transgender communities and is often required to receive medical supervision of treatments relating to transition like hormones or surgery.

General Terms

sexual orientation: One's mental, physical and emotional attraction to people of one or more genders, and subsequent interest in physical relationships and/or establishing longterm relationships with select people of that/those gender(s).

zie & hir: The most common spelling for fairly common gender-neutral pronouns. The first is subjective, replacing she or he, and the second possessive and objective, replacing her or his.

**Safe Schools Coalition:**
*Source: www.safeschoolscoalition.org/glossary.pdf*

ally: A member of a historically more powerful identity group who stands up against bigotry. For example, a man who confronts his friend about harassing women, a Christian who helps paint over a swastika, or a heterosexual person who objects to an anti-gay joke.

coming out: The process of first recognizing and acknowledging non-heterosexual orientation or trans-gender identity to oneself and then sharing it with others. Developmentally, many sexual minority youth will initially erect emotional barriers with acquaintances, friends and family by pretending (actively or through silence) to be heterosexual and congruent. Coming out means dropping the secrecy and pretense and becoming more emotionally integrated. This usually occurs in stages and is a non-linear, lifelong process.

co-parents: Grown-ups who are raising a child together, who may or may not be biologically related to the child. Sometimes refers to the partner of a biological parent. Sometimes refers to both (or all) parents, step-parents, partners and other guardians.

dyke: Pejorative term for a lesbian. Some young women self-identify as dykes, but it is still a slur in many contexts and is generally prohibited in schools with anti-harassment policies.

fag, faggot: Pejorative terms for a gay man. As unacceptable at school as racial or religious slurs.

failure-to-report: The crime (a gross misdemeanor, in Washington State) committed by certain professionals who are required by law to contact child protective services and/or law enforcement when they know or suspect that a child or teen has been neglected or physically or sexually assaulted, when they fail to do so.

failure-to-protect: Refers to the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. This clause states that all citizens are due equal protection under the law and cannot be discriminated against through selective enforcement. This means that schools are responsible for equally protecting all students. Sexual harassment policies, for instance, must be applied consistently, regardless of a student's (or an employee's) gender or race or religion or sexual orientation or gender expression.

heterosexual: Clinical synonym for straight.

homosexual: Clinical synonym for gay.

homophobia: Originally coined to mean, in classic psychological terms, irrational fear of homosexuality. Now refers usually to bias against or dislike of gay, lesbian,

bisexual and transgender people or of stereotypically gay/lesbian behavior, or discomfort with one's own same-sex attractions, or of being perceived as gay or lesbian. A less inflammatory term is anti-gay (as in anti-gay harassment).

homosexual: Avoid this term; it is clinical, distancing and archaic. Sometimes appropriate in referring to behavior (although same-sex is the preferred adj.). When referring to people, as opposed to behavior, homosexual is considered derogatory and the terms gay and lesbian are preferred, at least in the Northwest.

inclusive language: The use of terms such as family or parents/guardians, instead of mother-and-father in a letter about an upcoming open-house. Or of gender-neutral terms (e.g., partner, instead of boyfriend or girlfriend) in a lesson on communication. Terms that allow every child and family to feel they belong at school, including those who are gay or lesbian (as well as children who live with a single parent or grandparents, etc.).

lesbian: Preferred term for gay women. Many lesbians feel invisible when the term gay is used to refer to men and women.

lifestyle: An inaccurate term sometimes used to describe the lives of gays, lesbians and bisexuals. Implies that the homes, careers, and relationships of all sexual minorities are identical. There is a GLBT culture, with its own performing arts and body of literature. There is a GLBT community, with gay- and lesbian-identified businesses, publications and holidays. But the degree to which people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender take part in this culture and community varies from not-at-all to almost exclusively. There is no gay lifestyle, just as there is no straight lifestyle.

malicious harassment: Physical injury, damage to property, or threats based on a person's (real or perceived) sexual orientation; race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; gender; or mental, physical, or sensory handicap.

openly gay/lesbian: Preferred over self-avowed or practicing. For example: He is an openly gay principal.

outing: Publicly revealing the sexual orientation or gender identity of someone who has chosen not to share it.

pink triangle: A symbol originally used by the Nazis, who forced gay men to wear pink triangles on their clothing, imprisoned them in concentration camps, and put many thousands of gay men to death. Now, the downward-pointing, equilateral, pink triangle is a symbol of GLBT pride and the struggle for equal rights.

rainbow flag: A flag of six equal horizontal stripes (red, orange, yellow, green, blue and lavender or violet) adopted to signify the diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community.

sexual harassment: Any unwanted sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature that alarms or annoys someone, or interferes with someone's privacy, or creates an intimidating or hostile environment.

sexual minorities: Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.

sexual orientation: One's core sense of the gender(s) of people toward whom one feels romantically and sexually attracted. The inclination or capacity to develop intimate emotional and sexual relationships with people of the same gender, a different gender or more than one gender. Doesn't presume sexual experience/activity (i.e., sexual minority people are as capable as heterosexual people of choosing to abstain). To some degree, the qualities one finds attractive may be learned, probably in the first few years of life. There is growing evidence that people may be, however, biologically (hormonally, genetically) predisposed to be more attracted to one gender or another or to people of more than one gender. In all instances, use this instead of sexual preference or other misleading terminology.

sexual preference: Avoid this term; it implies a casual choice, which is rarely if ever the case. Sexual orientation is the correct term.

sissy: Pejorative term for a gay man or a man who doesn't fit masculine gender role stereotypes. As unacceptable at school as racial or religious slurs.

stonewall: The Stonewall Inn tavern in New York City's Greenwich Village was the site of several nights of rioting/rebellion following a police raid on June 28, 1969. Although not the nation's first gay-rights demonstration, Stonewall is now regarded as the birth of the modern gay-rights movement.

straight: Heterosexual; non-gay. Term preferred by some straight people as less clinical and formal than heterosexual, but some dislike it because it gets confused with not using drugs or with being a rigid person. Some GLBT people object to it as implying that they must be, in contrast, bent.

**New York University, Office of LGBT Student Services:**
*Source: www.nyu.edu/lgbt/glossary.html*

closet: Used as slang for the state of not publicizing one's sexual identity, keeping it private, living an outwardly heterosexual life while identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender, or not being forthcoming about one's identity. At times, being in the closet also means not wanting to admit one's sexual identity to oneself.
coming out:To disclose one's own sexual identity or gender identity. It can mean telling others or it can refer to the time when a person comes out to him/herself by discovering or admitting that their sexual or gender identity is not what was previously assumed. Some people think of coming out as a larger system of oppression of LGBT people- that an LGBT person needs to come out at all shows that everyone is presumed heterosexual until demonstrated otherwise. But this word need not apply only to the LGBT community. In some situations, a heterosexual may feel the need to come out about their identity as well.

heterosexism: The individual person, group, or institutional norms and behaviors that result from the assumption that all people are heterosexual. The system of oppression, which assumes that heterosexuality is inherently normal and superior, negates LBGT peoples' lives and relationships.

heterosexual: A person (male or female) who has significant sexual and or romantic attractions to primarily members of the other sex.

homophobia: The fear and hatred of or the discomfort with people who love and sexually desire members of the same sex. Homophobic reactions often lead to intolerance, bigotry, and violence against anyone not acting within heterosexual norms. Because most LGBT people are raised in the same society as heterosexuals, they learn the same beliefs and stereotypes prevalent in the dominant society, leading to a phenomenon known as "internalized homophobia."

homosexual: The formal or clinical term that was coined in the field of psychology, sometimes meaning only "gay male," but at times encompasses lesbians and occasionally bisexuals. The word is often associated with the proposition that same sex attractions are a mental disorder, and is therefore distasteful to some people.

queer: Originally a derogatory slur, it has recently been reclaimed by some to be an inclusive word for all of those within the sexual minority community. Because of the original derogatory nature of the word, it is not necessarily accepted by all.

*\*Reprinted with permission from NYU, Office of LGBT Student Services*

**Additional terms:**

affirming sex: the action of others in showing respect for an individuals' declared sex; using affirming language in alignment is the largest part. Examples include using the persons' chosen name and declared pronouns- regardless of an individuals' transitional medical/legal status/identity.

ag/aggressive/stud: synonymous with a butch lesbian identity; more often these terms are used to describe a Black or Latina lesbian with a very masculine gender presentation. Though they are often read as boys or men, they do not usually identify as male.

bisexual: emotionally and sexually attracted to some people of other [typically stated as "both"] genders. Does not presume non-monogamy or any sexual activity, necessarily. Some people self-identify as bi, rather than bisexual.

cisgender: a term to describe a person who identifies with the gender or sex they were assigned at birth

feminist: a term that infers objection to the differentiated treatment of people based on perceived or assigned sex—typically, people associate the term with women's rights; however, all people suffer under gendered oppressive expectations.

gay: A man who has significant sexual and/or emotional attractions to some other men, or who identifies as a member of the gay community. "Gay" is often used as an umbrella term to refer to all people who have their primary sexual and or  emotional attractions to people of the same sex. [Lesbians and bisexuals may feel excluded by this word—similarly as do women, when the term *man*kind is used to describe all people—regardless of sex].

gender fluid: a term used to describe people who are not locked into a specific category of gender expression or identity.

gender variant: a term used by some people to describe a lack of adherence to gendered expectations of their assigned birth sex.

intersex: a term used to describe a person born with anatomical or chromosomal variance from culturally ideal norms; differing from medical and scientific data used to define female and male. [hermaphrodite: an outdated term that was used to describe people with intersex persons. It is now considered derogatory, unless claimed by an individual with an people with DSDs [disorders of sex development]. For the most current information on intersex variations and the struggles they face, visit www.accordalliance.org or www.isna.org.

lesbian: A woman who has significant sexual and/or emotional attractions to other

women, or who identifies as a member of the lesbian community. Bisexual women may or may not identify with this term.

LGBTQQA: an acronym that is used to describe persons who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, or Allied to the above communities. [Sometimes "I" will appear in the acronym; however, many people who identify with the term intersex object to the practice, as they often see their situation as largely physical/medical. Some transsexual identified people feel this way, as well].

passing: a term used to describe the ability of a trans person to express their gender identity undetected; they typically blend into the dominant view of how a typical man or woman should look.

questioning: a term used to describe a person who is exploring their sexual orientation, gender expression, or the values they have absorbed from dominant heterosexist culture.

no-ho: a term used to describe a transexual person who chooses not to enhance their hormones with estrogen or testosterone.

safe zone: an area that is tuned in to peace-keeping and respectful treatment of people, regardless of personal bias. A safe zone  acknowledges that oppression, in all forms, exists and must be challenged- first by creating a climate where one can expect to be free of harassment. Next, having the ability to report incidence of LGBT and other bias harassment to caring adults who will enforce the safe zone.

Safe zone sticker: designed as a proactive and visible sign of support for LGBTQQA persons who deserve to feel safe at school. The sticker is recommended for use as a reminder to both show respect for students and to expect reinforcement from school personnel. Ultimately, the stickers would be best placed throughout the school, following a related in-service, which teaches adults proper enforcement of safe zones as related to LGBT, and among intersecting oppressions. [Sexism, racism, ableism, etc...]

social transition:  the point at which an individual takes action to inform others of their declared sex ; this may include outward changes in appearance, as well as a change from assigned name and/or pronouns.
[Here, supportive members of the individual's communities [allies] assist by affirming the declared sex by adjusting to changes in verbiage and assist in accessing public services and facilities].

medical transition: the point at which the medical community is informed of an individuals' transgender status and assists in accessing and monitoring interventions; these may include changes in documentation [using affirmed sex verbiage], psychosocial, and physical [body modifying].

transition: Not a single event—a life-long process, most often refers to the period of time when a transgender person begins to assert their gender, which may include any combination of the following: alterations to dress, name changes, changing pronouns, hormone therapy or sex reassignment surgeries. Not all trans people want nor have access to hormone therapy or sex reassignment surgery. Some transgender people identify only as a man or as a woman- having had transgender experience.

# General Resources for working with LGBTQQ Youth

**YouthPride** is a 501(c) non-profit organization, protects, unites, and dignifies the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth and young adults (ages 13-24).

The **Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN)** is a national organization dedicated to creating safer schools: http://www.glsen.org/

The **American Psychological Association's (APA) Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns Office** can be accessed online at http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbc/

The **Gay-Straight Alliance Network** provides information on starting a Gay-Straight Alliance. Visit http://www.gsanetwork.org for more information.

**Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)** offers information for LGBTQ youth and their parents. PFLAG's program "From Our House to the School House" addresses issues relevant to LGBTQ students. For more information or to find a local chapter, visit www.pflag.org

The **American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU)** Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Project provides information on creating a safer school environment for all students. The website also addresses legal issues and can be accessed at http://gbge.aclu.org/

The **Safe School Coalition** offers resources for educators (lesson plans, etc.) and information on laws and policies affecting LGBTQ youth. www.safeschoolscoalition.org

The **Anti-Defamation League (ADL)** provides anti-bullying resources for educators including the *No Place for Hate* program. http://www.adl.org/education

**Groundspark** produces educational videos addressing the issue of anti-LGBTQ bullying in schools. www.groundspark.org

**Teaching Tolerance** provides free, downloadable resources for educators. www.teachingtolerance.org

**The Trevor Project** offers a 24-hour crisis and suicide prevention helpline for LGBTQ youth. www.thetrevorproject.org

**Trans Youth Family Allies (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. We envision a society free of suicide and violence in which ALL children are respected and celebrated.

# Local Organizations serving LGBTQQ Youth

**YouthPride** is a 501(c) non-profit organization, protects, unites, and dignifies the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth and young adults (ages 13-24).

**DaCribb** serves as an educational resource center for gay and bisexual young men of color. Located in Atlanta, DaCribb also offers free counseling. http://www.naesmonline.org/dacribb/intheirwords/html

**Evolution** is a community center in Atlanta for African American males, ages 16-28. More information can be found at: http://evolutionprojectatl.org/

**Stand Out Youth**, located in Savannah, Georgia, provides support and resources for LGBTQ youth. http://www.standoutyouth.org/

**Georgia Equality** strives to achieve equality among members of Georgia's LGBTQ community. The website offers information on safe schools legislation. www.georgiaequality.org

**The Ben Marion Institute For Social Justice** is an educational 501c3 tax exempt non-profit working with schools and institutions to create systemic cultural change in the classroom and school environment, thus ensuring that all individuals are treated with kindness, empathy and fairness. The Institute creates and implements custom focused hands-on learning modules that address each school's individual needs in creating a peaceful classroom and school. www.benmarioninstitute.org

**All My Children** promotes the health and well-being of African American lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer persons, their families and communities through social justice research and interactive intervention programs.

**PFLAG- Atlanta (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)** provides support and resources to family members and friends of LGBTQQ people.  They also offer confidential support to LGBTQQ youth who may be struggling with how to come out their family and friends.  More information can be found at http://www.pflagatl.org/

**Lambda Legal** provides legal resources for students and schools.  For more information, visit www.lambdalegal.org.

# Suggested Resources for Parents

*Note: Some of the resources listed discuss religion, an issue many parents of LGBTQQ youth grapple with. In such instances, it may be beneficial to recommend affirming religious resources.*

- Robert A. Bernstein, **Straight Parents, Gay Children**
- Betty Fairchild and Nancy Hayward, **Now That You Know**
- Eric Marcus, **Is it a Choice?**
- Carolynn Griffin and Marian & Arthur Wirth, **Beyond Acceptance**
- Bishop John Shelby Spong, **Living in Sin**
- Lorraine Trenchard, **Being Lesbian**
- Betty Berzon, **Positively Gay**
- Mary V. Borhek, **Coming Out To Parents**
- J.F. Boylan, **She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders**
- Just Evelyn, **Mom, I Need to Be a Girl**
- Don Clark, Ph.D., **Loving Someone Gay**
- Bryce McDougall, **My Child Is Gay**

## Religious Resources

- Robin Scroggs, **The New Testament and Homosexuality**
- Daniel A. Helminiak, **What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality**
- Reverend Mel White, **Stranger At The Gate**

*For the Bible Tells Me So* (documentary):
http://www.forthebibletellsmeso.org/indexd.htm

*Institute of Welcoming Resources:* http://www.welcomingresources.org

*The Rainbow Center (Atlanta)* www.therainbowcenter.org

# Local Legal Resource: Beth Littrell



Beth Littrell is a Staff Attorney for the Southern Regional Office of Lambda Legal. Prior to joining Lambda Legal in May 2007, Littrell was the Associate Legal Director of the ACLU of Georgia where she worked on various constitutional law matters and developed and coordinated *the sticks & stones project*, a public education campaign to reduce anti-gay harassment in schools.

Her work on significant constitutional cases includes having helped strike down Georgia's fornication law, which made it a crime for unmarried persons to engage in intimate relations (*In re J.M.*); winning an appeal that forced the state to return a lesbian mother's children (*In re S.C. and E.C.*); successfully challenging school discipline for an off-campus website (*Goldsmith et. al. v. Gwinnett Co. Sch. Dist.*); and winning relief for students subject to a racially applied, overly vague "anti-gang" dress code (*Tillman v. Gwinnett Co. Sch. Dist.*). She was also among the legal team heading up the challenge to Georgia's anti-gay, anti-marriage constitutional amendment (*O'Kelley v. Perdue*), working as co-counsel with Lambda Legal, and was the lead attorney for the fight to secure the right for students to form a Gay Straight Alliance in White County, Georgia (*P.R.I.D.E. v. White Co. School Dist.*).

Beth Littrell's current docket of cases since joining Lambda Legal include *Langbehn v. Public Health Trust of Miami-Dade Co.,* a case against a hospital that denied visitation for 8 hours to a woman whose life partner of 18 years lay dying feet away; *Day v. SSA*, a challenge to the Social Security Administration's refusal to recognize a parent-child relationship between a gay disabled man in Florida and his legal children for purposes of providing social security benefits; *Central Alabama Pride v. Langford*, a challenge against the City of Birmingham for denying a gay organization equal access to fly their rainbow flags from city property; *Jarrell v. Boseman*, a challenge to second-parent adoptions in North Carolina; and *Mongerson v. Mongerson*, where she helped convince the Georgia Supreme Court to strike down a visitation restriction placed on a gay father prohibiting him from "exposing" his children to any "homosexual friends or partners."

Littrell received her B.A., *cum laude*, from Georgia State University in 1998 and her J.D. from Georgia State University's College of Law in 2001, graduating in the top twentieth percentile of her class. Her work on behalf of l/g/b/t/q people and youth has garnered her the Stonewall Bar Association's 2002 *Outstanding Service to the Stonewall Community Award* and YouthPride's 2006 *Service to Youth Award*. Throughout her career, she has advocated on behalf of dozens of youth experiencing discrimination in school and presented information to hundreds of individuals on the legal and ethical obligations of educators, administrators and school counselors to protect children equally and to reduce anti-gay harassment in classrooms and campuses.

# Authors, Editors and Contributing Organizations

**Anneliese A. Singh**, Ph.D., LPC, NCC is an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at The University of Georgia. She received her doctorate in counseling psychology from Georgia State University in 2007. Her clinical, research, and advocacy interests include: LGBTQ youth, Asian American/Pacific Islander counseling and psychology, multicultural counseling and social justice training, qualitative methodology with historically marginalized groups (e.g., people of color, LGBTQ, immigrants), feminist theory and practice, and empowerment interventions with survivors of trauma. Dr. Singh is the President of the Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues (ALGBTIC) where one of her Presidential Initiatives was to develop Competencies for working with transgender clients in counseling. She is the recipient of the 2007 Ramesh and Vijaya Bakshi Community Change Award and the 2008 O'Hana award from Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ) for her organizing work with LGBTQ youth. She is currently conducting participatory research and interventions in middle school aimed at reducing anti-LGBTQ bullying and violence.  E-mail Dr. Singh at asingh@uga.edu.

**Maru Gonzalez**, M.Ed., is an elementary school counselor and dedicated safe schools activist.  As a school counseling intern, she organized an LGBTQQ Youth 101 training for school personnel and helped revitalize the school's Gay-Straight Alliance.  Maru has collaborated with Georgia State University's Center for School Safety to provide support and resources to other GSAs in the metro-Atlanta area. She has also conducted research on cyber-bullying as it relates to LGBTQQ youth and on the experiences of school counselors as advocates for LGBTQQ students. In addition, Maru lends her time to YouthPride as a group facilitator for the Teen Forum.  Maru's passion for safe schools has taken her from Atlanta to Capitol Hill where she lobbied members of Congress to vote on behalf of the Safe Schools Improvement Act, higher funding for education and a resolution for the National Day of Silence.  In addition to activism at a grass roots level, she delivered commentary as a Political Contributor for the CNN Newsroom with Rick Sanchez during the 2008 presidential election.  Maru looks forward to continuing her journey as an agent for social change and, at only twenty-six, she is just getting started.  Maru can be contacted at marugonzalez83@gmail.com.

**Jesse McNulty**, M.Ed., is a teacher in his 13th year of teaching at- risk youth, (6th – 12th grade). He has taught in a variety of school settings; including students placed in alternative schools, shelters, and group homes; and across diverse demographics. He has a Master's of Education in Special education - Behavioral Disorders; with add-ons in Interrelated and Gifted.  He engages in progressive community involvement in hopes of the creation of a more Beloved Community, especially for at-risk youth.  An advocate for queerly situated youth, he volunteers and affiliates with organizations that strive to meet their unique and pressing needs. He is a weekly volunteer at YouthPride, facilitating a group called TransandFriends; and is a founding member of the Feminst Outlawz, who regularly engage in street

level activism, educational workshops, and promoting feminist art~ all collaboratively.  He is a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Council for Exceptional Children, Georgia Association of Educators, and Southern Poverty Law Center. He has received public service awards from LaGender Inc., Unity Fellowship Church, and YouthPride.  He is excited to have 17 more years of teaching ahead, and is prepared to contribute time and talent to the Georgia Safe Schools Coalition for at least as long!  E-mail Mr. McNulty at PlanDestiny@gmail.com

**Dr. Corey W. Johnson** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services and is the Coordinator for Recreation and Leisure Studies Program. He is also an affiliate faculty member with the Qualitative Research Program and the Institute for Women's Studies. He teaches courses in leisure history and philosophy, research methods, event management and experiential education.  Born in Dayton, Ohio, Dr. Johnson received his Bachelors degree in Education from Bowling Green State University (1995) and worked for The American Dance Festival and Duke University as a Coordinator for Performing Arts and Facilities. His Masters of Recreation Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1998) and his Ph.D in Leisure Studies from the University of Georgia (2002). He also has graduate certificates from UGA in Qualitative Research and Women's Studies. He returned to his alma-mater in 2006 after spending three years as a faculty member at California State University, Long Beach.  Dr. Johnson's qualitative inquiry (ethnography and collective memory work) focuses attention on non-dominant populations in the cultural contexts of leisure, providing important insight into the discriminatory practices and experiences that marginalized people often encounter in mainstream leisure settings.  He sees this research as complimentary to both his classroom instruction and his professional service, and uses advocacy, activism, civic-engagement, service-learning and community partnerships to create unique learning opportunities for individuals and institutions. This synergy is particularly relevant as it increases the quality, level, and number of services offered in a given community. His scholarship has been published in journals both in and outside of Recreation and Leisure Studies and he has received grant funding to create a collaborations between faculty in Recreation and Leisure Studies, Counseling Psychology and two state agencies (Georgia State Corrections and Athens-Clarke County Schools), to assess and meet the needs of their staff in relation to creating safe environments for LGBTQ identity development for youth. Dr. Johnson is also committed to service in the profession and specifically to encouraging students to consider higher education as an avenue for their future. He currently serves as the Co-editor for *Schole: A Journal for Park and Recreation Education* and on the editorial board of *Leisure Sciences* and the *Qualitative Report*. He also served on the Board of Directors for the Society of Park and Recreation Educators (SPRE) from 2005-2008.   He has been honored with the SPRE Leadership for the Future Award, the Volunteer Educator of the Year Citation for the State of California's Recreation and Park Association, the UGA College of Education's Early Faculty Career Award, the UGA College of Education Teaching Award, and most recently in 2009 with the Innovation in Teaching Award.

**Austin Laufersweiler** is GLSEN's first-ever Student Advocate of the Year and a fierce warrior for social justice. In the face of a hostile school climate, he created Students Promoting Equality and Justice Through a Respectful and United Movement (SPECTRUM). As president, Austin has built his platform on activism and systemic change, successfully launching several campaigns including the Day of Silence, Think B4 You Speak and a modified *Safe Space* training for staff members. He has taken his message for safer schools to college classrooms, town hall meetings and academic symposiums, calling on educators to step up as advocates for LGBTQQ youth. Operating from an anti-oppression framework, Austin pushed to incorporate multicultural training in his school's Peer Helpers Club. He has also collaborated with various organizations, including Al Sharpton's National Action Network, to fight prejudice at a broader level. Austin is currently working with a local middle school to develop a mentoring program for LGBTQQ students and to replicate the *Safe Space* faculty training. He can be contacted at a.lauf@yahoo.com.

**Ken Jackson** has worked in education for 24 year as a counselor, principal, and teacher. He has led workshops and seminars for local schools and national conferences in the area of diversity, specializing in LGBTQ work. He has worked as a school consultant on diversity issues and has created and taught diversity classes in high schools. He is a member of several professional organizations including ACA, ASCA, ACES, GLSEN, CSJ, ASGW, and ALGBTIC. Contact Ken at kjackson@uga.edu or kjackson@csdecatur.org

**Jeannie Senter**, MS, PT is the current Safe Schools Coordinator for PFLAG Atlanta. She worked as a physical therapist for 38 years, witnessing bullying of all kinds during the 20 years she worked with physically disabled children (K-12) in a large county school system. Jeannie can be reached at paragonjeannie@yahoo.com.

**Holiday Simmons** is a recent transplant to Atlanta, GA from New York, NY. She has a BA from the University of Virginia where she double majored in African American Studies and Women's Studies, with a minor in Environmental Science. She also has a Masters in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis. For over a decade she has been engaged in both education and social justice work with youth of color and LGBT youth in group-home facilities, community centers, and in public schools. As the Community Initiatives Manager at the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) she became intimately involved in the safe schools movement by coordinating GLSEN's four national Days of Action, and managing the Jump Start National Youth Leadership Team. Holiday brings both breadth and depth in her knowledge and experience of training students, educators, and community members on working towards safer schools for LGBT and ally students.

**Cat Morillas** is 24 years old and in May 2010 she will have earned her degree in Masters of Education for School Counseling. Cat is interning with the City Schools of

Decatur. Currently she is working with Georgia State University's Center for School Safety on their Bullying Intervention Project for the City Schools of Decatur. Under the supervision of Drs. Joel Meyers and Kris Varjas she is working on a national GSA advisors project as well as creating a national LGBTQQ module for School Psychologists. In addition, Cat is working on an International Mental Health Project with an emphasis in Mexico and Romania. Cat is the Vice President for Youth Pride's Youth Board. Cat is a passionate advocate who loves to provide the space and comfort for all individuals to have a voice that is heard and respected. Cat can be reached at cmorillas1@student.gsu.edu.

**Jillian Ford** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Division of Educational Studies at Emory University. Her research focuses on political socialization and citizenship education for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and questioning (LGBTQIQ) youth. Jillian believes fiercely in the connection between research and activism, and is dedicated to reforming the k-12 social studies education curriculum in the United States to be more inclusive and progressive. Before returning to graduate school in 2004, Jillian taught 10th grade World History and 11th grade U.S. History at Tri-Cities High School in East Point, Georgia. There, she founded and sponsored the "Know Your History" club, which was a continued project of the "Know Your History" Saturday School she co-founded and co-directed in Charlottesville, Virginia, while a student at the University of Virginia. Both organizations were Afro-centric arenas for student growth.

**Hollande Levinson** is the Education Director for the Anti-Defamation League Southeast Region, where she runs anti-bias, diversity education programs in schools and the community. Hollande has over 15 years of experience working in community organizing and community service organizations in Atlanta. After graduating from Emory University, she founded and directed an organization to involve college students and young people in community activism to address issues of poverty in Atlanta. She created a group to monitor police harassment of homeless people and organized an association to improve working conditions for day laborers. Hollande worked as an organizer with Atlantans Building Leadership for Empowerment (ABLE), an organization made up of people from all races and all classes, focused on productive improvements in the public arena. She came to ADL after spending six years at the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta as Program Director for adult Jewish education.

**All My Children** promotes the health and well-being of African American lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer persons, their families and communities through social justice research and interactive intervention programs. For specific questions and/or requests, e-mail info@amcproject.org.

**The American School Counselor Association (ASCA)** supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society. ASCA provides professional development,

publications and other resources, research and advocacy to more than 25,000 professional school counselors around the globe.

**The Anti-Defamation League (ADL)**- Founded in 1913, the ADL is the nation's premier human relations and civil rights agency and is dedicated in purpose and program to combating anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry, defending democratic ideals and protecting civil rights for all.  The ADL has a network of 30 Regional and Satellite Offices in the United States and abroad.  ADL's A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute is recognized world-wide as one of the most effective programs to teach people to recognize bias and the harm it inflicts on individuals and society, and to explore the value of diversity and improve intergroup relations. The Institute offers a range of programs to address bias and bullying for educators and students, pre-K through college.

**The Ben Marion Institute For Social Justice** is an educational 501c3 tax exempt non-profit working with schools and institutions to create systemic cultural change in the classroom and school environment, thus ensuring that all individuals are treated with kindness, empathy and fairness. The Institute creates and implements custom focused hands-on learning modules that address each school's individual needs in creating a peaceful classroom and school.  www.benmarioninstitute.org  For specific questions or requests, contact Abby Drue at abby@benmarioninstitute.org or Dr. Irma Starr at docstarr@benmarioninstitute.org.

**The Feminist Outlawz [FOz]** are a collective of artful activists who seek to build Beloved Community in a transient world!  We engage in advocacy through education, lobbying, protest/counter protesting, and socially conscious art/music projects. We are present at conferences, schools, and community events, encouraging Beloved Community. We present workshops on transgender folk, QQA youth [Queer Questioning Allied], intersecting oppressions and resilience, among other topics.

**GLSEN**, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established nationally in 1995, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community.

**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.

**PFLAG – Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays** – began in 1972 by Jeanne Manford at New York's Gay Pride Parade – is a national and international organization.  As one of over 500 chapters nationwide, PFLAG Atlanta's mission is

to: "support families…, educate the public…, and advocate for equality….The manual contains publications and information provided by both the Atlanta chapter and PFLAG National.

**Soulforce** strives for the freedom of all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from religious and political oppression through the practice of relentless nonviolent resistance.

**Trans Youth Family Allies (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. We envision a society free of suicide and violence in which ALL children are respected and celebrated.

**YouthPride** is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, protects, unites, and dignifies the lives of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth and young adults (ages 13 - 24).

SAFE ZONE
GA Safe Schools Coalition
georgiasafeschoolscoalition.org
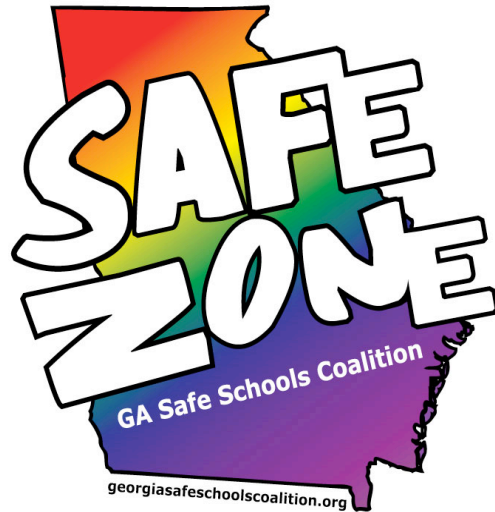
GSSC would like to thank Lady Jane of Silk Screenin' Revolutionz for creating our "safe zone" logo. For more information on Lady Jane's fabulous designs, visit www.silkscreeninrevolutionz.com or contact Lady Jane directly at ladyjaneattack@gmail.com.