

SHARING OUR STORIES:

FIGHTING FOR LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM IN YOUR SCHOOL

gsanetwork
CAMPAIGN
GUIDE

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Inspired by:

Jane Addams
social worker •
Alexander the
Great ruler, military
commander • Alvin
Ailey dancer,
choreographer •
Gloria Anzaldúa
writer, activist •

Let's Set the Record Straight: History Isn't.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF LGBTQ INDIVIDUALS TO THE UNITED STATES AND OUR HISTORY ARE DIVERSE, NUMEROUS, AND, UNFORTUNATELY, MOSTLY LEFT UNEXPLORED BY HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AND CLASSROOM LESSONS. How many of have been taught, for example, that James Baldwin, one of the prominent American writers of the 20th century, was an African-American, gay author who wrote about gay and bisexual characters in his novels? Or have we all learned that the main organizer of the 1963 March on Washington (where Martin Luther King, Jr. made his famous "I Have A Dream" speech) was Bayard Rustin, a long-time activist who was later denied credit for his work because of his homosexuality? When we learn about the civil rights movements of the 20th century, do we also hear about Stonewall and that it was started by people like Sylvia Rivera, a Latina transwoman who went on to devote much of her life fighting for the rights of transgender, queer, and homeless people?

Why is LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum important & necessary?

In many schools, learning about LGBTQ issues takes the form of very necessary **tolerance education** where students are educated about the importance of not discriminating against each other. Tolerance education is an **important first step**, but we need to **push further**. Take the step of infusing LGBTQ curriculum into history and social science classes, and students can start learning not only why we should treat each other fairly, but also that LGBTQ individuals have made valuable contributions to our history. We can **break down ignorance** even more and **create respect for everyone**.

Sir Francis Bacon *philosopher*
• James Baldwin *novelist, essayist* • Chrystos *poet* • Jean Cocteau *filmmaker* • Edward II *English king* • Federico García Lorca *poet* • Radclyffe Hall *poet, novelist* • Langston Hughes *poet* • Christine Jorgenson *photographer* • Frida Kahlo *painter* • Audre Lorde *poet, essayist* • Thomas Mann *novelist* • Margaret Mead *anthropologist* • Michelangelo *painter, sculptor* • Harvey Milk *politician* • Adrienne Rich *poet, essayist* • Renée Richards *tennis player* • Sylvia Rivera *activist*
• Eleanor Roosevelt *social reformer, diplomat* • Bayard Rustin *civil rights & peace activist*
• Bessie Smith *jazz & blues singer*
• Gertrude Stein *writer* • Billy Strayhorn *jazz musician, composer*
• Billy Tipton *jazz musician* • Alan Turing *mathematician* • Walt Whitman *poet* • Tennessee Williams *playwright*

This list represents just a few folks from history, some who identified as LGBTQ during their lifetimes, and some who were identified later by historians — often because the identity labels we know today, and/or the ability to come out, did not exist in their lifetimes. There's simply no way to list everyone in just one place, so we hope you'll be inspired by some of the names you see to do your own further research and reading!



TAKE ACTION!

Organize a campaign to get LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in your school.

When you work with a group to change your school in a specific way, you are working on a campaign. Before you start a campaign to change your school, you need a plan. When taking on any campaign, it helps to be organized and strategic.

What is your overall goal? Think Big! What would your school look like if all students were safe and free from harassment and discrimination? Your goal is what you are fighting to accomplish. Everything you do in your campaign should work toward your goal. Then, when you begin considering specific tactics and actions, you can ask yourselves this question: *“If we take this action, will it get us closer to our goal?”*

What is your campaign? A plan that focuses on one or two winnable gains toward your overall goal. A typical school-based campaign will take between six and nine months to complete.

What do you know about your problem? Research, research, research! What do you need to know about your issue? Think about student surveys or collecting student stories, getting statistics, etc. The more you know about your issue, the better chance you have of choosing the best strategy.

What are your strengths and weaknesses? Honesty is key in this section of your planning. Think about the number of people working on your campaign, access to transportation, money, and also your group's morale. The more honest and thorough you are, the easier it will be for you to get organized.

Who are your supporters? Who are your opponents? Consider who will help you achieve your goal—who else wants to stop discrimination and harassment? Teachers? Student groups? Community members? Remember that people may organize against you; figure out who they are and create a list. Your opponents can never be your targets.

Targets? Your target is who has the power to give you what you want. If your target appears to be a group of people (example: School Board / Student Governing Body), concentrate your efforts on a particular person or two people rather than the whole group. Determine who in the group is undecided about letting you carry out your campaign and focus your efforts on them. Their votes of approval will make the difference.

Tactics: What actions will help you reach your goal? While brainstorming tactics, ask yourselves how each tactic will help you meet your campaign goal. Examples of tactics may include: getting students to sign a petition supporting what you are trying to do, asking parents to write supportive letters to the school board, or having students wear buttons or ribbons in support of your campaign.

Develop a timeline. A timeline will help you keep track of what needs to be done, who needs to do it, and when it will be done. It's also a great way to keep track of your progress and to make sure that no details get lost along the way.

What do you do after the campaign is over? Once your campaign is over, it is important to spend some time evaluating what happened and what impact your group had on your community. If you won a victory such as changing school policy or getting teachers trained on campus, be sure to celebrate your success. If you weren't successful, think about what prevented you from succeeding.

Finally, ASK FOR HELP! Reach out to a supportive teacher, parent/guardian, and especially us here at GSA Network for help at any stage in your campaign. We're here to help and will do anything we can to make sure your campaign is successful!

TACTICS & EVENTS

Suggestions for your curriculum campaign

Below are some tactics that other GSAs have used successfully to campaign for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in their schools.

1. Evaluate your education! Be vocal about what you find out. Pay attention in your classes. Are your teachers teaching about the historical achievements of LGBTQ individuals, and are these issues included in your textbooks? Are things being left unspoken or made invisible? It's tricky, sometimes, to look for things that might or might not be apparent. Ask questions and speak up if you think omissions are being made. Write a paper or design a project about LGBTQ history for an assignment or suggest topics for classroom discussions.

2. Educate yourself! Sit down with your GSA members and start teaching yourselves about what LGBTQ historical figures have accomplished. There are several books and online resources that will provide you with plenty of information on how to begin. Contact GSA Network for useful resources, like our Queer People of Color History 101 workshop, which you can use for free.

3. Take over class! Get your teacher's permission to take over class and lead a discussion about LGBTQ history or present a lesson of your own.

4. Celebrate LGBTQ history month! October is LGBTQ history month, and this is a great opportunity for your GSA to educate your entire school. Put up posters about key LGBTQ historical figures all around your school. Collect short pieces about LGBTQ history and poems from queer poets like Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich or Walt Whitman and read them over the intercom during homeroom and during lunch. Screen historical documentary films during your GSA meetings and invite all students to attend. Plan a school-wide assembly and invite a speaker to come in and talk about LGBTQ history. See www.GLBTHistoryMonth.org for a new list of icons each year.

5. Support your teachers & administrators! Encourage and thank teachers who are already teaching the history you need to learn. Advocate for staff training on implementing age- and subject-specific LGBTQ-inclusive curricula. Arm yourself with information from the California Safe Schools Coalition about existing LGBTQ-inclusive curricula that already fits existing state curriculum standards and frameworks: www.casafeschools.org.

6. Change the rules! Find out who makes decisions in your school district about curriculum. Advocate for the adoption of curricula that is inclusive of LGBTQ people; encourage your schools or district curriculum council to adopt inclusive curriculum for all core 10th grade classes like history and social sciences.

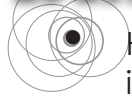
In order to advocate for a policy change on the school or district-wide level, you might have to launch a full-on campaign for change. A good place to start is a strategy chart. You can find out how to use one by going to www.gsanetwork.org/developingstrategy.

7. Change the rules for everyone! Advocate for the inclusion of LGBTQ history in statewide social science curriculum standards. Your targets here include the CA State Board of Education. Write letters, make phone calls, and testify during their scheduled public hearings to make sure they hear that you and other students need to learn about LGBTQ history. You can also contact your legislators about writing and supporting laws that support your cause. Contact GSA Network at advocacy@gsanetwork.org or 415-552-4229 for more information on how to do this.

8. Improve textbooks! Talk to textbook companies about the need for inclusive curriculum. Be clear that it makes sense for them to start printing textbooks that include everyone's history.

Learn more about LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum Campaigns at www.gsanetwork.org/inclusivecurriculum

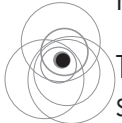
LGBT-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM BENEFITS EVERY STUDENT:



History educates us about what came before us and helps us understand what is happening now in our world. LGBTQ-inclusive history is **more complete and accurate**, giving us a better **understanding of our past and present**.



We **recognize ourselves** when we read about what the revolutionaries, the poets, the inventors, and the leaders of the past fought for, won, lost, and accomplished. Knowing and understanding their struggles helps us comprehend our own, and helps us feel a little less invisible, no matter where we live.



Teaching LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum helps to create safer, more supportive schools. The **California Safe Schools Coalition's** analysis of results from the **Preventing School Harassment Survey** revealed that in schools where the majority of reporting students learned about LGBTQ issues in the curriculum, "Students reported fewer mean rumors or lies spread about them, fewer reports of being made fun of because of their looks or the way they talk, and less LGBT bullying."

LGBTQ HISTORY RESOURCES:



LGBT Issues in the Curriculum Promotes School Safety, California Safe Schools Coalition Research Brief No. 4. Written by Russell, S.T., Kostroski, O., McGuire, J.K., Laub, C., & Manke, E. (2006). San Francisco, CA: California Safe Schools Coalition. www.casafeschools.org



GLBTQ: An online GLBTQ encyclopedia. www.glbtq.com



GLBT Historical Society: A historical society, archival collection, and museum devoted to LGBTQ American history and located in San Francisco, CA. www.glbthistory.org



Recommended Books & Movies for LGBTQ Youth: A short list of suggested titles for LGBTQ youth and their allies, teachers, and parents. www.gsanetwork.org/booksandmovies

THIS CAMPAIGN GUIDE BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

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For more ideas on how to fight
homophobia & transphobia in your school,
visit www.gsanetwork.org.

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