Published on *Gay-Straight Alliance Network* (http://www.gsanetwork.org)

FAIR: Get the Facts!

What is the FAIR Education Act? What does it mean for my school? Why is it important for GSAs? Find out here!

What is the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act?

The FAIR Education Act updates California's education guidelines to integrate age-appropriate, factual information about the role and contributions of people with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people into social studies and history lessons. These education guidelines already include the contributions of both men and women, people of color, diverse ethnic communities and other historically underrepresented groups. Signed into law on July 14, 2011, these updated guidelines went into effect on January 1, 2012.

[1]

For more information, also check out:
California Department of Education fact sheet [1] on the FAIR Education Act.

Who decides what students will learn?

Lessons required under the FAIR Education Act must be age-appropriate and will be developed at the local level, where school districts will decide what?s appropriate for each classroom based on parent and teacher input.

What kinds of things might students learn about under the FAIR Education Act?

Coursework may vary, but local school districts, parents and teachers might consider including in high school history courses lessons such as:

1. In the course of learning a bout other civil rights movements of the 50s and 60s, a discussion of the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969 that helped spark the modern-day lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights movement for equality. Or students might learn about the recent repeal of the ?Don?t Ask, Don?t Tell? policy, which banned openly gay people from serving in the military, just as they learn about the racial integration of the military or the fight for women to be able to serve.

2. The relationship between the women's movement and civil rights movement of the 60s to the birth of the movement to secure equal opportunities and equal rights for people with disabilities, including the landmark American Rehabilitation Act in the 70s and the Americans With Disabilities Act in the 1990s.

What should parents know about the FAIR Education Act?

These updated education guidelines require a factual, inclusive, age-appropriate teaching of history. They empower parents to provide input about social studies lessons at the local level and gives clarity about what students will or will not learn in the classroom. Lessons about morality or the intimate details of historical figures? lives are not part of the law and are left entirely for parents to discuss at home.

Does the FAIR Education Act require teachers to use specific language about sexual orientation or gender identity?

The FAIR Education Act does not require teachers to say any specific words related to sexual orientation or gender identity in the classroom. The FAIR Education Act requires a factual, inclusive, age-appropriate teaching of history and social studies. Nothing more.

But I haven't learned about LGBT or disability history yet! What should I do?

Talk to your teachers! Check out our campaign guide to launch a FAIR campaign in your school, and direct your teachers to our LGBTQ-inclusive lesson resource [2] and YO! Disabled and Proud's Disability History resources [3].

Here is an example discussion YOU can have with your History teacher:

You: Hi History Teacher! Did you know California recently updated its education guidelines to require social studies lessons to include the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and people with disabilities? Have you thought about what lesson plans or activities you will include to make sure you are following the California Department of Education?s requirements?

History Teacher: No I haven?t, these updates are so new that I have barely had time to think about how to update my lesson plans!

You: Luckily, I have this fabulous Resource List [2] that I would like to share with you. Please share this resource list with the rest of the history department and social studies department at your next staff meeting!

History Teacher: Thank you! This is so helpful, and I?m excited to do my part to make sure that history lessons don't exclude anyone just because of who they are!

.

Source URL: http://www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/facts

Links:
[1] http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/senatebill48faq.asp
[2] http://www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons
[3] http://yodisabledproud.org/organize/disability-history.php