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Peer Education Workshops

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Peer Education Workshops

Educating your peers about issues of sexual orientation and homophobia can be one of the most effective ways to make your school safer for LGBTQ students, and GSAs are a great framework for implementing an anti-homophobia peer education program. If your GSA is planning to organize and lead classroom anti-homophobia workshops, keep these things in mind as you go along:

Ahead of Time

Consider attending a formal training.

The GSA Network offers trainings for potential anti-homophobia peer educators - we'll tell you everything you need to know about developing and leading classroom workshops. Call our office

to set up a training at your school or in your area.

Figure out what you need to do to get the workshop(s) approved by the school.

Talk to your advisor and meet with administrators and/or other faculty members. Present them with a potential workshop agenda and be able to tell them why you think this is an important thing to do.

Find a teacher.

Find a teacher that is supportive and who thinks their class would be receptive to your presentation. This may be a teacher who attends GSA meetings or one you know is supportive in other ways. Often, health teachers and social studies teachers are interested in having this topic discussed in their class. Talk with them about how they can support you and discuss how they will handle any disruptions that might occur.

Guage the climate of the classroom.

Talk with the teacher or give a pre-workshop survey to find out what folks already know, what they have misconceptions about, and what they want to learn.

Practice!

In the Classroom:

Draw connections.

Try to draw connections between your workshop and what the teacher is teaching. (Psychology is obvious, as it Health/Family life. Some less obvious ones would be History, tying it into the civil rights studies... etc.)

Invite an administrator or another teacher.

Invite a supportive Administrator to see your workshop if you'd like to do it in other classes. Also other teachers might like to see what you propose doing in their classes, so feel free to invite

them.

Make it clear that you do not speak for the entire LGBTQ community.

Make this disclaimer known at the beginning of the workshop. You do not speak for every LGBTQ individual in the world, and you shouldn't be expected to represent your entire community. You can only speak from your personal experience. (Use "I" statements.)

Define and clarify the terms you use.

Not everyone will be as versed as you in LGBTQ issues and language. You should define the terms you use, such as "sexual orientation" or "gender identity," to make sure that everyone understands what you mean. If you decide to use words such as "queer" or "dyke," you should also discuss what they mean to you and why you are choosing to use them when others may not.

Not everyone will agree with you.

The entire reason you are doing the Anti-Homophobia workshop is to increase awareness. People will disagree with you, and that's okay as long as they are not disruptive to the workshop. Be accepting of others' beliefs.

Stick to your purpose.

You are there to do an anti-homophobia workshop, not a sex education workshop. unfortunatelyt, for many people the instant you mention "gay," they think sex. An anti-homophobia workshop is about making schools safer - free from harassment and violence.

Be Honest.

Above all else be honest about what you know. If you don't know an answer, that is okay, tell them that you don't know.

Afterward

Learn from your evaluations.

Make sure you give folks enough time to fill them out, and be open to constructive criticism. Don't let the overly negative ones get you down, though.

Sample Classroom Anti-Homophobia Workshop Agenda

INTRODUCTION (10 min)

1. Personal introduction (name, age, what, why you're doing this workshop, etc)
2. Purpose of Workshop
    1. Increase awareness of the impact that anti-gay harassment and homophobia have on students at the school
    2. Increase awareness of what homophobia is.
    3. Create a safe space for people to ask questions about LGBTQ issues
    4. Discuss how students can be better allies for LGBTQ people in schools.
3. Ground Rules/Agreements/Norms
    1. Why is it important to have agreements? (So that people feel safe, comfortable and respected to say what's on their minds, everyone gets heard...)
    2. Put up Ground Rules: (let the class help generate these if you have time)
    3. Read off each agreement and ask participants if there are any to add (if you already generated the list)
    4. Ask everyone to agree to the Agreements/Norms/Ground Rules

TERMS & DEFINITIONS (5 min)

1. Go over basic terms of LGBT (Remember not everyone will be comfortable with these and many won't be familiar with Transgender)
2. Ask for slang terms (you can discuss origins of the slang terms if you know them and have time)
3. Ask for stereo types (if you have time)

ACTIVITY* (Do an activity, such as LGBTQ Bingo, that covers basic concepts and gets into the issues.) (10 min)

1. Say the name and purpose of the activity in your own words.
2. Explain instructions
3. At the end of the exercise, ask for reflection from students on how it felt to participate in the activity.

PERSONAL SHARING (2 speakers) (20 min)

1. Explain that the presenters are going to share personal stories.
2. Mention that these personal stories are not necessarily representative of every LGBTQ person's experience.
3. At least one of the speakers should identify as LGBTQ, but straight allies with friends or family members can also share personal stories.
4. Each speaker gives a 5 minute highlight of their story, then allow 10 minutes to answer

questions. Highlights:

- When did you know you were gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?
- What is it like to be a bisexual, lesbian, gay or transgender youth in high school?
- When you came out, were you supported by your friends? Family? Others?
- What made it easier for you to come out?
- If you are a straight ally, talk about your experience in relation to homophobia. How have you experienced homophobia because you have friends or family members who are LGBTQ? How does homophobia affect your friends and family members?

5. Ask for questions from the group.

RESOURCES AND EVALUATIONS (5 min)

1. 1. Resource materials to hand out:
    1. Resource sheet such as What Every Super-Rad Straight Ally Should Know, or make one of your own. Say something like: "We hope that at the end of this workshop you will be more interested in becoming an Ally for LGBTQ people at our school."
    2. Information on community resources, such as LGBTQ youth centers, hotlines, groups, etc.
    3. Information about your GSA.
2. Ask the students to complete the evaluation.

If you have more then 50 minutes...

1. Consider making the panel discussion longer For many students this may be their first chance to hear LGBTQ people speak about their experiences. Give more time for questions. Or have another panelist. It is always nice to have a Straight Ally talk about why they find it important to be an Ally.
2. Do an agree/disagree activity* To get the most out of Agree/Disagree you need at least 20 minutes or longer. Also please tailor your questions to your community, in addition to the ones that are included with the instructions. This is an excellent activity to get the class thinking.

* Contact the GSA Network for activity descriptions and curricula, or download a copy of the What Every Super-Rad Straight Ally Should Know [2] resource sheet.

(Thanks to Catholic Charities of the East Bay for their work designing this workshop.)

Source URL: http://www.gsanetwork.org/resources/gsa-actions-events/peer-education-workshops

Links:
[1] http://www.gsanetwork.org/files/resources/PeerEdWksps.pdf
[2] http://www.gsanetwork.org/resources/creating-inclusive-gsas/straight-allies