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GSA Network Statement in Support of Restorative Approaches to School Discipline

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Today, Gay-Straight Alliance Network and members of its National Association, as listed below, issued this statement in support of restorative approaches to school discipline for the Dignity In Schools Campaign [1]'s National Week of Action on School Pushout.

Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of GSA Network, said of the organization's participation in the National Week of Action on School Pushout: ?Gay-Straight Alliance youth leaders are rallying schools to address discipline issues like bullying through restorative approaches, which offer LGBT youth and all students the best chance to stay in school and ultimately thrive and succeed.? For more about GSA Network's participation in the Dignity in Schools Campaign Week of Action, visit: gsanetwork.org/weekofaction [2].

Restorative justice offers best solutions for LGBTQ youth

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Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students report experiencing ongoing bullying, harassment, and discrimination from other youth, teachers, and school administrators. LGBTQ students additionally face the impacts of discriminatory policies and explicit and implicit bias in exclusionary school discipline practices, such as suspensions and expulsions. Studies show they are up to three times more likely to experience harsh disciplinary treatment by school administrators than their heterosexual counterparts. As a result, we see LGBTQ and gender nonconforming youth overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. The practice of zero tolerance and punitive school discipline harms school climate, further excludes students, hurts academic performance and contributes to the pushout of LGBTQ students from schools, increasing their likelihood of entering the juvenile justice system.

Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network) believes that the GSA movement and LGBTQ students across the country would benefit significantly from shifting school climates away from a culture of punitive school discipline, including when responding to incidents of anti-LGBTQ bias, harassment, and bullying [4]. Effectively meeting the needs of LGBTQ youth requires creating supportive learning environments for all students, which can be achieved through various models, such as restorative justice, peer counseling, and mediation. These solutions bring students and educators together to collaboratively and proactively address the root cause of conflict, thereby allowing schools to address and correct student behavior without denying students valuable instructional time. Numerous studies show the potential for restorative practices to prevent and significantly reduce suspensions, expulsions, and alternative school placements. Restorative justice approaches to school discipline offer the best solutions for LGBTQ youth in schools.

GSA Network and the following members of its National Association encourage administrators and policymakers to inform themselves of these practices and utilize these models in policymaking and implementation.

National Association members in support:

Ally Safe Schools Program Mazzoni Center (Pennsylvania)
Arizona GSA Network
Center for Artistic Revolution (Arkansas)
Colorado GSA Network
Equality Florida
Gay-Straight Alliance Network
Gay-Straight Alliance Network of California
Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE-Wisconsin)
GSA Connect-Georgia Equality
GSA Network of East TN
Illinois Safe Schools Alliance
Indiana Youth Group-Indiana Gay Straight Alliance Network
Iowa Pride Network
KYC Connect (Ohio)
Massachusetts GSA Network

Mississippi Safe Schools Coalition
Missouri GSA Network
Montana GSA Network
New Mexico GSA Network of the Santa Fe Mountain Center
Oregon GSA Network
Out4Good and the GSA Network of Minnesota
Outright Vermont
SMYAL / DC Regional GSA Network
Texas GSA Network
True Colors (Connecticut)
Utah Pride Center and the Utah QSA Network
Youth Pride Inc. (Rhode Island)
Youth Services of Tulsa

Press Release
http://gsanetwork.org [5]

Source URL: http://www.gsanetwork.org/news/gsa-network-statement-support-restorative-approaches-school-discipline/100213

Links:
[1] http://dignityinschools.org/
[2] http://gsanetwork.org/weekofaction
[3] mailto:jill@gsanetwork.org
[4] http://gsanetwork.org/news/blog/two-wrongs-dont-make-right/06/26/12
[5] http://gsanetwork.org