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Groundbreaking work in Minnesota

Mar. 12, 2014 ? Fran Hutchins -...

This iscross-posted from Equality Federation[1], and written by Fran Hutchins, Equality Federation's Director of Member and State Services.

All young people deserve the opportunity to feel safe and protected at school in order to learn. That's why the Equality Federation and our members are committed to building welcoming and just schools where students are free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and harsh discipline policies that push our young people out of school.

In partnership with the GSA Network, the Federation is working in four states -- Colorado, Georgia, Minnesota, and Wisconsin -- to develop strategies for securing strong, effective safe and just schools policies at the local and state level. In these states, we're exploring intergenerational collaborations and partnering with education justice organizations to address all the ways that our young people are pushed out of schools and into poverty or the criminal justice system.

Just this past week, as a part of this work, OutFront Minnesota and Out 4 Good, in partnership with the Minnesota Safe Schools for All Coalition, held their 2014 Youth Summit on Safe Schools.

The two organizations worked collaboratively with GSAs, educational justice partners and youth in their state to create this successful event.

The Equality Federation and GSA Network were able to play a small part, giving planning assistance and providing a mini-grant from the Just and Fair Schools Fund. The grant helped provide transportation to the 450 high school students from across Minnesota who attended the Youth Summit.

Students met in St. Paul for a day filled with workshops on everything from racial justice in education to advocacy to ending the school to prison pipeline -- all led and organized by students. Participants then took a trip to the Capitol for a youth-led Safe Schools Rally and visits with legislators to talk about the Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act. Click here to see media coverage of this successful event.

The Minnesota bill is model legislation. It not only addresses the pervasive bullying that LGBT students face but also emphasizes restorative justice, a best practice in fair and just education policy. Restorative justice encourages accountability, works to repair harm, and discourages expelling and/or arresting students.

At the Federation, we are proud to work with these groups in Minnesota who, through the Youth Summit and their legislative push for the Safe and Supportive Schools Act, are bringing the worlds of youth engagement, education justice, and equality advocacy together.

The work in Minnesota is a great example of the Federation's goal to build bridges between state equality groups, youth advocacy groups such as GSAs, and education justice partners to create a safe and just climate for all students to learn and succeed.

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Source URL: http://www.gsanetwork.org/news/blog/groundbreaking-work-minnesota

Links:
[1] http://equalityfederation.org/blog/201403/federation%E2%80%99s-safe-and-just-schools-program-empowers-groundbreaking-work-minnesota