

# As If It Matters

.. six stories beneath the surface ..

.. a video created by youth for youth ..



labels

reflection



homophobia



connection

self-image



acceptance

# Curriculum Guide

.. with discussion questions, activities, and resources ..



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# introduction

Nine youth wrote, directed, produced, and edited *As If It Matters*, a video that voices the actual stories we see in our everyday lives. The video deals with issues of homophobia, cultural acceptance, body image, relationships, and labels through the stories of six students who struggle to discover themselves and build connections with their peers.

We came together to create this video through Free Zone, an arts for social change program of Gay-Straight Alliance Network and LYRIC (Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center). We collaborated with TILT (Teaching Intermedia Learning Tools) for media literacy and video education. The Free Zone class was made up of 9 youth and 4 facilitators that met throughout the summer of 2001 to discuss oppression and power and encompass our learning into our script writing and other forms of pre-production. We then shot, directed, and edited those thoughts into something that we feel honestly represents us and the stories we have to tell.

Together with this discussion and curriculum guide, *As If It Matters* is intended to spark dialogue, increase the visibility of LGBT youth experiences, and inspire people to take action against discrimination and harassment in their communities and schools. Creating awareness, showing truth, and offering advice-- we hope this video will create positive change in how LGBT youth and their peers are treated in high schools across the U.S.

We hope these materials will be useful for you in using the video as a spark for discussion.

## what's in this guide?

### 1 Introduction

- Information About LGBT Youth
- What the Law Says...
- What Students Are Doing About It...
- Facilitation Tips
- Definitions

### 2 Discussion Questions

- General Discussion Questions
- Discussion Questions about Specific Themes  
(Homophobia, Body Image, Heterosexism, Being an Ally, Coming Out)

### 3 Suggested Activities

- Activity 1: Watching TV as an Alien
- Activity 2: Examining Language at School
- Activity 3: Vision of an Accepting School
- Activity 4: What's "Normal"

### 4 Handouts

- Examining Language at School Survey Form
- Definitions Matching Activity
- AB 537: School Safety and Violence Prevention Act
- How to be a Super Rad Straight Ally
- Recommended Books For and About LGBT Youth
- Recommended Videos For and About LGBT Youth
- Transgender Resources

### 5 Evaluation Form

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## here's the situation . . . . .

**53% of students report hearing homophobic comments daily at schools.** (GSA Network Survey 1999-00)

**84% of students report rarely or never hearing staff members intervene when anti-gay comments are made.** (GSA Network Survey 1999-00)

**22% of LGBT youth skip school once a month because they fear for their safety on school grounds.**  
(Youth Risk behavior Survey MA, 1997)

**Lesbian and gay youth are twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to report having attempted suicide in the past year.** (National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 2001)

## what the law says . . . . .

**The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000** (originally known as Assembly Bill 537 or AB537), protects students, faculty, and staff at public schools and non-religious schools receiving public funding from harassment and discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. The state defines gender as "a person's actual sex or perceived sex and includes a person's perceived identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance, or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with a person's sex at birth." This means that transgender and gender nonconforming people are protected under AB 537. "Actual or perceived" sexual orientation and gender identity means that a person does not need to identify as LGBT in order to file a complaint about harassment or discrimination, allowing many more people to come forward and be protected under the law.

**As a teacher, you can use AB 537 to improve your school climate and make your campus a safe place for all students. You can educate yourself and other faculty members about the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of teachers under AB 537:**

- Teachers are protected from harassment and discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Schools are now legally responsible for protecting students and employees who identify as LGBT or are perceived to be LGBT. This means that when teachers witness verbal or physical harassment, hear slurs, or learn about incidents of discrimination or harassment, they must respond with seriousness and speed. Teachers can report students or other faculty members who have harassed or discriminated against students or other staff to the principal or dean, can assist students in preparing complaints, and can file their own complaints if they feel they are being harassed or discriminated against.
- Every time teachers overhear an anti-LGBT slur, they should intervene and educate the person who is making the slur. Even if the slur is not directed at an individual, it still creates a hostile environment for LGBT and questioning students and faculty, students and faculty who have loved ones that are LGBT, and students and faculty that believe in a vision of social justice and appreciate diversity. When you overhear a slur, turn it into an opportunity to educate. Inform the person making it of the non-discrimination policy, and remind them that slurs are hurtful and offensive. You can open up a discussion about LGBT issues, so that people can examine where their prejudices come from and understand why it is important to be sensitive to and supportive of those who are LGBT.

*continued on next page...*

- Some teachers want to work to protect LGBT students, but fear a potentially hostile response from parents and other faculty members. AB 537 allows these teachers to come forward as allies to LGBT youth without fearing a negative response because now they have the support of the law.
- In addition to responding to harassment and discrimination, it is important to take steps to prevent harassment and discrimination before it happens. Teachers can incorporate LGBT issues into their curricula, for example in history, literature, or social studies classes.
- Teachers can create a safe space in their classroom by posting a sign declaring that they will not tolerate harassment, slurs, or discrimination.
- Faculty allies can go to their school's Gay-Straight Alliance, diversity club, or Project 10 group to offer their support. Teachers can be strong and powerful allies to LGBT student groups, and building constructive relationships between teachers and students can be an important step in fighting intolerance in school communities.

**Complaints about harassment or discrimination** should first be taken to the principal or assistant principal at your school whenever possible. Complaints can also be made against your school for not adequately addressing such incidents. For information about how to file a complaint, contact your district superintendent's office and ask for the designated complaint officer. To learn more about your rights contact GSA Network at 415.552.4229.

**Here is a checklist to assess your school's compliance with the letter and the spirit of the law:**

**At a minimum, schools must comply with the law.**

Under AB 537, public schools and non-religious schools in California receiving public funding must comply with the following:

- Schools are not allowed to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Schools cannot exclude students from interscholastic, intramural, or other school activities on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Schools may not discriminate against a Gay-Straight Alliance or other similar club.
- Schools cannot allow a hostile climate of pervasive harassment to persist.
- Schools must ensure that people who harass others on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender are effectively disciplined.
- Schools must have someone designated to handle complaints of discrimination.
- Schools must keep complaints confidential and must not retaliate against or penalize the student or employee who complained.
- Schools must respond to incidents of anti-LGBT violence or threats swiftly and effectively.

**Schools should do more than merely comply with the letter of the law**

The text of AB 537 states that "all students of public schools have the inalienable right to attend classes that are safe, secure, and peaceful." Under the spirit of the law, there is much more that schools can do to support and ensure this right beyond following the actions specifically required by the law.

- Schools should have a written harassment policy that clearly includes sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Schools should have a standard complaint form that includes sexual orientation and gender.
- Schools should train teachers about sensitivity to LGBT issues, diversity, harassment, and discrimination.
- Schools should take active steps to educate students about LGBT issues, diversity, harassment, and discrimination.
- Schools should train counselors on LGBT issues, so that they are sensitive to the needs of LGBT students.
- Schools should provide counseling and support to LGBT students.
- Schools should encourage and support Gay-Straight Alliances or other similar groups that deal with

## . what students are doing about it . . . . .

As of December 2001, there are over 225 Gay-Straight Alliance clubs in California schools. This represents a growing youth movement fighting homophobia and discrimination of all kinds. A Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is a student-run club which provides a safe place for students to meet, support each other, talk about issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, and work together to end homophobia and other forms of oppression. Many GSAs function as a support group and provide safety and confidentiality to students who are struggling with their identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning.

In addition to support, some GSAs work on educating themselves and the broader school community about sexual orientation and gender identity issues. They may bring in outside speakers to cover a particular topic such as LGBT history. They may organize a "Pride Week" or "LGBT Awareness Events" and offer a series of educational workshops, panels, and pride celebrations. Many participate in the Day of Silence, a day when participants remain silent all day as a way of acknowledging the silence induced by homophobia in our society. Some GSAs organize a "Teach the Teachers" staff development day which focuses on teaching school staff how to be better allies for LGBTQ students. For example, GSA members would present scenarios about discrimination or harassment and get teachers to brainstorm how to respond to those situations.

Other GSAs are activist clubs and have worked to get LGBTQ issues represented in the curriculum, LGBTQ related books in the library, and progressive non-discrimination policies implemented at a district level. For example, many GSAs in California are working to insure that their school district implements AB 537, California's School Safety and Violence Prevention Act that prohibits discrimination in schools on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Additionally, many GSAs have participated in activism outside of their school on a city or state level.

All of these different types of GSAs also provide a social outlet for LGBTQ students and straight allies. Lots of GSAs organize barbeques or movie nights, go to a local LGBT Prom or a local LGBT Pride Parade, and attend conferences together. GSAs are a great way to build community at schools and lessen the isolation that LGBTQ students might otherwise experience.

## . . . . . make it real . . . . .

Make It Real, a project of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, works to empower youth to ensure implementation of AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act, which protects students from harassment and discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Unfortunately, most students and schools don't even know about the law. Make It Real brings youth-facilitated workshops about AB 537 and student activism to Gay-Straight Alliance clubs in California to help them envision change at their school and then make that vision a reality. These workshops, along with *Make It Real: A Student Organizing Manual For Implementing California's School Nondiscrimination Law (AB 537)* are geared toward student activists. This is intended to place tools for change in the hands of those most affected by homophobia in schools.

For more information, visit our website at [www.ab537.org](http://www.ab537.org).

# . CA media literacy education standards .

## English Language Arts • Grades 11/12 • Listening and Speaking Strategies, Comprehension

**Standard 1.1** Recognize strategies used by the media to inform, persuade, entertain, and transmit culture (e.g., advertisements; perpetuation of stereotypes; use of visual representations, special effects, language).

**Standard 1.2** Analyze the impact of the media on the democratic process (e.g., exerting influence on elections, creating images of leaders, shaping attitudes) at the local, state, and national levels.

**Standard 1.3** Interpret and evaluate the various ways in which events are presented and information is communicated by visual image makers (e.g., graphic artists, documentary filmmakers, illustrators, news photographers).

## History/Social Sciences • High School Historical Research, Evidence and Point of View

### Skills:

1. Students distinguish valid arguments from fallacious arguments in historical interpretations
2. Students identify bias and prejudice in historical interpretations
3. Students evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past, including an analysis of authors' use of evidence and the distinctions between sound generalizations and misleading oversimplifications

**Standard 11.5** The growth and effects of radio and movies their role in the world wide diffusion of popular culture

**Standard 12.8** Students evaluate, take and defend positions on the influence of the media on American political life, in terms of:

1. the meaning and importance of a free and responsible press
2. the role of electronic, broadcast, print media and the Internet as means of communication in American politics
3. how public officials use the media to communicate with the citizenry and to shape public opinion

## Health/Prevention Middle School

**Standard 3** Students will select examples from media (TV and print) of appropriate and inappropriate responses to potentially dangerous situations

**Standard 9** Identify a variety of consumer influences and analyze how those influences affect decisions (Students will find and compare two or more advertisements for the same health-related product, select one, and defend their decision verbally or by cartoon depiction)

## High School

**Standard 4** Students will analyze a television program and write a short essay describing the family dynamics in the program

**Standard 7** Explore how body image is affected by many outside influences (Students will create a collage that shows how body image is portrayed by advertisements)

**Standard 8** Identify influences and pressures to become sexually active

**Standard 9** Analyze the influence of advertising and marketing on the selection of healthful and nutrition products (Students will create a PSA that promotes a safe and healthy environment; students will select an advertisement and evaluate its influence on consumer choices)

Adapted from © 2000 Frank W. Baker

# facilitation tips.

## DOs

- **Role model the behavior you wish others to use.**
- **Emphasize that questions are welcomed and encouraged.**
- **Set ground rules/agreements for the discussion.** When discussing difficult topics, agreeing on a set of ground rules can help make people feel comfortable about being open with their experiences and feelings. Some ground rules you can set are 1) respect everyone in the room, 2) agree to disagree, 3) keep everyone's comments confidential, 4) be honest, 5) step forward (if you aren't participating as much) or step back (if you are dominating the discussion), 6) don't interrupt, 7) allow people the right to pass, 8) no assumptions or generalizations, and 9) any other rules the group suggests and agrees upon.
- **Encourage students to use I statements, and steer clear of generalization and stereotypes.** If youth refer to stereotypes or make generalizations, point it out – use this as a time to ask the group about stereotypes and myths vs. factual information.
- **When students use derogatory language, talk about where it comes from.** If a student uses derogatory or stereotypical language, before reprimanding them, ask the student if there might be a better way to phrase their statement or question. This can be a good opportunity for the whole class to discuss ways that derogatory language about LGBT people is hurtful and offensive. Furthermore, it provides the chance to illustrate that anti-gay slurs and harassment are pervasive in our schools and society.
- **Be honest about what you do and don't know.** If a student asks a question to which you do not know the answer to, tell them that you do not know. If possible, commit to researching the answer through contacting the Gay-Straight Alliance Network or a local LGBTQ resource center or give the student the resources to do the research on their own.
- **Encourage students to answer each other's questions.** Ask the group if any one wants to speak on that point.
- **Pause to check for understanding.**
- **Keep an eye on group dynamics, and address any issues respectfully** (i.e., are some people dominating the discussion and others not speaking?)
- **Encourage active participation in the group.** Make sure everyone is talking; your voice shouldn't be the only one. Don't just look for raised hands; look at people's faces and body language.
- **Be prepared to respond to inappropriate questions and comments.** Students may ask questions to embarrass the teacher/facilitator and shock classmates. Use correct terminology in responding and re-word the question in appropriate language. Refer to classroom ground rules or state when a question is inappropriate.

## DON'Ts

- **Don't automatically assume understanding.** It's often difficult for youth to talk about LGBT issues because for many this will be a new or uneasy subject. Don't be afraid to call on people. Don't be confrontational, but ask students if they have any thoughts on the topic.
- **Don't be afraid of discussions on LGBT people and issues.** They are the only way to change a culture of homophobia.
- **Don't assume you are the only source of information in the room.** Give the group space to share their knowledge, ideas, and personal experience.
- **Don't rush through it or talk too fast.** Allow for silent gaps so info sinks in and quieter people have a chance to speak.
- **Don't ignore disrespectful behavior.** Use disrespectful comments as a "teachable moment" and to model respectful ways to confront slurs, stereotypes, and misinformation.
- **Don't allow for a small group of people to do all the talking.**
- **Don't dominate the discussion.** The facilitator should simply be moving the discussion along.

# definitions.

- 1 Sexual Orientation:** Sexual orientation is the term that describes who a person is attracted to, whether it be members of the same gender (gay or lesbian), members of another “opposite” gender (heterosexual), or to members of both genders (bisexual). Sexual orientation is a newly protected category in California’s public schools non-discrimination policy.
- 2 Gender:** Gender covers a wide range of issues relevant to all people. It relates to masculinity and femininity and it includes the following pieces: *gender identity*—the gender one experiences oneself to be, regardless of one’s biological sex; *gender characteristics*—characteristics such as facial hair or vocal pitch; and *gender expression*—the way a person expresses his or her gender, through gestures, movement, dress, and grooming. *Gender nonconformity* simply means not expressing gender or not having gender characteristics or a gender identity that conform to others’ expectations. Much of the harassment students experience is related to gender and gender nonconformity. Gender is now a protected category in California public schools.
- 3 Transgender:** A broad umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity, gender characteristics, or gender expression does not conform to the identity, characteristics, or expression traditionally associated with their sex at birth; transsexuals, cross-dressers, gender queers, drag kings and drag queens, and other gender nonconforming people may identify as transgender.
- 4 Intersex:** Intersex people are individuals born with anatomy or physiology which differs from cultural ideals of male and female. It is estimated that one out of every 2000 children born are intersex. There is a growing community of intersex people fighting to end shame, secrecy and unwanted genital surgeries.
- 5 LGBT:** LGBT is the string of letters that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Some people use LGBTQ to include people who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity or prefer the word “queer.”
- 6 Queer:** An umbrella term used to describe LGBT people; it has been reclaimed by some LGBT people from its derogatory use by others and is used to express pride in being LGBT.
- 7 Homophobia:** A term that is used to describe a strong negative bias/hatred towards LGBT people. It is not a completely inclusive term, so some people also use biphobia (hatred/fear of bisexual people) or transphobia (hatred/fear of transgender people) as well as homophobia.
- 8 Heterosexism:** Discrimination that privileges heterosexuals and disadvantages LGBTQ people. The system that creates the expectation of heterosexuality and gender normativity through media, political, and cultural messages.



connection . acceptance . labels . reflection . homophobia . self-image



STEVE



MAIZY



NYKKI



GAVIN



ROSA

***As If It Matters* discussion questions:**

1. What was the theme of *As If It Matters*? What were the youth video makers trying to tell us? Were they successful? Justify your answer.
2. Did you learn anything from this movie? What was it?
3. Was there something you didn't understand about the movie?
4. What did you like best about the movie? Why?
5. In what ways were the issues these youth faced similar and different from the challenges you and your friends face?
6. Select an action performed by one of the characters in the video and explain why the character took that action. What motivated him or her? What did this motivation have to do with the theme of the video?
7. In what ways do these stories describe what could happen to a student at your school or in your community?
8. What was the structure of the story told by the movie?
9. How did the editing of the video advance the story that the video makers were trying to tell? Explain how?
10. What could be done to make your school and community a more positive place for the students telling these stories? What could you do to make this happen?

Adapted from: Classroom Cinema, by Richard A. Maynard, 1977, Teachers College Press, New York.



TIFFANY



JOSH



JEN



ULYSSES



JODI

“Today will mark the moment in my life when I make an attempt to show the world who I really am and how I truly feel. The day I leave behind the place of childhood innocence and care-free laughter I grew up playing in. The day I face challenges of isolation, confusion and loneliness. I know things will never be the same. I will be caught between worlds, defined by labels and boundaries, not wanted or belonging in any of them. I’ll have to think of ways to amuse myself and be occupied during classes and lunchtime while other students talk to each other about their day, their lives. It’ll be hard and I am afraid, but I’m left with no other choice than to face these obstacles with an open heart and mind. Somehow, I know that I’ll make it through.”



Adapted from “Funny Boy” by Shyam Selvadurai, (p. 39) copyright 1994.

# homophobia



Homophobia describes a strong prejudice or hatred towards LGBT people. It is not a completely inclusive term, so some use biphobia (hatred/fear of bisexual people) or transphobia (hatred/fear of transgender people) as well as homophobia.

Homophobia can be expressed overtly through violence and harassment or more subtly through the use of language that relates being gay with negative connotations or by ignoring that LGBT people exist.

**“Oh them, they are so gay.”**

1. What kinds of homophobic words and comments do you hear at your school? Sometimes, people use derogatory language even when it's not directly about an LGBT person. What are the costs of comments like this? Do you hear teachers stopping these comments? Do you hear other students stopping these comments?

**“We may stink, but at least we're not muff divers.”**

2. What might have happened in the locker room if Gavin hadn't told his friend to leave Ulysses alone? Why do you think young men are the main perpetrators of violent homophobic attacks? How could you respond if someone called you gay just because you stopped a homophobic comment?

**“You're a faggot aren't you? I knew it! I saw you lookin' at me. You're both a couple of fags!”**

3. Does your school have a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) club? Are their posters or other anti-homophobia posters torn down?

**“I can't even stand to be around anyone's who gay.”**

4. Homophobia (fear or hatred of LGBT people) is a form of prejudice similar to sexism or racism. Is your school a safe or accepting place for LGBT students? What could you do to make your school more accepting?



**“What's wrong with you? Are you gay or something?”**

**“Keep hanging with your faggot friends.”**

**“It's the gay girl and her sidekick. Sorry—we're not hitting the showers yet.”**

**“Have you been checking me out this whole time?”**

*he looks down...*



# heterosexism

Heterosexism describes the societal expectation that everyone should be heterosexual, get married, and conform to gender roles in accordance with their sex at birth. It is what makes heterosexuality “normal” and creates homophobia.

“I just want to be normal.”

1. Where and how do we learn that we are all supposed to be heterosexual? Where and how do we learn that being LGBT is NOT what we are supposed to be? Think about the potential influence of media, family, school, laws, religious institutions, culture, etc.

“Have you ever seen a gay black person on television or in a history book? NO! Cuz we’re not accepted.”

“You weren’t gay this morning.”

2. In what ways do LGBT youth experience isolation and loneliness? In what ways are LGBT youth “invisible” to each other, their friends, their parents, their community?

“Jodi, you turned our best friend gay!”

3. Why do you think Jen was so hesitant to tell Gavin that she has lesbian mom’s? How do you think it makes her feel that people assume she has a mom and a dad? What do you think it would be like to have LGBT parents?

“Hey, are your mom and dad home?”

4. How do you think Ulysses felt when he was propositioned by the girl at the party? Why did she assume he likes girls? Why is everyone assumed to be heterosexual until they “come out?”

“Hey, my parents are outta town. Their room is kinda empty. Whaddya think? How’ bout it?”

5. What is the norm at your school? In what ways do you see yourself, your friends, teachers, and the school district assume everyone is heterosexual? Give examples.

“When are you gonna get a boyfriend, Nykki?”



# . . . . being an ally . . .

An ally is someone who stands up for you. Allies are people who are not targetted by a particular kind of bigotry or harassment, but find it important to challenge that intolerance both in specific occurrences and by trying to change the environment to be more fair and accepting.



1. Often, straight people decide it's important to fight against homophobia and be an ally to LGBT people after someone they know has come out to them. Has this ever happened to you? What are other ways that straight people might be inspired to challenge homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism?

*"Well, actually Maizy, I'm bisexual."*

*"I just feel really uncomfortable around gays."*

2. How does homophobia and heterosexism affect straight people? What are some of the benefits that straight people gain from the system of heterosexism? What are some of the ways that heterosexism and homophobia harm straight people?

3. Have you ever acted as an ally to someone or a group of people who are discriminated against? Why did you choose to act as an ally? What did you do? What did that feel like? What was effective and what could have been better?

*"I haven't had to go through coming out, but I've seen a lot of my friends, and it's really hard."*

4. Have you ever experienced someone being an ally for you or your community? What did they do? What did that feel like? What was effective and what could have been better?

*"Yo, dude, leave him alone. . . we gotta go to class."*

5. If you're straight, what are some ways you can contribute to making your school and community a more accepting environment? Remember and share a time you said or heard a homophobic slur at school. Next time you hear an offensive slur or joke, how could you respond? Try practicing.

*"Just because I'm not narrow minded like you doesn't make me gay."*

6. What would it be like to be part of a GSA as a straight ally?





# ... coming out ...

Our society assumes everyone is heterosexual, so there is a lot of homophobia that often makes LGBT people feel like hiding their sexual orientation. Being “closeted” puts a lot of stress on people and their relationships with family, friends, and girlfriends and boyfriends. Many LGBT youth experience depression and even

attempt suicide as a result of this homophobia. The norm of heterosexuality means LGBT people have to constantly “come out” in order for others to know their sexual orientation.

**1.** Why do you think that LGBT people use the metaphor of “the closet” to describe people not knowing about their sexual orientation or gender identity?  
“Today will mark the moment in my life when I make an attempt to show the world who I really am and how I truly feel.”

**2.** In what ways are LGBT youth “invisible”? To each other? To their friends? To their family? To the community?  
“Today will be the day I face challenges of isolation, confusion and loneliness. I know things will never be the same.”

**3.** Why was it so important to Jodi that her girlfriend Nykki come out? In what ways would it be challenging if your boyfriend or girlfriend felt they had to hide their sexual orientation? What effects might this have on a relationship?  
“I’m sick of this. You either come out or we’re over.”

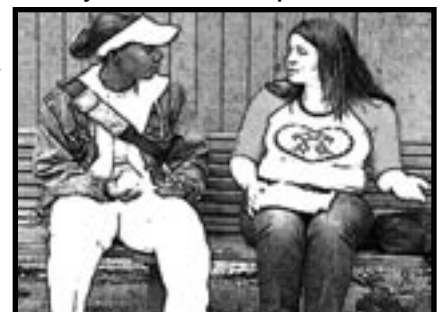
**4.** What if people had to come out as heterosexual? What if straight people had to answer questions like: What caused your heterosexuality? Could your heterosexuality be a phase you might grow out of, etc.  
“She just wants me to come out and I’m not sure I’m ready to yet, you know.”  
“Why does everybody care about other people’s sexual orientation?”

**5.** Being LGBTQ is viewed and experienced differently in different cultures and communities. How was Ulysses’ mom’s reaction specific to their cultural background? How do you think coming out would be different in various religious, racial, and national communities?  
“I can see that, why she could be upset, her culture is not accepting of this gay lifestyle, I guess.”

**6.** What role do out LGBT people play in helping individual LGBT youth feel empowered and ok?  
“Forget about your family and the world for a minute. What do you see your self as?”

“That’s what I’m talking about. I can’t even kiss my own girlfriend.”  
“They won’t accept me or be cool with it. They’re gonna wonder if I’m hitting on them and stuff.”

“Actually, I have two moms. They’re lesbians....Most people aren’t cool with that at all.”  
“I told you, not in public! What if someone sees us?”





## . . . . body image . . . .

Media images that help to create cultural definitions of beauty and attractiveness are one of the factors that contribute to personal struggles with body image and to the rise of eating disorders. Here are some facts about the media's influence in our lives:

- A study of mass media magazines discovered that women's magazines had 10.5 times more advertisements and articles promoting weight loss than men's magazines did (as cited in Guillen & Barr, 1994).

- A study of one teen adolescent magazine over the course of 20 years found that:
  - \*\* All of the articles contained in these magazines included statements highlighting that weight loss would improve appearance.
  - \*\* In articles about fitness or exercise plans, 74% cited "to become more attractive" as a reason to start exercising and 51% noted the need to lose weight or burn calories. (Guillen & Barr, 1994)
- The average young adolescent watches 3-4 hours of TV per day (Levine, 1997).
  - \*\* A study of 4,294 network television commercials revealed that 1 out of every 3.8 commercials sends some sort of "attractiveness message," telling viewers what is or is not attractive (as cited in Myers et al., 1992). These researchers estimate that the average adolescent sees over 5,260 "attractiveness messages" per year.

1. Where do we learn what our bodies are supposed to look like? Describe the messages you hear about what your body and other people's bodies are supposed to look like.

2. How do you think Jen felt when Melissa told her she only flirts with people who are skinny?  
"You're (how should I put this) not it."

3. Do the people we see on television and in movies reflect the way most people look? How do you think racism is perpetuated through the beauty standards set by media? How often do you think about how people portrayed in the media usually have personal trainers, hours each day to work out, and may have had cosmetic surgery? How does this affect what we think we "should" look like?

4. Is there pressure to look a certain way at your school? What happens if people don't fit that image? Do you hear people commenting on other people's bodies at school? What does it mean to be "popular" at your school? Who is "popular"? Do the "popular" people look a certain way or have similar characteristics (including race, class, clothes, body type, etc)? What impact does the existence of a "popular" group have on the culture of the school?

"Why do you have to be so focused on my weight. Why can't you just get to know me?"

5. When do we start being preoccupied with the way we look?

6. How often do you think people skip parties, barbecues, swimming and other activities because of fear or embarrassment about how they look?



# . . . watch TV as an alien . . . . .

## Homework:

Watch at least one hour of network television as if you were from another planet and hadn't seen Earth's culture before. Use this space to record your observations, ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

- 1.** What does the world you see look like? What are people like? Think about age, race, class, nationality, sexual orientation, body type, looks, etc. What seems to be coming across as the "norm" or "typical"? Does the world you see look like the world you experience every day?
- 2.** Who do you see strongly represented? Who seems to be missing or under represented? How does under-representation and misrepresentation of various races, cultures, communities, and sexual orientations affect us? How does it make you feel to be a member of an under-represented or misrepresented group or as a member of a highly represented group?
- 3.** Try and count the number of times heterosexuality is assumed or enforced. What do you find? Are you surprised? Why or why not? What effect do you think this has?
- 4.** Who would you like to see better represented in media? What would you do to change who is seen and who isn't? How would that change things?

# examining language at school

## Overview

Language shapes how people perceive themselves, others, and the world at large. The purpose of this activity is to help students make explicit the denotations and connotations of the words they see, hear, and use to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons.

## Goals

- To examine the power of words to shape how we come to understand sexual orientation and gender identity
- To challenge harmful connotations/stereotypes in language used to describe sexual orientation and gender identity
- To gain sensitivity and multiple perspectives on language used to describe sexual orientation and gender identity

**Time:** about 40 min

**Materials Needed:** Words Around Us Handout, Definitions Handout

## Part 1: Collecting data

**Important: This part must begin one week before the rest of the activity. You can start after watching *As If It Matters*, or one week before watching *As If It Matters*.**

One week prior to the activity, students should work individually to record any examples of language they see, hear, or use in school connected to lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender persons during the week. In some cases, language may be used to describe a particular person, while in other cases, it may be used to describe either a real or abstract group of people. In still other cases, the language may be used to describe something that has no connection to people (e.g., a student may hear a classmate describe a homework assignment as "gay"). The language may be positive, negative, or neutral in its connotations.

## Distribute Handout 1: Words Around Us and review with students how to collect data.

Using the handout, students should record the data so they can get a sense of how often words about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons are used. It may not be practical (or safe) for students to record information in the presence of the people using it. In such instances, they should record the information later. They may want to record all the information at once at the end of the day, doing their best to recall as many specific instances of language as possible. At a minimum, students should record information on a daily basis.

Students should record the exact language they see, hear, or use, even though they may be offended or have very strong feelings about the words they see or hear. Stress the importance of recording accurate data.

Under the heading "Who used," students should NOT write anyone's name. Instead they should record whether the language was used by a student, teacher, staff person, or administrator. Under the heading "Where used," students should record in what part of the school the language was used (e.g., hallway, locker room, classroom, cafeteria).

Students should record the intention of the speaker using the language under the heading "Intention." Was the language used as a description, without placing value on lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender persons? Was it used to hurt, demonize, or portray people in a negative light? Was it used to praise, celebrate, or portray people in a positive light? Was the language used seriously, mockingly, or comically? If students are uncertain or have contradictory ideas about how the language was used, they should note that here.

Remind students to make note of their personal response in the last column labeled "Reactions" in a phrase or two. Tell students that in one week, the class will be compiling all the individually collected data, analyzing it from different perspectives, and drawing conclusions.



## . . . examining language at school, continued . . . .

### **Part 2: Compiling and analyzing data**

As a whole class, compile the data individually collected by students during the past week. Use a transparency or a large butcher paper version of Handout 1: Words Around Us to record the class data. Ask a student volunteer to state one word or phrase he or she heard during the past week and write that phrase in the second column. Ask for a show of hands by other students who heard the same word or phrase and record that information in the same column next to the word or phrase. Check to see how many days during the past week the word or phrase was used and record that information in the "Word/Phrase" column. This will illustrate how frequently this language is used. Under the column "Who used," record the various types of people who used this language in the past week. Similarly, record where the language was used. Under the "Intention" column, list the ways the language was used. In some cases, the same word or phrase may have been used with different intentions.

After students have volunteered all the examples of language they heard in school, discuss the following questions:

- **What words and phrases are most commonly heard at our school to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender persons?**
- **In general, how are these words used? (What is the intention?)**
- **In what parts of the school is the most negative language used?**
- **By whom is the most negative language used?**
- **What is your personal reaction to these data?**

### **Part 3: Defining words**

During Part 1 of this activity, students will have recorded a number of words used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students. Tell students that in the next part of this activity, they will become sensitive to how they use language and to the meanings of words that the class will use to discuss LGBT youth, including some words that they may have recorded earlier.

Cut up and give each student one of the sections/cards from Handout: Defining Terms. Ask students to find another person in the class who has a card that makes a match between word and definition.

After all the students have found a classmate whose card makes a match with their own, ask one pair of students to read their word and definition. Follow by asking another pair to read a different word and definition until all seven words have been defined.

**After students finish reading the definitions, ask them the following questions:**

- How are these definitions different from the use of some of these same words when you recorded them in the first part of this activity?
- When is it appropriate to use these words?
- What are some examples of inappropriate uses of these words?

Tell students that all these words will be used during this and other activities, so they should understand their meanings. They should also be sensitive to HOW these words are used. None of the words in this exercise should carry a negative connotation or stigma, although when students recorded these words in Part 1 of the activity, they may have been used as insults or put-downs.

Set ground rules about using these words in your classroom, paying attention to why it is important to be sensitive to language as well as to consequences for students who do not respect the ground rules.

**Discuss:**

- Why is homophobia so pervasive in schools?
- How does homophobia affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students?
- How does homophobia affect straight students?

## examining language at school, continued

### Part 4: AB537 School Safety and Violence Prevention Act

Distribute AB537 Handout

In 1994 Assemblymember Sheila Kuehl became the first openly gay member of the California State Legislature. The following year, she introduced "The Dignity for All Students Act," a bill to bar discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in schools. The bill stalled in committee. Unwilling to let go of this hopeful possibility, 250 LGBTQ youth descended on Sacramento to educate the state legislature about the issues affecting them. Again, the bill was stalled. Each year our numbers grew and the bill got closer to being won. Queer Youth Lobby Day in 1999 drew more than 700 youth from around the state. Passionate testimonies about experiences of discrimination and harassment were shared and action was demanded. Youth spoke to media, lobbied their school boards, and visited legislative offices. But again, the bill lost...by one heartbreaking vote. Supportive legislators, youth activists, and citizens from across the state were outraged and would not be stopped. Due to their determined efforts, the bill was resurrected during the same legislative session. The new bill sought to protect all categories of individuals who are protected by the hate crimes statute in the California penal code. This meant that students would be protected not only on the basis of *actual or perceived sexual orientation*, but also on the basis of *actual or perceived gender identity*. The new bill moved through the legislature with lightning speed and AB537 went into effect on January 1, 2000, thanks to the passion and determination of LGBT youth and their allies.

This law makes it illegal for schools or school districts to discriminate against students or staff on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, or to allow a school environment to be so hostile that LGBT students and staff are, in effect, denied equal access to education and employment. To this end, schools are required to have some mechanisms in place to assure that the law is followed. For example, all students are supposed to be informed of how to file a harassment claim.

But just because a law passes doesn't mean that it really gets put into effect at the local level. So students all over the state are now organizing to hold their schools and districts accountable. They are working together to make sure that the safety, freedom, and dignity of LGBT students are reality.

### Part 5: Interrupting harassment and discrimination in school

Because the treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in schools, in some cases, constitutes human rights violations, it is important to interrupt such treatment. That means not participating in such violations and doing what we can to stop others when we see them perpetrating such acts. All students, not just LGBT youth, have a responsibility to protect the human rights of all students in schools. For straight students and teachers, this means acting as an ally, someone willing to speak up for the rights of LGBT youth. Taking a stand is not easy, however. In some cases, students might fear for their own safety. In other cases, allies might fear being labeled gay or lesbian.

As a class, discuss some of the examples of homophobia recorded in Part 1 and how students and teachers, individually and collectively, can interrupt violations of California's non-discrimination policy. As you brainstorm, think not only about how to react to violations as they occur or after the fact, but also about how to create a climate in school that supports respect for and celebration of students' human rights. Discuss the relative risks of the actions generated by students, given the climate of their school.

Stress the importance of being proactive. Point out that students and teachers have only a limited number of responses AFTER harassment of LGBT youth occurs. When students and teachers act BEFORE, they have a wider range of options that can prevent violations from occurring in the first place.

Share information about your school's GSA, if you have one, and when they meet. Distribute "How to be a Super-Rad Straight Ally" handout.

Adapted from The Human Rights Education Series, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights: A Human Rights Perspective*, jointly published by Amnesty International USA, The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), and the Human Rights Resource Center. Copyright © 2000 [ww.hrusa.org/hrmaterials](http://ww.hrusa.org/hrmaterials)

# . . . vision of an accepting school . . . .

## Goals:

- Gain understanding of heterosexual privilege.
- Understand heterosexism on the individual and institutional levels.
- Envision a school in which heterosexism and homophobia do not exist.
- Identify actions to address heterosexism and homophobia.

**Time:** 40 minutes

**Materials Needed:** Newsprint for each small group and markers.

1. In order to create a world that is free of heterosexism, we must know what that might be like. This exercise is designed to help us shape that vision. Tell students they will be working creatively to imagine school free of heterosexism and homophobia.
2. With the whole class ask for ideas on what is racism and how it shows up in school. After a couple minutes draw the connection between racism and homophobia (i.e., People discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation in a similar way to how people discriminate based on race. In both cases there is a group that is privileged at the expense of other groups. As individuals we experience being both privileged and oppressed based on our gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc.).
3. Create small groups of no more than 3 students. Groups should have about 7 minutes for the following task (you may want to write the below instructions on the board or give a copy to each group):

**Imagine that through a miracle, this high school has become free of homophobia and heterosexism, and is as equally accepting of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people as it is of heterosexual people. Describe in detail what happens in this new world free of heterosexism and homophobia. Record your ideas on butcher paper for presentation to the whole class.**

### **What would be different about the:**

- curriculum (including text books, videos, etc.)
- sports program
- social events
- cultural offerings
- course offerings
- student clubs and activities
- newspaper
- mascot
- student center
- student government
- safety on campus
- security
- climate for learning
- posters, advertisements and other media at school

**After 5 minutes of work time announce that there are 2 minutes left. At 7 minutes, call time.**

4. Give students 10 minutes to create a brochure for back to school night that describes the school environment they have envisioned. (You may want to provide examples of brochures.)
5. Warn them when they have a few minutes left and then invite each group to present in turn. Encourage the listeners to express their appreciation for creative thinking as the reports are given. Decide how long reports should be depending on the time available.
6. After all groups have reported, invite participants to reflect on these visions, and call out some ideas they heard that are actually workable in the present (ex. inclusive language in all printed materials; a regular LGBT section to the school newspaper; openly LGBT staff and faculty). Hand out the "What Every Super-Rad Straight Ally Should Know" handout and the AB537 Fact Sheet and talk about how students can help create the kind of school they just described.

Adapted from: Adams, Maurianne, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, ed. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. Routledge, NY: 1997. (160-161).

# what's "normal"

This activity works well after viewing and discussing *As If It Matters*.

## Goals:

- Reflect on how our lives are affected by issues of gender, sexual orientation, and homophobia.
- Explore personal feelings, thoughts, and beliefs about sexual orientation.
- Describe the process by which we have learned that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are abnormal and that heterosexuality is expected.
- Raise awareness and understanding of the destructive consequences of heterosexism and homophobia.
- Gain understanding of heterosexual privilege.
- Gain understanding of heterosexism on the individual, institutional, and societal levels.

**Key Concepts:** socialization, stereotypes, manifestation of stereotypes and heterosexism in school

**Materials needed:** chalkboard, butcher paper, or white board.

**Time:** 40 min.

**Ask students to pair up. Tell them that you are going to ask a question which each person will answer in turn: one person speaking and the other listening. Each person will have one minute. After one minute, ask them to switch speakers. All three questions can be answered in the same pair or you can have the students switch partners for each question.**

- What is the first time you remember knowing that there was a sexual orientation other than heterosexual?
- What do you remember learning about LGBT people, and from what source did you learn this information?
- How did you learn that you were expected to be heterosexual?

**Invite students to return to the whole group. Ask students to call out some of the things they learned about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people while you or a co-facilitator write them on the chalkboard. Next make a list of the sources of learned messages. Next, ask participants how they learned that they were expected to be heterosexual. Make a list of these items on the board or butcher paper.**



“ I just want to be normal!”

continued on next page . . .

# . . . what's "normal" continued . . . . .

some typical responses include:

Early learnings about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people	Sources of these learnings	Ways we are taught we should be heterosexual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child molesters</li> <li>• Obsessed with sex</li> <li>• Want to be the other sex</li> <li>• Hate the other sex</li> <li>• Had a bad heterosexual experience</li> <li>• Recruit young people</li> <li>• Act like the other sex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents, family</li> <li>• Peers</li> <li>• Media: TV, ads, movies, books</li> <li>• Religious teachings</li> <li>• Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent's relationship</li> <li>• Teased about cross-sex friendships</li> <li>• Proms, dances, dating</li> <li>• Look forward to getting married</li> <li>• Weddings, anniversaries, engagements</li> <li>• Stigma attached to LGBT people</li> <li>• Silence about LGBT people</li> <li>• Games like "Smear the Queer"</li> <li>• Anti-gay name calling as a put down</li> <li>• Role models in the media are usually heterosexual</li> <li>• No examples of famous LGBT people provided in curriculum</li> </ul>

**You may choose to have students reflect individually in a writing assignment, have small group discussion, or discussion with the whole class. Here are some possible questions.**

- What are your reactions to seeing the list of stereotypes of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people?
- Which stereotypes are most familiar to you?
- What do you notice about how and from where we learn about LGBT people?
- What do you notice about how we learn to be heterosexual?
- What privileges do heterosexual people have that LGBT people don't have?
- What stereotypes were brought up in *As If It Matters*?
- What stereotypes were challenged in *As If It Matters*?
- What surprised you in the video?
- How do you see stereotypes about LGBT people perpetuated in high school?
- How can we make school a place that is more open to LGBT people?
- How is your life affected by the issues of gender, sexuality, and homophobia?

**Acknowledge that we have all learned messages about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people. Check to see if there are differences in messages depending on cultural backgrounds. If so, discuss what might account for those differences. Be sure that people express their reaction in ways that respect the class guidelines.**

Adapted from: Adams, Maurianne, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, ed. *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*. Routledge, NY: 1997. (146-148).

. . . examining the language at school . . . .

Date	Word/Phrase	Who Used	Where	Intention	Reaction

# Definitions

for “examining language in school”

Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual
Transgender	Queer	Intersex
Homophobia	Heterosexism	Gender
<p>A broad umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity, gender characteristics, or gender expression does not conform to the identity, characteristics, or expression traditionally associated with their sex at birth; transsexuals, cross-dressers, gender queers, drag kings and drag queens, and other gender nonconforming people may identify as transgender.</p>	<p>Intersex people are individuals born with anatomy or physiology which differs from cultural ideals of male and female. It is estimated that one out of every 2000 children born are intersex. There is a growing community of people fighting to end shame, secrecy and unwanted genital surgeries.</p>	<p>It relates to masculinity and femininity and it includes the following pieces: <i>gender identity</i>—the gender one experiences oneself to be, regardless of one’s biological sex; <i>gender characteristics</i>—characteristics such as facial hair or vocal pitch; and <i>gender expression</i>—the way a person expresses his or her gender, through gestures, movement, dress, and grooming. <i>Gender nonconformity</i> simply means not expressing gender or not having gender characteristics or a gender identity that conform to others’ expectations. Much, perhaps most, of the harassment LGBT students experience is related to gender and gender nonconformity. Gender is now a protected category in California public schools.</p>
<p>A term that is used to describe a strong negative bias/hatred towards LGBT people. It is not a completely inclusive term so some people also use biphobia (hatred/fear of bisexual people) or transphobia (hatred/fear of transgender people) as well as homophobia.</p>	<p>A person attracted physically and emotionally to some persons of the same sex. Usually used to describe men.</p>	
	<p>A person attracted physically and emotionally to some men and some women.</p>	
<p>An umbrella term used to describe LGBT people; it has been reclaimed by some LGBT people from its derogatory use by others and is used to express pride in being LGBT.</p>	<p>Discrimination in favor of heterosexuals and against LGBTQ people. The system that creates the expectation of heterosexuality and gender normativity through media, political, and cultural messages.</p>	<p>A woman attracted physically and emotionally to some other women.</p>

# AB 537 Fact Sheet

## California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act

### What is AB 537?

AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, changed California's Education Code by adding actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity to the nondiscrimination policy. The state defines "gender" as "a person's actual sex or perceived sex and includes a person's perceived identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance, or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with a person's sex at birth."

### What does AB 537 cover?

AB 537 covers discrimination and harassment in California public schools and any school receiving state funding. Religious schools are exempted. Harassment is defined as "conduct based on protected status that is severe or pervasive, which unreasonably disrupts an individual's educational or work environment or that creates a hostile educational or work environment." The protections cover any program or activity in a school, including extracurricular activities and student clubs. This gives GSAs and other LGBTQ-related student clubs state protection in addition to federal protection through the Equal Access Act.

### How do you file a complaint?

First, file a complaint with your school. The process for filing a complaint within your school can vary. This information should be outlined in your student handbook or an administrator should be able to make it available to you. It is often the same process as filing a sexual harassment complaint. If your school's harassment report form is not inclusive of sexual orientation and the expanded definition of "gender," consider working to change this as a goal of your activism.

**Document everything.** Write down the key details of the harassment such as who, what, when, where, and witnesses. Include details from meetings you have with administrators. Keep a copy of all reports you file and confirmation that they were received.

### What is your school board obligated to do?

If your school fails to adequately address your complaint, you have ways of holding them accountable through the local school board and the state Department of Education. Your school board should follow the state's "Uniform Complaint Procedures," which outline that, to be compliant with the law, your school board is obligated to do the following:

- Designate a staff member to be responsible for complaint resolution.
- Notify, at least annually, parents, employees, committees, students, and other interested parties of local complaint procedures, including the opportunity to appeal the school's decision.
- Protect complainants from retaliation.
- Ensure confidentiality of the parties and the facts related to the case.
- Accept complaints from any individual, public agency, or organization.
- Resolve the complaint through mediation or investigation and complete a written report within 60 days of receipt of the complaint.
- Advise complainant of their right to appeal within 15 days of receipt of this written report.

### What is the state Department of Education obligated to do?

As the authority over public schools, the **California Department of Education** (CDE) is ultimately responsible for making sure that schools abide by AB537. If your school board fails to adequately resolve your complaint, the CDE is obligated to do the following:

- If the school board fails to act within 60 days of a complaint or if a complainant appeals a school board decision, the CDE is obligated to conduct a mediation or investigation within 60 days, after which it will issue a decision about whether the school board has lived up to its responsibilities and whether it needs to do anything else.
- Require schools implement corrective actions concerning issues raised through investigation of complaints.
- Request a report of the schools' actions and keep a file of every written complaint received.

### Other options for holding your school accountable:

- **Litigation.** Sue your school district. With the help of an attorney, students can ask a judge to order the school to stop discrimination before it happens or continues. This is called **injunctive relief**. It's cool because a judge issues an "injunction" (an order) to your school district -- and your school district has to do it! You can do this simultaneous to going through the above process.
- **Community Organizing.** Organize other students, teachers, staff, parents, and community allies to form a community response to the problem of homophobia in your school. Think of AB 537 as a tool and use it as leverage to work to change the school climate.

**To learn more about how you can implement and enforce AB 537, check out our online student organizing manual at [www.ab537.org](http://www.ab537.org) or call our office.**



[www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

For more information and resources for Gay-Straight Alliances, contact GSA Network:

Northern CA: 160 14th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, ph: 415.552.4229, f: 415.552.4729

Central CA: 985 N. Van Ness, Fresno, CA 93728, ph: 559.442.4777, f: 559.442.4734

Southern CA: 4477 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 202, Los Angeles, CA 90027, ph: 323.662.3160, f: 323.662.3167



# What Every Super-Rad Straight Ally Should Know

**One of the most unique aspects of the Gay-Straight Alliance model is that it brings together LGBTQ individuals *and* straight allies to combat homophobia. Here are some ways to encourage straight allies (or potential allies) to become more actively and effectively involved in your GSA.**

## TEN WAYS HOMOPHOBIA AFFECTS STRAIGHT PEOPLE

1. Homophobia forces us to act "macho" if we are a man or "feminine" if we are a woman. This limits our individuality and self-expression.
2. Homophobia puts pressure on straight people to act aggressively and angrily towards LGBTQ people.
3. Homophobia makes it hard to be close friends with someone of the same sex.
4. Homophobia often strains family and community relationships.
5. Homophobia causes youth to become sexually active before they are ready in order to prove they are "normal." This can lead to an increase in unwanted pregnancies and STDs.
6. Homophobia prevents vital information on sex and sexuality to be taught in schools. Without this information, youth are putting themselves at a greater risk for HIV and other STDs.
7. Homophobia can be used to hurt a straight person if they "appear to be gay."
8. Homophobia makes it hard for straight people and LGBTQ people to be friends.
9. Homophobia along with racism, sexism, classism, etc. makes it hard to put an end to AIDS.
10. Homophobia makes it hard to appreciate true diversity and the unique traits that are not mainstream or "normal."

*For more info, see Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price, edited by Warren J. Blumenfeld, Boston: Beacon Press: 1992.*

## "HOMOWORK": WAYS TO FIGHT HOMOPHOBIA AS A STRAIGHT ALLY

1. Organize discussion groups in class or after school to talk about the "Ten Ways Homophobia Affects Straight People."
2. Always use neutral labels like "partner" or "significant other" instead of "boyfriend," "girlfriend," etc. when writing papers or talking to others.
3. Bring up LGBTQ issues in conversations with friends or discussions in class.
4. Interrupt anti-LGBTQ jokes, comments or any other behaviors that make homophobia appear OK.
5. Put LGBTQ-positive posters in the halls and classrooms or wear shirts, buttons, etc. that promote tolerance.
6. Don't make assumptions about peoples' sexual orientations or gender identities. Assume there are LGBTQ people in all classes, sports, meetings, daily life, etc.
7. Don't assume that "feminine-acting men" and "masculine-acting women" are not heterosexual.
8. Don't assume that "macho males" or "feminine females" are heterosexual.



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# Recommended Books For & About LGBTQ Youth

**Here is a *short* list of suggested titles for LGBTQ youth and their allies, teachers, and parents. If your school library does not carry these books, meet with the librarian to request them. More complete lists of books for and about LGBTQ youth can be found at [www.outproud.org/book\\_search.taf](http://www.outproud.org/book_search.taf), [www.softlord.com/glbbooks/fiction/](http://www.softlord.com/glbbooks/fiction/), and [www.glsen.org/pages/sections/library/schooltools/guide/r.article](http://www.glsen.org/pages/sections/library/schooltools/guide/r.article).**

## **Non-Fiction:**

- Bass, Ellen & Kaufman, Kate. (1996). FREE YOUR MIND: THE BOOK FOR GAY, LESBIAN & BISEXUAL YOUTH--AND THEIR ALLIES. New York: HarperCollins.
- Blumenfeld, Warren J. & Raymond, Diane (1993). LOOKING AT GAY AND LESBIAN LIFE. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Bornstein, Kate. (1998) MYGENDER WORKBOOK, New York: Vintage Books, or (1995) GENDER OUTLAW, New York: Routledge.
- Hemphill, Essex (1991). BROTHER TO BROTHER: NEW WRITINGS BY BLACK GAY MEN. Boston: Alyson Publications.
- Heron, Ann (1994). TWO TEENAGERS IN TWENTY: WRITINGS BY GAY AND LESBIAN YOUTH. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Hutchins, Loraine and Lani Kaahumanu, eds (1991). BI ANY OTHER NAME: BISEXUAL PEOPLE SPEAK OUT. Boston, Alyson Publications.
- Jennings, Kevin (1994). BECOMING VISIBLE: A READER IN GAY AND LESBIAN HISTORY FOR HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications.
- Lorde, Audre. 1984. SISTER OUTSIDER. New York: The Crossing Press.
- Marcus, Eric (1993). IS IT A CHOICE: ANSWERS TO 300 OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT GAYS AND LESBIANS. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
- Moraga, Cherrie and Gloria Anzaldua, eds. (1984.) THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press.
- Roscoe, Will, ed. (1989). LIVING THE SPIRIT: A GAY AMERICAN INDIAN ANTHOLOGY. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Sherman, Phillip E., ed. (1994). UNCOMMON HEROES: A CELEBRATION OF HEROES AND ROLE MODELS FOR GAY AND LESBIAN AMERICANS. New York: Fletcher Press.

## **Fiction:**

- Baldwin, James (1988). GIOVANNI'S ROOM. New York: Dell Publishing. Love story of two young men in Paris.
- Bauer, Marion Dane, ed. (1994). AM I BLUE? COMING OUT FROM THE SILENCE. New York: Harper Collins. A collection of short stories by young adult authors dealing with gay issues.
- Brown, Rita Mae (1988). RUBYFRUIT JUNGLE. New York: Bantam. A coming of age lesbian love story.
- Feinberg, Leslie (1993). STONE BUTCH BLUES. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand. A beautifully written and powerful narrative about the struggles faced by a transgender individual in the 1950's and 60's.
- Garden, Nancy (1988). ANNIE ON MY MIND. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. A touching story about first love between two teenage girls.
- Greene, Bette (1991). THE DROWNING OF STEPHAN JONES. New York: Bantam. Based on a true incident, this is the story of a young girl's homophobic boyfriend and the violent death of an adult gay male.
- Homes, A.M. (1989). JACK. New York: Macmillan. A teenage boy deals with his parents' divorce and his father's homosexuality.
- Kerr, M.E. (1995) DELIVER US FROM EVIE. New York: Harper Trophy. Story of a young lesbian in a small Missouri town.
- Miller, Isabel (1985). PATIENCE AND SARAH. New York: Random House. A beautiful love story between two young women in 19th century England.
- Salat, Cristina (1993). LIVING IN SECRET. New York: Bantam. The story of a young girl who is taken away from her lesbian mother by the courts.
- Sinclair, April (1994). COFFEE WILL MAKE YOU BLACK. New York: Hyperion. A coming of age story of an African-American girl who is questioning her sexuality.
- Snyder, Anne (1981). THE TRUTH ABOUT ALEX. New York: Signet. The story of a friendship between the star quarterback of the football team, who is straight, and a young gay teen.



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For more information and resources for Gay-Straight Alliances, contact GSA Network:

Northern CA: 160 14th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, ph: 415.552.4229, f: 415.552.4729

Central CA: 985 N. Van Ness, Fresno, CA 93728, ph: 559.442.4777, f: 559.442.4734

Southern CA: 4477 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 202, Los Angeles, CA 90027, ph: 323.662.3160, f: 323.662.3167

# Transgender Resources

## **Terms and Definitions:**

**(This list is not comprehensive and may not apply to every individual.)**

- Crossdressing (CD):** dressing as someone from a different gender category; may be done by people from all genders and sexual orientations. Crossdressers sometimes referred to as **transvestites (TV)**.
- Drag:** crossdressing, especially in public or in a performance.
- Feminine:** concept of what is "naturally" or traditionally female in terms of appearance, behavior, and personality.
- Female-To-Male (FTM), Male-To-Female (MTF):** used to classify crossdressers, transgender individuals, or transsexuals; may indicate either gender expression or gender identity.
- Gender:** gender covers a wide range of issues that affect everyone. Subcategories of gender include: **Gender Characteristics--** characteristics that are used by others to attribute gender to an individual, such as facial hair or vocal pitch; **Gender Expression/ Gender Presentation--**the way a person expresses his or her gender through gestures, movement, dress, and grooming; **Gender Identity--**a person's understanding, definition, or experience of their own gender, regardless of biological sex; **Gender Nonconformity--**not expressing gender or not having gender characteristics or gender identity that conform to the expectations of society and culture; **Gender Role--**culturally accepted and expected behavior associated with biological sex. **Intersex:** refers to someone who is biologically neither completely male nor completely female; may have genital and/or reproductive body parts of both sexes; **Gender Binary System--**a social system that requires that everyone be raised as a boy or girl (dependent on what sex you are assigned at birth) which in turn forms the basis for how you are educated, what jobs you can do (or are expected to do), how you are expected to behave, what you are expected to wear, what your gender & gender presentation should be, and who you should be attracted to/love/marry, etc.
- Masculine:** concept of what is "naturally" or traditionally male in terms of appearance, behavior, and personality.
- Passing:** crossdressing well enough to be seen as a member of a different sex/gender category.
- Sex:** one's biological assignment as male, female, or intersexed.
- Transgender (TG):** a term for designating those who transcend or transgress gender by not looking, acting, being, or identifying as traditionally male or female; can include crossdressers, transsexuals, intersex people, and other gender nonconformists.
- Transsexual (TS):** a person who feels that his or her gender identity does not match their biological sex ("I'm a woman in a man's body" etc.); a pre-op (preoperative) transsexual is a TS preparing to have sex reassignment surgery, and a post-op (postoperative) transsexual has already undergone sex reassignment, although not all transsexuals desire surgery; some transsexuals take hormones to make their bodies look more male or female.

## **Trans Youth Resources:**

### **Trans Youth Groups:**

- Changeling*, Wednesdays 7-9pm @LYRIC (123 Collingwood St., S.F.). For more info call LYRIC at 415.703.6150.
- Gender Garden*, 25 and under, Mondays 6:30-8pm @ the Pacific Center (2712 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley). For more info call 510.548.8283.
- Chromosomes*, 17 and under, Mondays 4-5pm @ the Pacific Center (2712 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley). For more info call 510.548.8283.

### **Other groups to check out:**

- FTM International*, (mostly adults, youth welcome), 2nd Sunday of each month, 2-5pm, 1360 Mission St., San Francisco, Suite 200 (second floor).
- Transaction*, (many young adults involved), see [www.transactionsf.org](http://www.transactionsf.org) for more info.

**Trans Youth Web Ring** — [www.youthresource.com/queeryouth/transyouth.htm](http://www.youthresource.com/queeryouth/transyouth.htm). A collection of linked sites by trans youth.

**TGTS-Youth E-Mail Discussion List** — For more info, see [www.geocities.com/transboys/tgts-youth.html](http://www.geocities.com/transboys/tgts-youth.html). To subscribe, e-mail [majordomo@queernet.org](mailto:majordomo@queernet.org) with the message "subscribe tgts-youth <your e-mail address>."

**Trans Teens E-Mail List** — register @ [www.egroups.com/subscribe/TransTeens](http://www.egroups.com/subscribe/TransTeens).

**Yahoo! Club for Trans Youth** — for more info, visit [clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/transyouth](http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/transyouth).



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# Evaluation . . . . .

Please return this evaluation to the people organizing the use of *As If It Matters* at your school. This information will help us evaluate our impact, make improvements in our efforts, and continue to offer resources to combat discrimination and harassment in schools. Thank you.

- 1.** How did you use *As If It Matters* (i.e. did you show it in a classroom, a workshop, an assembly, etc)?
  
- 2.** How many students viewed *As If It Matters* and engaged in a related discussion or activity?
  
- 3.** Which, if any, of the following activities and resources did you use? Mark all that apply.
  - Discussion Questions about specific issues with reference to the video (Homophobia, Body Image, Heterosexism, Being an Ally, Coming Out)
  - Activity 1: Watching TV as an Alien
  - Activity 2: Examining Language at School
  - Activity 3: Vision of an Accepting School
  - Activity 4: What's "Normal"
  - Examining Language at School Survey Form
  - Definitions Matching Activity
  - AB 537: School Safety and Violence Prevention Act
  - How to be a Super-Rad Straight Ally
  - Recommended Books For and About LGBT Youth
  - Transgender Resources

Comments:
  
- 4.** Would you recommend *As If It Matters* for use at other schools?
  
- 5.** Please share any other comments you have about *As If It Matters* and the curriculum materials.