

LESSON: Student-Driven LGBT Anti-Bullying Campaign

Overview

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) biennial National School Climate Survey documents the experiences of students who identify as LGBT in America's secondary schools. The 2009 survey includes responses from 7,261 LGBT students between the ages of 13 and 21 from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Among GLSEN's findings are that nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students experience harassment in schools.

In response to several youth suicides reported in the national media, Dan Savage, syndicated sex-advise columnist, author and gay rights activist, who initiated the It Gets Better Campaign points out that bullying of LGBT youth is not a new issue, in fact even before cyber-bullying LGBT youth experienced harassment during many of their waking hours.

Bullying and harassment should never be tolerated! All of us are needed to take action! Media campaigns are one means of creating awareness among large segments of a population while at the same time mobilizing support and encouraging action. Since LGBT bullying and harassment are tremendous and wide-spread problems, it's clear that many efforts are going to be required to create awareness, mobilize support and encourage action.

The purpose of these lessons (the number of lessons is determined by you) is to directly involve students in taking action concerning the bullying and harassment of LGBT youth in their school by designing their own media campaign. These lessons require them to study the problems of bullying and harassment in their school from a new perspective, that is, the perspective of an ad agency whose assignment is to encourage important changes in school climate.

Objectives:

- Create awareness of bullying and harassment of LGBT students in their school
- Identify and discuss examples of bullying and current actions to deal with this problem
- Develop recommendations for an action plan for dealing with bullying of LGBT students
- Brainstorm a media campaign to prevent bullying with the target audience as students in their own school.

Level: Middle / High School

Time: Variable (1 week+)

Preparation and Materials:

- TBD based on student decisions + access and availability to supplies and equipment (poster paper, computers, video cameras, etc.)
- Handout: Steps in Planning and Launching a Media Campaign

Procedures

Invite representatives of your school's Gay, Straight Alliance (GSA) to speak in your class. If your school doesn't have a GSA, check out GSA Network for more information as to how one might be started.

Important Note: Before starting this lesson be sure to enlist the help of the GSA as well as other resource people in your school and in the community to serve as support for your campaign. Also make sure to identify resources that LGBTQ will be able to contact both during and after the campaign is over.

Show the trailer featured on the website, Put This on the Map. Better still show the entire 34-minute video as an introduction to the media campaign. For order information, see the Resources section of this website or contact Put This on the Map.

Discuss the issues that the GSA representatives raise with your class or that the film raises. Encourage students to think about some incidents they have observed (avoid citing names of students involved).

- What happened as a consequence of the bully's actions?
- Did a teacher intervene or take action?
- Discuss whether other students observed what happened? If so, consider what the other students did about what they observed?
- Are there any school policies about bullying in our school?
- If so, what are they and how are they enforced? In their opinion, are these policies effective at this time?

Discuss the topic of emotional abuse (which students may not recognize as a form of violence):

- Is emotional abuse considered a form of violence? Why or why not?
- There's film about emotional abuse entitled : But Names Can Hurt Forever. Why do you think the film was given this title?
- Besides name-calling, what other forms of emotional abuse might we see in a school?
- Consider some examples of emotional abuse.
- In what ways might emotional abuse be taking place in our school? Discuss some examples.

Introduce the idea that it's time for students to take their own action as a group and that together they can make a difference!

Activity

Discuss the ThinkB4YouSpeak campaign as one example of a media campaign developed by the national Ad Council. Note that so far the campaign reports that their efforts have been very successful in raising awareness about the use of hurtful words.

Ask for student opinion about this campaign. (Note that some LGBTQ students have pointed out that this campaign uses a very negative approach only compounding the problem by targeting other people. As one student said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.")

Rather than simply adopting an idea that adults developed, a youth driven campaign can have much greater power. To design their campaign, youth need to examine their own particular school climate and design a campaign tailored for the students in their school.

You may want to share some examples of student-driven campaigns to initiate students' brainstorming:

- "Use Another Word" campaign initiated by students in Springfield High School, Springfield, Oregon
- Point out that campaigns can involve a wide variety of creative ideas. Consider this highly successful campaign initiated by students in a Canadian school
- Middle school in Massachusetts launched an Anti-Teasing Campaign

- New Jersey high school students developed 10 anti-bullying public service announcements, including 5 for TV and 5 for radio
- Start your own Creative Expression Contest . See the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) No Name Calling Week website for ideas

Tell the students that we are going to form our own ad agency and come up with our own media campaign to deal with bullying in our school.

As a guide, use the handout Steps in Planning and Launching a Media Campaign.

Be sure to examine how you are going to measure the success of your campaign and develop measures to evaluate your success.

NUVARING AD #1

- Tell students that we often see commercials but ask how often we really stop and think what they're telling us.
- Today we're going to take a second look at an ad for a birth control method and try to figure out how informative it might be to a teen girl. If you are a girl, assume you are interested in starting birth control or you're already using a birth control method but would be interested in changing methods
- If you're a boy, assume you are trying to help a girl who has come to you for advice (this could be your girlfriend and the two of you are trying to decide what would be best to do or the girl could be your sister, a close relative or a very good friend who needs your help).
- Using the Questions to Consider handout, deconstruct this ad and record your answers.
- Show the Nuvaring Ad #1 a few times so that the students have the chance to look at it in detail. (Make sure to tell them that no detail in an ad is there by accident! Everything is carefully planned.)

Before discussing #1, show Nuvaring Ad #2.

- As a group, deconstruct Ad #2 using the Questions to Consider handout Compare Ads #1 and #2
- Consider why the company might have decided on this approach to the ad.
- Does Ad #2 provide any new information that would be useful for the girl trying to learn about a new method of birth control?
- What techniques does Ad #2 employ to convince its audience?

Assessment

Have the students keep a journal or create a blog to share with their teacher documenting their individual thoughts, experiences and reflections as they in work on this campaign.