

GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

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DEFINITIONS

[HTTP://WWW.MALA.CA/POSITIVESPACE/](http://www.mala.ca/positivespace/)

[HTTP://WWW.QUEENSU.CA/HUMANRIGHTS/TAP/3DISCRIMINATION.HTM](http://www.queensu.ca/humanrights/tap/3discrimination.htm)



- ◉ **Homophobia:** a term used to describe negative attitudes, feelings and beliefs towards lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgendered individuals and those perceived to be these sexual orientations or gender identities
- ◉ **Heterosexism:** an assumption held by society that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual; often seen as inherently superior and preferable to all other sexual orientations.
- ◉ **Queer:** many have adopted this because it is more encompassing and more inclusive and less cumbersome than LGBT or LGBTTTIQ
- ◉ **LBGT:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered
- ◉ **Transphobia:** a reaction of fear, loathing & discriminatory treatment of people whose gender identity or gender presentation (or perceived gender or gender identity) does not match, in the socially accepted way, the sex they were assigned at birth.

WHAT IS A GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE

- ⦿ GSAs provide all students with a safe place to meet, make friends, and talk about issues and feelings. GSAs can help to improve the school climate for everyone, by promoting discussion about homophobia and its effects on everyone, by educating the wider school community, and by encouraging greater understanding among students and staff alike. All students should be invited to attend, but with absolutely no expectation that they will reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- ⦿ <http://www.galebc.org/main.htm>

GSA (GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE)

GOAL

- Schools should prepare students to be willing to, and capable of, developing into citizens who respect Canada's anti-discrimination laws. These laws make it illegal to discriminate against anyone based on sexual orientation [and many other criteria as well]. Students in a school that has “straight” and gay [LGTB] students working side-by-side toward common goals will more likely grow into adults who can support the spirit of these laws.
- <http://www.galebc.org/GSAbooklet2004.pdf>

TEACHERS ROLE

- ◉ Stand back...
- ◉ Allow the students to run the show, teachers are there as facilitators
- ◉ Teacher is there to guide discussions and be a support unit for the students
- ◉ Teacher facilitates a fun, judgment free space
- ◉ Teacher keeps up to date with issues

CENTENNIAL SECONDARY TEACHER FAUNE JOHNSON (GSA TEACHER SPONSOR)

- “It is a safe place for any student to talk about anything and not be judged.”
- “By our existence to those who are invisible for any reason that others do accept differences and support human rights.”
- “Eight years ago when we first started a GSA in our school it was controversial. Now it is not a big deal. However, I wonder what will happen when I’m not in the school. I hope another teacher will carry on.”
- A couple of years after the originator of our GSA graduated ... many people said to her, "I didn't ever come to your GSA, but I knew you were there and you saved my life." Lots of people told her the same kind of thing. Teachers don't always get to hear these things, but you can be sure that students are affected by our actions and words.

NINE STEPS TO START A GSA

[HTTP://WWW.GALEBC.ORG/MAIN.HTM](http://www.galebc.org/main.htm)

1. Find supportive staff members to work with you
2. Follow established procedures in your school or district (you may need an administrators permission)
3. Enlist support of school administration
4. Inform counselors and other school staff about your group
5. Pick a meeting place
6. Advertise
7. Get snacks
8. Schedule your first meeting
9. Establish guidelines with students; repeat and explain in full at every meeting

BILL C-250

- ◉ Bill C-250, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda)*, was passed in the House on September 17, 2003. The bill amends the definition of "identifiable group" to include "any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation." It is an offence under the hate crimes provisions to incite hatred or promote genocide against any identifiable group.
- ◉ <http://www.cle.bc.ca/CLE/Stay+Current/Collection/2003/9/03-fedleg-hatecrimesgay.htm>

WAYS THAT HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA AFFECT GLBTQ YOUTH

Homophobia and transphobia make many GLBTQ youth feel isolated, lonely, and ashamed.

Homophobia and transphobia create an environment in which GLBTQ youth may have to face harassment and even violence in their schools, communities and/or homes.

Homophobia and transphobia make some GLBTQ youth 'act straight' to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Homophobia forces many gay, lesbian, bisexual, and questioning youth to become sexually active before they really want to, choosing partners of the opposite sex just to hide their sexual orientation or their questions. Transphobia forces many transgender youth to become sexually active before they really want to just so they can hide their gender identity.

Homophobia and transphobia contribute to the self-doubt that makes many GLBTQ youth turn to drugs and/or alcohol to numb their feelings.

Homophobia and transphobia cause many GLBTQ youth to drop out of school and/or run away.

Homophobia and transphobia cause many GLBTQ youth to think about and/or even attempt suicide. Many of the youth who kill themselves are GLBTQ.

HOW HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA AFFECT STRAIGHT YOUTH

[HTTP://WWW.ADVOCATESFORYOUTH.ORG/LESSONPLANS/ACTIVISTALLY2.HTM](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/lessonplans/activistally2.htm)

Homophobia and transphobia pressure straight people to act unkindly or even cruelly towards GLBTQ people and encourage bullying and cruelty toward anyone whose appearance or behavior isn't sufficiently 'macho' or 'feminine' (from the viewpoint of the bully).

Homophobia and transphobia force straight people to act 'straight,' limiting their individuality and self-expression. Straight youth often choose their clothes, hair color/style, friends, and even behavior to 'prove' that they are not GLBTQ.

Homophobia and transphobia can destroy family relationships. Some parents, sisters, brothers, and even grandparents break off their relationships with GLBTQ family members.

Homophobia and transphobia lead many straight youth to become sexually active before they really want to just to 'prove' they are straight.

Homophobia, along with racism, sexism, and poverty, makes it hard to end the HIV epidemic.

Homophobia and transphobia make it very hard for straight people and GLBTQ people to be friends.

Homophobia and transphobia make it nearly impossible for people to appreciate diversity and the wonderful variety that exists among all people.

BC SAFE SCHOOLS TASK FORCE, (2003) SUBMISSION 3: ...ONE STUDENT WAS QUOTED

- “When I came out, fag, faggot, and queer were shouted at me as I walked down the hall. It escalated into violence in the second semester when my locker was torched. In grade 12 it got worse. I couldn’t use the student washroom because guys would harass me until I left and signs started to appear saying things like, “No fags allowed”... “I was too afraid to stay at school in early February I dropped out of school and I won’t get my diploma at a public school because I am too afraid to go.”

SB'S VIEW

NANAIMO

- ◉ Being in a smallish town, you're not exposed to queer, gay, or trans culture or people very much and when you are, it's all negative.
- ◉ I think that if there had been a GSA maybe I would have figured my shit out a lot earlier in life.
- ◉ I don't know many queer or trans kids in Nanaimo....most people just leave or hide
- ◉ People just assume you're straight...we need to stop assuming everyone is straight...

STRUGGLES WE HAD

- ◉ Difficult to find Canadian Content, because GSA originated in the United States
- ◉ Information not available to us due to charges for some documents
- ◉ The BCTF has a handbook yet it is not available to download, feels as though there are walls in place
- ◉ There are no services like this in Nanaimo
- ◉ We attempted to contact those currently involved in GSA's but received little response

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- ◉ When starting a GSA you are eligible to receive financing for GSA events or to establish GSA clubs in BC
- ◉ Club youth leaders are given money, bursaries, to further their education

BEING OUT: LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDER YOUTH IN BC: AN ADOLESCENT HEALTH STUDY, THE MCCREARY REPORT (1999)

- ◉ 17% (2/15) of LGBT students were physically assaulted
- ◉ 28% (4/15) of youth said that their teachers sometimes/often made homophobic remarks
- ◉ 34% (5/15) of LGBT students were threatened with violence
- ◉ 63% (10/15) of LGBT students have been verbally abused
- ◉ 82% (12/15) of youth reported that students made homophobic remarks at school

ACTIVITY

- ◉ Goal: Including people rather than excluding...embracing rather than tolerating
- ◉ 2/15 write “assault”
- ◉ 4/15 write “teachers”
- ◉ 5/15 write “violence”
- ◉ 10/15 write “abuse”
- ◉ 12/15 write “youth”
- ◉ 15/15 write “difference”
- ◉ 15/15 can make a difference...
- ◉ and so can one!

FINAL THOUGHT

- “You don’t have to be Black, First Nations or Asian to know that racial slurs hurt people. And you do not have to be gay or lesbian...to know that these homophobic putdowns also hurt people.” (GALE BC)

