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Remembering Lawrence King Action Guide





February 12th is the anniversary of the school shooting that claimed the life of openly gay, gender nonconforming eighth-grader Lawrence King at E.O. Green Junior High School in Oxnard, CA in 2008.

Students are preparing to remember and honor Lawrence King, who according to classmates was regularly harassed because of his sexual orientation and gender expression. King, who sometimes wore make up to school, was killed by a male classmate. Allegedly King had asked the student to be his valentine.

Though King's death was among the most publicized hate crimes since the murder of Matthew Sheppard in 1998, the persistent harassment that King faced at school is not unique. The 2007 National School Climate Survey found that in the past school year:

- Nearly nine-tenths of LGBT students (86.2%) reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation and two-thirds (66.5%) because of their gender expression.
- Over one fifth (22.1%) of LGBT students reported being physically assaulted at school in the past school year because of their sexual orientation and over a tenth (14.2%) because of their gender expression.
- Three in five LGBT students (60.8%) said they feel unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation and over one third (38.4%) because of their gender expression.

Here is what you can do to honor Lawrence King

Inform:

- Ask your administration to let your Gay-Straight Alliance club make an announcement on the PA system asking for a 30 second vow of silence to remember Lawrence King. Include who he was and why remembering him is important for you and your school.
- Make an altar for Lawrence King to visually represent the violence LGBTQ students face. Ask to display it at school. Include the time and place where your GSA meets so students can get more involved with your club.
- Write a letter to your campus newspaper demanding that violence against LGBTQ people stop. Write about Lawrence King and why it's important for your school to stand up to hate. Give the time and place where your GSA meets.
- Organize an anti-violence assembly at your school. Invite speakers who can either talk about Lawrence King's life and death or about the violence in schools against LGBTQ youth.
- Work with other students or groups on campus to organize a "No Violence Week." Have discussions, show movies, or make posters about the violence and bullying in our schools.

Mobilize:

- Dedicate a GSA meeting to discussing violence against LGBTQ individuals. What can your GSA do to make your school safer?
- Organize a teach-in for teachers and administrators at your school. Teach them about the harassment and discrimination faced by LGBTQ students at your school and in the country. Make sure you include information on what the law says they have to do to keep LGBTQ students safe.
- Review your school's policies and see if they include LGBTQ students. See if your school's discipline and school safety plans include ways to fight against homophobia and transphobia. If they don't suggest better policies that include fighting homophobia and transphobia. We can help you with this!
- Hold a candlelight vigil on or around the anniversary of Lawrence King's death. Here are some tips on how your GSA can do this:
 - Choose a date, time and central location in your school, like a lunch quad.
 - Create an outline of what will happen during the vigil ? who will speak, who will bring candles, what pictures and readings you will use, etc. You may want to have an open mic session where people can share their thoughts and feelings.
 - Ask your administration for permission. Show them the outline you created. Clearly explain who Lawrence King was, how he died, and why remembering his death is important.
 - Once you have permission, make flyers promoting the vigil and distribute them

throughout your school.

- Make an announcement through your school bulletin system.
- Register your event at: <http://www.rememberinglawrence.org/> ^[1]
- Record the vigil with pictures and/or video. Upload your pictures and video to YouTube, or your GSA's Facebook / Myspace pages.
- Let GSA Network know what you're doing or if you need help! Contact us at info@gsanetwork.org ^[2]

Tips for Planning a Successful Event to Honor Lawrence King

Before:

- **Make a Plan:** Your GSA should prepare for how exactly you want to approach the day and what you want it to consist of.
- **Create a Timeline:** After deciding on your club's goal, you should make a timeline so that everyone knows what needs to be done. Be sure to include who is in charge of each item and when it needs to be finished.
- **Get More People Involved:** Try to get as many people as possible aware of the event and involved in participating. You could do that by sending out e-mail announcements, advertising in the school newspaper, putting up flyers and posters, and of course by word of mouth.
- **Get Teachers/Administrators/Staff Involved:** Find out if staff are interested in participating and schedule a meeting with your principal!
- **Build Coalitions/Build Bridges:** Consider including other school clubs that may be interested in collaborating on the event. Also contact local community groups like PFLAG, an accepting religious group, your local LGBT center or other nearby GSAs, and ask them to join with you.
- **Issue a Press Release:** Let the local media know about what you are doing to honor Lawrence King. Describe the events at your school, history of the event, and use some quotes from GSA members about why you are doing the event. Be sure to include a phone number for how a reporter can reach your group to follow-up for interviews.
- **Be Prepared!** Have a meeting to discuss positive ways to handle harassment from non-participants. Be prepared to have prepared spokespersons from your group who can speak about the event.

During:

- **Announce the Event:** Post an announcement in the daily bulletin or through the PA system at school explaining the event and requesting that all staff and students be respectful of the students participating in the project.
- **Coordinate Volunteers:** Ask people to help setup your event. Make sure that you have enough people for setup, monitoring the event, and cleanup.
- **Provide Resources:** Have a resource spot or staffed table where people can find info about your GSA or other LGBTQ groups and resources.
- **Organize Visual Displays:** Organize a visual display such as having your participants wear a sticker or T-shirt, or put up posters all over campus explaining the event.

After:

- **Keep in touch:** Invite those who attended the event to join your GSA in fighting homophobia and transphobia year-round.
- **Continue the Education:** Host a discussion about how to raise awareness everyday, not just one day out of the year.
- **Evaluate the Event:** Evaluate the successes of the day and discuss what improvements could be made for next year.

Additional Resources

Tips on Planning a Successful Event

<https://gsanetwork.org/resources/gsa-actions-events/planning-events> ^[3]

Tips on How to Make Your School a Hate Free Zone

<https://gsanetwork.org/resources/gsa-actions-events/making-your-school-hate-free-zone> ^[4]

Know Your Rights! Information on the Legal Rights of GSAs and LGBTQ students

<https://gsanetwork.org/resources/legal-resources> ^[5]

Links

[1] <http://www.rememberinglawrence.org/>

[2] <mailto:info@gsanetwork.org>

[3] <https://gsanetwork.org/resources/gsa-actions-events/planning-events%20%20>

[4] <https://gsanetwork.org/resources/gsa-actions-events/making-your-school-hate-free-zone%20%20>

[5] <https://gsanetwork.org/resources/legal-resources%20>