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## **Speak Out -- LGBT Youth Empowerment in USA Today**

Sep. 2, 2011

USA Today spoke to GSA Network's Executive Director Carolyn Laub and featured five ways to Make It Better in a supplement by MediaPlanet! Click below to see a larger version of the page on bullying:



**Question:** How can teachers and other school leaders help provide a safe environment for youth?  
**Answer:** They can educate themselves about LGBT issues and promote equality in the classroom.

# Combating bullying

The schoolyard bully is a cliché of books and television. In reality, however, bullying can have serious, lasting consequences. And young people who are bullied because of their sexual orientation or gender identity often have fewer resources to help them.



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Nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students experienced verbal or physical harassment at school in the previous year, according to a 2009 study by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). This was linked to increased depression and anxiety and decreased self-esteem. One of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, says that students feel bullied because of not as perceived social orientation, or gender identity experience. "Disproportionately high rates of negative consequences," including lower grades, dropping out of school, depression, and substance abuse. (Thomas Korman 2014, reproductive

discourse of the matchstick man, the nation's oldest and largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) at-risk youth service provider, says that even when resources exist for LGBT youth, they are not open about being LGBT). Teachers and school administrators must educate themselves about bullying issues and connect to students' safety, "regardless of their own personal beliefs," Korman asserts. "Safe space is a school isn't a privilege, it's a young person's right."

Anti-bullying policies exist and focus on including policies are a good first step toward awareness and accountability, he says, but must have adequate funding for monitoring and evaluating, resources, and staff training. Although adults must take action, Korman says, "students are leading this movement." One step is by forming gay-straight alliance (GSA) clubs to support each other and create positive change. There are some over 4,000 clubs around the country, many with a large percentage of straight allies. Students feel safer if their school simply has a GSA, the

study found, such as that "the healthy use amplified."

And U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan issued a letter to state education leaders that the law requires every school to have anti-bullying policies, including those that address bullying and harassment for everyone.

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**Safe Schools**  
The presence of anti-LGBT language and discrimination are proven to have a negative effect on LGBT students' achievement. The safety of intervention can help boost the positive effects of a hostile school climate and promote a positive educational experience.

**The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**  
The leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. glsen.org

**GSA Network**  
A youth leadership organization that connects school-based gay-straight alliances (GSAs) to each other and community resources through peer support, leadership development, and training. gsa-network.org

**It Gets Better Project**  
Share personal videos that revealed LGBT teenagers that they are not alone—and it might help! itgetsbetter.org

**PFLAG Safe Schools For All**  
Collaborating Respect, a program to train and certify members to go directly into schools with community resources, staff training, model policies, and resource programs that address bullying and harassment. pflag.org

**American Civil Liberties Union LGBT Project**  
Schools and youth working to make public schools safe and free for LGBT students, defending their free speech in school, and making today's laws more like the advanced rights of youth schools.

**The Matthew Shepard Foundation**  
Supports diversity programs in education and helps youth organizations establish environments where young people can feel safe and be themselves. matthewshepard.org

**Safe Schools Coalition**  
An international public-private partnership support of gay/lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth. safeschoolscoalition.org

**StopsBullying.gov**  
Provides information, resources, and advice on how kids, teens, young adults, parents, educators and others in the community can prevent or stop bullying.

**Welcoming Schools**  
An LGBT inclusive approach to addressing family diversity, gender stereotyping and bullying. Includes training, toolkits, and more. calling-it-what-it-is.org

## Make it better now for LGBT youth

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth shouldn't have to suffer through bullying in school. Here are some concrete steps you can take to make it better now for LGBT:

- 1. Support a Gay-Straight Alliance in your school or community. GSAs can be a life-saving source of support for students dealing with bullying. Share this support through a letter to the local paper, helping raise money for the club, or creating an online site like donating books that address lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth issues to the local library.

2. Inform your school and spread the word that homophobic and transphobic abuse are unacceptable.

3. Advocate for a non-discrimination or anti-bullying policy in your school district that specifically includes protections for students based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Make sure the school district has policies that protect all students experiencing harassment. Know how to get help.

4. Call up your Congressional representatives and tell them to support the Safe Schools Improvement Act.

5. Write a letter! Reach out to your former school's principal, let him or her know what is new for LGBT youth when you return there, and ask the administration to make it better for today's students. Use the "Write a Letter, Make a Difference" template at [www.stopsbullying.gov](http://www.stopsbullying.gov) or [www.gsa-network.org](http://www.gsa-network.org) to make it happen. Write a letter to your representative and to publish your story on its open letter.

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<http://www.mediaplanet.com/> [2]

News Article  
USA Today

Source URL: <http://gsanetwork.org/news/speak-out-lgbt-youth-empowerment-usa-today/090211#comment-0>

### Links

[1] <http://www.makeitbetterproject.org/sites/makeitbetter/files/SpeakOut-USAToday-GSAN.pdf>

[2] <http://www.mediaplanet.com/>