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## Countdown to History

Dec. 7, 2011 ? Jill



For California GSAs, January 1st doesn't just mean a new year; it means a new era! That's when the **Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act goes into effect**, requiring the inclusion of LGBTQ people and people with disabilities in social studies classes.

While you have the **right** to a FAIR education starting in 2012, that doesn't mean that all California history classes will suddenly be inclusive at the stroke of midnight. Making a new law real, or implementing it, requires a lot of work. And since all of this implementation happens at the local level, **YOU** can work this month to make sure that your school's FAIR come January!

### 1. Observe

Before taking action, figure out what's happening at your school. Pay attention in your social science classes, like history, sociology, and social studies. Did your teachers mention disability and LGBTQ issues or history? Were LGBTQ people portrayed negatively just because of their sexual orientation or gender identity? If you're not sure, talk to your teacher, let them know about the FAIR Education Act, and ask them what their plan is to make your class FAIR. If you are learning about LGBTQ and disabled history in a non-discriminatory way: congratulations! That's awesome. Now, check in with your friends to see if their classes are FAIR, too.



## 2. Report

With your help, GSA Network will be keeping track of which schools follow the new law, and which ones still need help. **On January 1st, we'll launch our FAIR/unFAIR website** where you can report your findings, good or bad, to GSA Network. Keep an eye out for it at [www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR](http://www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR) [1] and in the meantime, start talking to your teachers!

## 3. Campaign

If not all the social studies classes in your school are including LGBTQ and disabled people, you can change it by organizing a campaign to make your school FAIR! [Go to our website to download a complete campaign guide](#) [1] to fight for LGBTQ-inclusive lessons in your school.

Here are some first steps:

- **Talk to your teachers!** Do you have a teacher who you think might be supportive? Approach them, explain the importance of the FAIR Education Act, and point them to resources for teaching LGBT-inclusive and disability-inclusive history.
- **Work with the superintendent's staff.** Research your school district's structure, and figure out who's responsible for new curriculum. Talking to a supportive teacher and asking them for help in learning about your district is a good way to figure out who to talk to. For example, many school districts have an Assistant Superintendent in charge of curriculum instruction. Remember that you can always go to your school district's website to check out who is in charge of curriculum or instruction. No matter where your school is in the process of implementation, this is a great person to meet with.
- When talking to administrators, **make it clear that the FAIR Education Act is the law**, and that they need to follow it. From there, discuss how your district is doing in efforts to follow the law. Be ready to share any challenges you've seen blocking your school from including LGBTQ and disabled people in your social studies classes. Do teachers and principals know about the law and understand its requirements? Do educators have the materials they need to incorporate LGBT and disability history into their lessons? Outline these issues with the administration and Superintendent's staff, and develop a plan for addressing them.

The FAIR Education Act was passed for students by students, and that puts you in a unique position to demand that **YOUR** rights are being respected. **This law made history ? now let's make it real!**

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### Links

[1] <https://gsanetwork.org/FAIR>