

PEER EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

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Educating your peers about issues of sexual orientation and homophobia can be one of the most effective ways to make your school safer for LGBTQ students. GSAs are a great base for starting an peer education program around LGBTQ issues. If your GSA is planning to organize and lead classroom anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia workshops, keep these things in mind as you go along.



Ahead of Time:

- **Consider attending a formal training.**

GSA Network offers trainings for potential anti-homophobia peer educators – we'll tell you everything you need to know about developing and leading classroom workshops. Call our office to set up a training at your school or in your area.

- **Figure out what you need to do to get the workshop(s) approved by the school.**

Talk to your advisor and meet with administrators and/or other faculty members. Present them with a potential workshop agenda and be able to tell them why you think this is an important thing to do.

- **Find a teacher.**

Find a teacher who is supportive and who thinks their class would be receptive to your presentation. This may be a teacher who attends GSA meetings or one you know is supportive in other ways. Often, health teachers and social studies teachers are interested in having this topic discussed in their class. Talk with them about how they can support you and discuss how they will handle any disruptions that might occur.

- **Gauge the climate of the classroom.**

Talk with the teacher or give a pre-workshop survey to find out what folks already know, what they have misconceptions about, and what they want to learn.

- **Practice!**



In the Classroom

- **Draw connections.**

Try to draw connections between your workshop and what the teacher is teaching. (For example, in a history class, connect the workshop to LGBTQ historical figures and history of the LGBTQ movement)

- **Invite an administrator or another teacher.**

Invite a supportive Administrator to see your workshop if you'd like to do it in other classes. Also, other teachers might like to see what you propose doing in their classes, so feel free to invite them.

- **Make it clear that you do not speak for the entire LGBTQ community.**

Make this disclaimer at the beginning of the workshop. You do not speak for every LGBTQ individual in the world, and you shouldn't be expected to represent your entire community. You can only speak from your personal experience. [Use "I" statements.]

- **Define and clarify the terms you use.**

Not everyone will be as versed as you in LGBTQ issues and language. You should define the terms you use, such as "sexual orientation" or gender identity," to make sure that everyone understands what you mean. If you decide to use words such as "queer" or "dyke," you should also discuss what they mean to you and why you are choosing to use them when others may not.

- **Not everyone will agree with you.**

The entire reason you are doing the workshop is to increase awareness. People will disagree with you, and that's okay as long as they are not disruptive. Be respectful of others' beliefs.

- **Stick to your purpose.**

You are there to do an anti-homophobia workshop, not a sex education workshop. Unfortunately, for many people the instant you mention "gay," they think sex. An anti-homophobia workshop is about making schools safer – free from harassment and violence.

- **Be Honest.**

Above all else, be honest about what you know. If you don't know an answer, that's okay – just tell them that you don't know.

Afterward

- **Learn from your evaluations.**

Make sure you give folks enough time to fill them out, and be open to constructive criticism. Don't let the overly negative ones get you down, though.

