



# Tips&Tactics

An organizational development resource for chapters

## UPCOMING DATES:

Coming Out Day: Oct 11, 2005

<http://www.hrc.org>

Day of Silence: April 26, 2006

<http://www.dayofsilence.org>

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## So you want your schools to be safe for GLBTQ students?

Where do you start? We are all aware that schools have varying levels of safety and respect for GLBTQ youth and staff. Some are progressive, very aware and pro-active in their approach to student safety. More often than not, students suffer horribly from bullying and harassment from their peers and even from their teachers and administrators. Studies find that students respond with depression, truancy, lower grades, and even suicide.

Every chapter has a goal to address the issue of safe schools. Some have been actively working with educators for many years; many are being blocked or are unsure of where to begin. PFLAG chapters are making a difference in schools in many different ways. Some ideas:

- First find out the state of the schools in your community. What are the anti-bullying policies? Is staff trained in how to address GLBT issues? Learn as much as you can about the state of the schools with regard to GLBTQ youth and staff.
- Who are your allies in the community? Find out who in your chapter knows whom. Get started on a coalition to address bullying and harassment in the schools.
- Consider some of the many small ways that PFLAG chapters have made a difference across the country – check the list of “25 Ways PFLAG Makes Schools Safer Every Day” at <http://www.pflag.org/index.php?id=121>.

### *Safe Schools Checklist*

How do we go about creating the necessary changes? The first step is to identify and assess policies, practices and services in our schools. Here are benchmarks of a school that is inclusive and safe for GLBT youth:

- Has a harassment policy or student bill of rights that explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression that is being implemented, monitored, and enforced. (For suggested model anti-harassment policies, see Resources section.)
- Provides annual, mandatory training for teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses and Title IX coordinators and other staff about sexual orientation and gender identity, and on anti-GLBT bullying intervention.
- Has a student group for GLBT and straight students.
- Has accurate information in the library on GLBT lives, history and issues.
- Makes accommodations for students identifying as transgender including bathroom use, dress codes and athletic teams.
- Has information available in school counselor and psychologist offices for questioning students to help them address their concerns.

## *New Resource for Chapters*

This year PFLAG National has produced a Safe Schools Manual on CD for distribution to chapters and safe schools allies across the country. We depend on chapter input to keep it effective in supporting your work in your communities.

The Safe Schools CD includes outlines and handouts that are being used in PFLAG safe schools workshops around the country as well as supplemental resources produced by allied organizations like GLSEN, the ACLU and Lambda Legal. We recommend using the bookmarks tab on the left side of the PDF file to assist you in finding your way around the manual – it contains over 300 pages of material that can be overwhelming if you're only looking for one document!

To get one for your chapter, email [schools@pflag.org](mailto:schools@pflag.org). The first CD is free; each additional one is \$2.00 which includes postage. The material is in PDF format and can be copied to your computer. If you have the ability to burn CD's, you have permission to do so as long as you credit PFLAG National. The resource can also be added to a CD you produce with your local chapter resources included. If you need any assistance with this process, contact the Safe Schools Coordinator.

### *What parents, teachers and counselors need to know about gender variant youth:*

The first thing we all need to do for our gender variant students is examine our own gender stereotypes and their effect on students. So much of what we know about "anti-gay" hostility is rooted in gender expectations.

- Do we insist on a particular dress code?
- Can we expect every senior to fit into the tux/low-cut gown dichotomy for yearbook photos?
- Are gender neutral rest rooms available for students?

Resources include: PFLAG's TNET resource, "Our Trans Children" available on the PFLAG website those from the Safe Schools Coalition at [http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-gender\\_nonconforming\\_trans\\_youth.html](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-gender_nonconforming_trans_youth.html).

## *Tips: Is your PTA ready for PFLAG support?*

Find your local and state PTA contacts:

[http://www.pta.org/jp\\_find\\_your\\_pta.html](http://www.pta.org/jp_find_your_pta.html)

- Who do you know who is in your local PTA, on the board, or active on committees at the district or state level?
- Find out how they support PTA's commitment to stop bullying in the schools.
- Are they willing to schedule and host a workshop for parents on GLBT safety?
- Is the state organization ready for your assistance in their conference?
  - Find out when the conference is and who the conference planner is.
  - Submit an application to be included as an exhibitor.
  - Submit an anti-bullying workshop proposal – National staff can provide a PowerPoint template.
  - Workshops are generally approved as much as a year before the event, so get your proposal in early!
- PFLAG National can provide copies of the brochure, "From Our House to the Schoolhouse" as handouts. If you'd like to distribute the Safe Schools Manual on CD, contact us to arrange for production and shipment of the estimated number you'll need.
- What else can you distribute? Some state coalitions have distributed "Diversity Beans" (see [www.diversitybeans.com](http://www.diversitybeans.com)); some have made rainbow bracelets available. Make sure participants know how to reach you once the conference is over.

PFLAG chapters in California, Colorado, New York and North Carolina were welcomed at their statewide PTA conference exhibit halls this year. It can be done!



*About PFOX: How is it affecting GLBT youth in the schools?*

Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and Gays (PFOX) was formed in 1996 with \$100,000 provided by the deeply anti-GLBT Focus on the Family. The similarity to the name of PFLAG is no coincidence – PFOX was formed in a deliberate effort to mimic the appearance of PFLAG’s model and piggy back on PFLAG’s well-earned reputation. PFOX has since struggled to cultivate an aura of credibility by presenting the “family” side of the harsh anti-GLBT right wing agenda.

How is this affecting our work in the schools?

- The conservative Liberty Counsel represented PFOX in mid-2005 in a case against the Montgomery County, MD, School Board in order to block implementation of a new Family Life curriculum that included a few segments on sexual orientation. The suit was successful due to a reference to religion in the teacher’s notes, and the school district quickly settled in order to end the matter. While PFOX has trumpeted this as a huge victory, and is using the case to intimidate other school districts, it will be short lived as the school board is still intent on updating their curriculum and has made no promises about including PFOX’s religion-based perspective on sexual orientation.
- PFOX was excluded from the National PTA conference in 2005 while PFLAG was accepted. Their attempt to garner national attention for being excluded was ignored by mainstream press, although this exclusion has been portrayed as discrimination against “ex-gays” in the conservative Christian media.

*What can PFLAG chapters do to address attempts to stop our continued progress?*

- Continue to press for comprehensive sex education in your local schools and on the national level. For guidelines, consult SIECUS <http://www.siecus.org/pubs/guidelines/guideintl.pdf>
- Continue to support youth and educators in their efforts to establish Gay/Straight Alliances in the schools. These organizations do include youth and adults who might consider themselves “ex-gay.”
- Continue efforts to establish and implement effective anti-bullying policies at the local, state and federal levels.
- Stay vigilant and educated about what goes on in your schools and communities! If you have any concerns about upcoming events in your community, contact PFLAG National for assistance.

*Establishing a support system for youth*

Many PFLAG chapters have expanded their successful safe schools work to create safe spaces for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth outside of school buildings and in community programs. These programs are often life saving for youth and provide a haven in a hostile world. It is important that we carefully examine our commitment and resources, and build a strong foundation for all of our youth work.

PFLAG guidelines for working with youth can be found on the Safe Schools Manual on CD as well as on the PFLAG web site.

[http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/Guidelines\\_for\\_Working\\_with\\_Youth.pdf](http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/Guidelines_for_Working_with_Youth.pdf)

Be sure to check out the **Safe Schools Training Workshops** available to PFLAG chapters and their allies. These include Overview, Coalition Building, Train the Trainer, and Strategic Planning sessions, and can be modeled to fit your chapter and community needs.

<http://www.pflag.org/index.php?id=128>

### *Anti-bullying legislation and policies*

What do your state board of education and school district say about bullying and harassment in the schools? Is there any policy in writing that specifically includes GLBTQ students, mentioning “sexual orientation” and “gender identity or expression” as protected classifications of students and staff?

One of the first steps we can take in our safe schools work is *find out what safeguards are already in place*, if any. Look for non-discrimination, anti-harassment, and anti-bullying policies for students and staff. Check out the history of these policies; how long ago were they revisited? Is there a plan in place to revise/review?

If there is no district policy, do two things:

- find out who in your chapter knows someone on the School Board, and
- find out what student and staff policies are in place in the individual schools

Then you lobby for change, which is a whole other issue of *Tips & Tactics!*

See <http://www.pflag.org/fileadmin/nonprofit.pdf>.

### *National PTA Summary, June 2005*

National PFLAG Staff attended the National PTA conference in Columbus OH in June, presenting a workshop on safe schools for GLBTQ students and providing safe schools information in the conference exhibit hall. The Ohio Chapters provided substantial support in pulling off a successful conference experience.

The highlight of the workshop was an overview of the impassioned work of Rev. Larry Rezash and Dr. Fred Peterson in the Dayton OH area schools. They have been providing educator workshops for many years, and they have created a resource notebook for distribution.

They also stayed after the workshop to answer questions at the PFLAG booth in the exhibition hall. Dan Tepfer, OH State coordinator, his wife Nancy, and Jamie Burgess of the Dayton Chapter were also generous with their time at the booth. Regional Director, Mike Neubecker, and his wife Jan, and Board member David Horowitz and his wife Toby all made a huge difference by telling their stories to PTA registrants who visited the booth.

### *Good anti-bullying policy components:*

On the state and district level, it is important to

- include students, teachers, employees, and staff
- explicitly list the categories of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression for protection
- protect individuals based on their “actual or perceived” sexual orientation and gender identity or expression
- protect them based on their association with any person who falls into one of the protected categories
- provide for each district to establish
  - enforcement mechanisms,
  - notice of the policy to students, parents and staff, and
  - staff training programs.



Nancy Tepfer, Jan and Mike Neubecker, Judy Hoff, David and Toby Horowitz at the PFLAG booth, National PTA conference in Columbus OH