

Practical Strategies for Safe Schools Work:

- I. Two ways to work---top down (if you have administrative/board support) or bottom up (if you face opposition from the top) Necessary attitude is positive not adversarial. You want to support the school in changing school climate so that all children can learn and succeed in school. Tie to the districts core values.
- II. Does your school district have an inclusive non-discrimination policy? If it does, you are helping the district to fulfill their policy. If it doesn't, the work is harder because they need to be convinced that such a policy is necessary.
- III. Evidence that is most powerful is the youth themselves. Get them to tell or write their stories. If not current students, then graduates.
- IV. Build a coalition so it isn't just a PFLAG project. Strength in broad support. Youth serving agencies, city's human relations commission, churches and synagogues, retired teachers, parents of both straight and glbt children, glbt members, public health, and district teachers, counselors, administrators who are allies. Send letters of endorsement of the Coalition and its goals to Board members.
- V. Work under the radar. Know your board and speak to them one-to-one before an issue comes up. Join committees such as School Improvement team as a community member. Get retired teachers who are known and respected to be spokespersons.
- VI. Encourage self-assessments with faculties, parent groups, student groups. A survey name-calling can include gay harassments but also racial, ethnic, religious, other. Safe School survey asks how students are protected from harassment, do group norms include sexual orientation and gender expression? How are incidents of harassment handled? Are their books in the library to serve the needs of GLBT youth?
- VII. Offer resources. *Everyone Counts: A Resource Guide on GLBT Issues for Educators* Begin with elementary, then middle level, then high school for education---it is a developmental process for children and youth as well as for staff and parents.
- VIII. Work with the district's Diversity Office, whoever works with equity and multicultural education. Frame early workshops as multicultural to include GLBTQ. (Durango) Work for the district to take responsibility for the trainings as part of professional development for all teachers.
- IX. Talk with the opposition. Finds points of agreement: all children should be safe. Avoid headlines because they bring out the opposition and increase misunderstanding and controversy. Administrators hate controversy.
- X. Never give up. Network. Ask for help. Be Patient. Never give up.