Creating Safe Spaces for LGBTQ youth

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empowering LGBTQ youth

Introductions

Goals for this workshop

- Identify and discuss the nature myths and facts about bullying
- Explore the impacts of anti-LGBT bullying on students in DC
- Explore strategies to create safe spaces
- Share tools and best practices
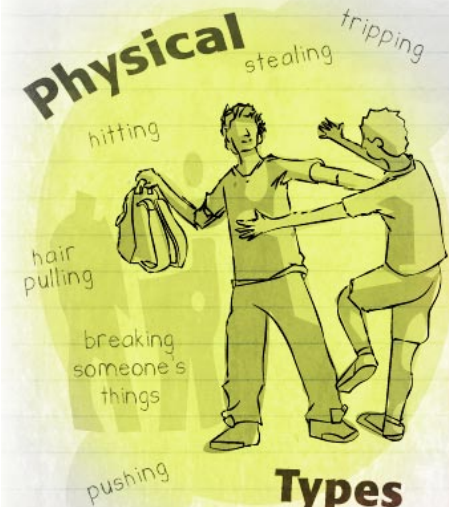
Bullying Mythology

- Everyone gets bullied, it's a part of growing up
- Being bullied as children makes us stronger adults
- Girls will be girls, boys will be boys
- Bullies are "bad" or "troubled" children
- Monitoring words like "fag" or "that's so gay" can stop bullying
- Others…?

Bullying Facts

- An estimated 1 in 3 youth are bullied in US schools
- Students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression had lower grade point averages than students who were less often harassed (2.9 vs. 3.2).
- Students who experienced higher levels of victimization in school because of their sexual orientation or gender expression were more than twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education (e.g., college or trade school) than those who experienced lower levels (10.7% vs. 5.1
- Bullying is a social behavior, that is taught and reinforced by social systems in our schools and communities. It can therefore also be untaught.
- Policing or banning words does to address the underlying social system which not only allows bullying but rewards it.

The Anatomy of Bullying

As is the case with any other type of violence, harassment or abuse, bullying can take many forms all of which are detrimental to a young person's wellbeing.

What makes a space safe?

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- Pay attention to the identities of the students in your classroom
  - Youth are often targets of bullying because of their perceived or actual race, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, class, language
- Address bullying when and where it happens
- Reevaluate how we reward and praise dominant identities as a school community
  - E.g Celebrating normative expressions of gender with school-wide pep rallies for sports teams
- Believe students when they report bullying to you

Anti-LGBT Bullying Resources

- Get support starting a GSA at your school
  - http://smyal.org/programs_gsa.php
- Sample Curricula
  - www.glsen.org
- More research
  www.queeringeducation.org