

Think Before You Speak

Campaign Sponsor: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVE:

Reduce and prevent the use of homophobic language among teens.

BACKGROUND:

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) teens in the U.S. experience homophobic remarks and harassment throughout the school day, creating an atmosphere where they feel disrespected, unwanted and unsafe. GLSEN's research finds that three-quarters of LGBT teens hear slurs such as "faggot" or "dyke" frequently or often at school, and nine in ten reports hearing anti-LGBT language frequently or often. Homophobic remarks such as "that's so gay" are the most commonly heard type of biased remarks at school. Research also shows that these slurs are often unintentional and are a part of teens' vernacular. Most do not recognize the consequences, but the casual use of this language often carries over into more overt harassment.

CAMPAIGN DESCRIPTION:

The new campaign aims to raise awareness among straight teens about the prevalence and consequences of anti-LGBT bias and behavior in America's schools. Ultimately, the goal is to reduce and prevent the use of homophobic language in an effort to create a more positive environment for LGBT teens. The campaign also aims to reach adults, including school personnel and parents, because their support of this message is crucial to the success of efforts to change behavior among the target age group.

TARGET AUDIENCE:

Teens in grades 8-12.

DID YOU KNOW:

- Nearly a third of LGBT students missed school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (more than two-thirds report that they feel unsafe).*
- Almost 90% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; almost half were physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; also more than half experienced some form of electronic harassment (cyberbullying) in the past year.*
- Sexual orientation and gender expression were the most common reasons students were harassed at school.*

*Based on data from GLSEN's 2007 National School Climate Survey

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