

How to Plan: LGBTQ Pride Assembly

Audience: Middle School (or High School with modifications)

OBJECTIVES

By this activity, students will:

- Increase awareness of LGBT history and culture
- Have an opportunity to express their support of LGBT students and staff.
- Celebrate LGBTQ identity and culture outside the context of bullying, discrimination and suicide

TIME

- 45 to 60 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Auditorium gym or theatre space
- A/V equipment (laptop, speakers, projector, projection screen, lights)
- Decorations for the stage (LGBTQ letters, rainbow flag, props for skits)

DIRECTIONS

- ❖ Planning an LGBTQ assembly requires commitment from LGBTQ club students. Make sure everyone understands that this is a celebration of community and diversity, rather than an anti-bullying event. Make sure your students are interested and committed in making the assembly possible.
- 💬 Discuss with students the significance of SFUSD's April LGBTQ Pride month. Our district is unique in that we encourage schools to celebrate pride, and recognize the contributions of the LGBTQ community.
- 💬 This event may require holding extra LGBTQ club meetings during lunch or after school to complete projects related to the assembly. Create lists of to-dos and timelines to keep students and on track.

Facilitator Note: October's LGBTQ Spirit (Purple) Day or Pink Tsunami and April's LGBTQ Pride Assembly can be coordinated to bookend LGBTQ awareness-building and learning in a school year. While the intent of LGBTQ Spirit Day is to raise support for the issues that impact LGBTQ youth (i.e. bullying, acceptance, suicide), the LGBTQ Pride or Drag Show assemblies focus on the positive, joyous and empowered aspects of the LGBTQ experience.

BEFORE THE SHOW: Here are some initial steps to take to plan for a pride assembly:

- 1. Meet with administration early in the spring semester to discuss the assembly.** It is important that they understand the intent, district policies and support related to the event, rather than contextualizing it in a vacuum. Set a date in or near April for the assembly, taking into account April testing schedule.

2. Make an announcement during a staff meeting

Gather support for the event and ask for staff volunteers to help set up, participate, or clean up. Encourage teachers to incorporate a discussion about LGBTQ pride in history in the week leading up to the assembly (i.e. why are we doing it and why it's important)

3. Work with your students to plan a program for the assembly.

The brainstorming and planning should happen early spring. The program should be educational, fun and engaging. See sample agenda from **Denman Middle School** on page 82. Below are some ideas of program elements that can be included:

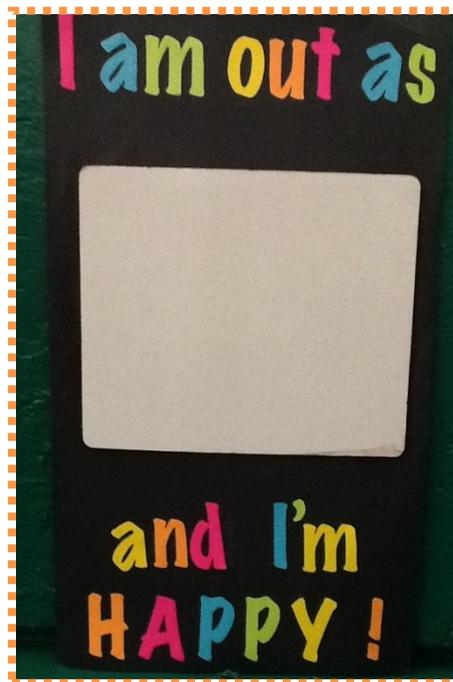
➤ "I'm out as..." Slideshow

- **What:** A slide show of students coming out as any identity category: ethnicity, location, sexuality/gender (LGBTQ), affinity (rap, gamer, k-pop, anime fan), or spiritual
- **How:** Have a conversation about "coming out" with students. Explain its meaning, and its importance in LGBTQ history, use this Harvey Milk quote as a starting point for the discussion:

☞ "Every gay person must come out. As difficult as it is, you must tell your immediate family. You must tell your relatives. You must tell your friends if indeed they are your friends. You must tell the people you work with...Once they realize that we are indeed their children, that we are indeed everywhere, every myth, every lie, every innuendo will be destroyed once and all. And once you do, you will feel so much better."

Create a poster with a small dry erase board for students to write whatever identity they would like to be "out" as. Write examples on the other side. Arrange with your club to spend a few lunch meetings taking pictures of students with the sign

Create a slideshow for the assembly. Aim to have a broad diversity of identities represented. This includes activities or affinity (i.e. "gamer" or "1Direction Fan") to cultural/ethnic (i.e. Pinoy," "Black and Proud," "Muslim" or "Mexicana") to LGBTQ identities. Students and staff, including non-certificated staff, should be represented.



Note on LGBTQ students coming out during assemblies: Always have one-on-one conversations with any LGBTQ student who desires to come out during any school event. Conversations must be supportive and affirming, and help think through their decision. In this conversation gauge how the student will handle reactions, their current level of support (inside/outside of school), and create a safety plan.

Example of questions to help students think through decision:

- “What makes you happy about this idea?”
- “What makes you concerned or worried?”
- “How will you feel if people cheer you?”
- “What will you do if some people boo you?”

Example of questions to gauge current support:

- “Are you out to any friends at school?”
- “How will they support you when you come out?”
- “Are your (parent(s)/caregivers) aware that you want to do this?”

Example of questions to initiate safety planning:

- “How can I support you with this decision?”
- “Are there other adults at this school you feel comfortable going to if someone harasses you?”
- “Is there anyone outside of school (i.e. caregivers, family) who might find out from other students who you do not want to know?”

Coming out is a process. It is worth telling students that they may have to address questions/comments afterwards. Let students know that you will work with administration and key faculty to support and protect their safety at school.

If the student is out to accepting caregiver(s), encourage them to discuss the decision with them and ask if you could follow up with your own discussion with the caregiver(s). If the caregiver does not know or is unsupportive, it is important that the student works with an LGBTQ support liaison, school counselor and social worker to create a plan for if they find out.

➤ **History of LGBTQ Pride Presentation:**

- **What:** Increase awareness of the history of LGBTQ pride celebrations or milestones of LGBTQ history
- **How:** Club members or Peer Resource students, with the support of a teacher or other adult, can make a Power Point presentation or LGBTQ history timeline about the Stonewall Rebellion and its significance in history. There are substantial resources on the topic on the internet (see below).

➤ **#ALLYPose Selfie Slideshow:**

- **What:** Slideshow with messages supporting LGBTQ students, such as, “I support my LGBT friends,” or “I am an ally for LGBT students,” or “Proud to be an ally!”
- **How:** Students and staff can so take pictures with the signs using their own phones (selfies!) and post them – using the hashtag #ALLYpose -- on social networking sites to increase positive messages about LGBT youth on the

Facilitator Note: This activity is particularly effective in the context of having held other cultural pride assemblies. The message to which we would like to expose our students is that sexual and gender identity are only two of the ways in which students might differ from each other and that LGBT identity and culture is only one of many communities that we can “come out” as, and celebrate in our district.

internet. Encourage students to send you pictures to create a slideshow.

➤ **Videos, Performances or Speakers:**

- **What:** Show a short video (music or informational) that portray LGBTQ community in positive light, invite performers or speakers from a CBO, or from your school community, to perform spoken word, drag, sing, student/teacher dances, fashion shows, host a panel that celebrates LGBTQ culture, community and identity, or emphasizes the importance of a welcoming and supportive school community.
- **How:** Identify students or staff willing to perform or contact CBOS (HIFY, LYRIC, Speakers Bureau, Huckleberry, YouthSpeaks) to find performers or speakers. Vet videos, performances and speakers for age-appropriateness and cultural sensitivity

Note about drag performances: Drag is an art that plays a significant role in LGBTQ history and culture. It is an adaptive art form that is defined and experienced differently within the LGBTQ community depending on ethnicity, gender, class, geographic region, politics, age, generation, etc. Due to this subjectivity, extra sensitivity must be taken when planning a drag performance.

Here are some things to consider during planning:

- Contextualizing performance for students [i.e. what are we about to see and why is it important]
- Differentiating drag as an art form vs. Transgender identity [Drag is what people *do* (art) vs. Transgender is who people *are* (identity)]
- Celebrating gender diversity vs. mocking or reinforcing gender stereotypes

Drag performers, from within our school communities or larger San Francisco community, are welcome within SFUSD. Work with drag performers to set school and age-appropriate language, music and performance expectations. This means monitoring song and dress choice closely. Drag outfits and lyrics **must** be school appropriate. Always remember to add extra time for them to arrive and dress. Trust us - it takes a lot of time and effort to look fierce and fabulous.

➤ **Diversity Trivia Game:**

- **What:** An onstage “Game Show” played with students
- **How:** Guidelines for Diversity Trivia can be found in this facilitation guide. It is recommended that you choose sets of three questions per “contestant” ahead of time, with one LGBT-related question in each set. If your assembly has included a presentation on LGBT history or culture, you may wish to use questions that refer back to that presentation.

➤ **Statement of support from the school administration and PTSA leadership:**

- **What:** School administrators message the importance of having a safe and respectful environment, and support of LGBTQ students. *Especially if any students use the assembly as an opportunity to come out, school administrators make it clear to all students that staff support students in being safe and openly LGBTQ.

- **How:** Include school administrators in opening or closing the assembly to address all participants. Set aside 5-10 minutes for administrators.
4. **Invite MCs, guest speakers or performers 1-2 months before the event.**
 5. **Conduct a rehearsal the week before the assembly**
Make sure you leave 3-5 minutes of extra time for delays and/or complications for the day of the performance. DO NOT go over the allotted time limit as things take to take longer during the actual assembly. If possible, hold another rehearsal the day before the assembly.

DAY OF THE SHOW:

6. **Provide teachers seating chart for their classes.**
Teachers should bring their students to the auditorium after they take attendance.
7. **As students walk in, play a slideshow with music to engage them.**
For example, some schools show pictures of famous LGBTQ people, a timeline of historic LGBTQ events, definitions of important LGBTQ words and clips from drag performances and movies.
8. **Open the show with a dance or video—something that will excite and raise energy.** The show's MC can follow up and officially open the show. Ask your school's principal, students or find a community member to MC.

The MC must be engaging and fun. They will be responsible for speaking between acts, introduce performers and videos, or help buy time if necessary. They should also help make sure the audience is silent and respectful during sensitive moments of the show. This may include testimonials and emotional videos.
9. **Make sure an assembly agenda is available backstage.**
Performers, speakers and staff supports know when they need to be on stage. Assign someone to be a manager backstage so performers and speakers do not miss their cue.
10. **Always thank important contributors, performers, donors and other supports at the end of the show.**
This can be done by the LGBTQ support liaison, student leader, or MC. Make sure this is done before the end of day bell or end of the show.
11. **Ask student and key staff to stay behind to clean up and organize the performance space.**
Always ask staff and students ahead of time so they can expect to spend time after the show to help out. This may also encourage other staff and students to help with clean up.

CLOSING

How can students and staff debrief the event and discuss what worked, what needs to change and steps for next event?

Ideas:

- During a following club meeting (a week or so after the event) have students write down successes, highlights and suggestions for next year. Each person can share one with the group. If possible, film the event and watch with your club to lead this conversation. This is often a nice addition to a celebratory end-of-the-year party.
- Provide a survey to the staff and ask them what they enjoyed, any questions they have and any suggestions for the next year's show. An anonymous survey may provide more truthful responses.
- You may also provide a survey to students through the advisory or homeroom class. Once the assembly has occurred for two or more years, students can begin to compare pieces of the assembly and give more poignant feedback.

Try to focus debrief discussions on making the assembly more educational. It is often easier to make it more entertaining and celebratory, so try to challenge students to make it something that also educates the audience and leaves them with something to think about.

SAMPLE ASSEMBLY PROGRAMS

LGBTQ Pride Assembly

Denman Middle School, March 30th, 2014

45 minutes

1. **Introduction:** Ms. Hensler, LGBTQ Support Liaison (2 Minutes)
2. **HIFY Speakers:** Highlights of the LGBTQ Middle School Initiative at Denman (3-5 minutes)
3. **Slideshow:** #ALLYpose, set to music: *Same Love* (5 minutes)
4. **Diversity Club:** LGBT History Presentation (5 minutes)
5. **What it means to come out:** Ms. Hensler (3 Minutes)
6. **Out and Happy Slideshow:** set to music: *Happy* (5 minutes)
7. **Principal's Statement of Support to LGBTQ students:** Ms Shipp/Mr. Bass, Denman site administrators (3 Minutes)
8. **Diversity Trivia Game:** (5 minutes)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**Websites**

1. The History of LGBT Pride:
 - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/introduction/stonewall-intro/>
 - <http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2013/01/22/169984209/stonewall-explaining-obamas-historic-gay-rights-reference>
 - <http://www.nps.gov/diversity/stonewall.htm>
2. Black History Month Profiles: Highlighting Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender People: <http://www.nbjc.org/news/black-history-month-profiles.html>
3. Gay History and Literature: <http://rictornorton.co.uk>
4. Gay & Lesbian History in the US: A Snapshot of the 20th Century: http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/cmehison/gay_les
5. GLBT Historical Society: <http://www.glbthistory.org>
6. GLBT History Month: <http://www.glbthistorymonth.com/glbthistorymonth/2010>
7. GLBTQ Encyclopedia: <http://www.glbtc.com>
8. The Lesbian Herstory Archives: <http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org>
9. LGBT History on the Web: <http://home.earthlink.net/~ruthpett/lgbthistorynw/links.htm>
10. ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives: <http://www.onearchives.org>
11. OutHistory: http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Main_Page
12. Out of the Past: <http://www.pbs.org/outofthepast>
13. People With a History: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh>
14. Reclaiming History: http://www.uic.edu/depts/quic/history/reclaiming_history.html

Books

1. *Gay America: Struggle for Equality* by Linas Alsenas
2. *Gay Power! The Stonewall Riots and the Gay Rights Movement, 1969* by Betsy Kuhn
3. *Gay Rights Activists* by Kate Burns
4. *Hear Us Out! Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present* by Nancy Garden
5. *Lives of Notable Gay Men and Lesbians: A series for teens* by Chelsea House Publishers, which includes the following titles: James Baldwin, Willa Cather, Marlene Dietrich, Rock Hudson, John Maynard Keynes, T. E. Lawrence, Liberace, Federico Garcia Lorca, Martina Navratilova, Sappho, Gertrude Stein, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde