

Goleta Valley Junior High Leadership Presentation Series

Overview

Just Communities provides educational programs to students, parents/guardians, and educators in schools and districts throughout California's Central Coast, including the Santa Barbara School District. Just Communities' programs offer participants awareness, knowledge, and skills to promote inclusion, equality, and justice in their school communities. Just Communities provided a series of three 50-minute presentations to the Goleta Valley Junior High School Leadership Class on November 18th through November 20th, 2009 at the request of the class teacher. The aim of the presentation series was to provide students with equity-related information to help student leaders foster a safe, respectful, and equitable school environment for all students.

Presentation Topics

1. Session 1 Topic: Overview and Sexism
 - a. Welcome and Overview
 - b. "Roots of Violence" activity: Exploring the connection between bullying and violence and discrimination and inequality.
 - c. Sexism: "Act Like a Man / Act Like a Lady" Activity: Exploring societal messages about gender roles and the bullying, harassment, and violence young men and women experience based on gender role expectations
 - d. Discussion: Creating a safe, respectful campus environment free from gender-based harassment

2. Session 2 Topic: Heterosexism and Homophobia
 - a. Welcome and review
 - b. Definitions related to sexual orientation, heterosexism, and homophobia
 - c. Media Examples: Recent hate crimes against gay youth
 - d. Discussion: How students can work to create a safe, respectful campus environment free from harassment based on sexual orientation

3. Session 3 Topic: Racism and Being an Ally
 - a. Welcome and review
 - b. Definitions: Stereotype, Prejudice, Discrimination, Oppression, Racism
 - c. Media Examples: Racial stereotypes in advertisements, cartoons, etc.
 - d. Discussion: Racial stereotypes at school and how to change them to ensure that all students – regardless of racial or ethnic background – are treated with respect and dignity.
 - e. Closure: Being an ally and promoting a safe, equitable school community.

California Educational Standards

The presentations are aligned with the Educational Standards for grades seven and eight approved by the California Department of Education. In particular, the material related to sexual orientation, homophobia, and heterosexism is aligned with Standard 1.8.G which states that an

essential concept for students is to “Recognize that there are individual differences in growth and development, physical appearance, gender roles, and sexual orientation.” This material is also in congruence with Standard 4.4.G which states that students should be able to “Analyze the benefits of respecting individual differences in growth and development, physical appearance, gender roles, and sexual orientations.”

California Legislation

The presentations are also aligned with California State Legislation, in particular AB 537, which states that California public schools have a duty to protect students from discrimination and/or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Educational opportunities like this presentation series are a critical means to the prevention of such discrimination and harassment. Descriptions of related state public policy are below.

Assembly Bill 537

Under the [California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 \(AB 537\)](#), all California public schools have a duty to protect students from discrimination and/or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

In the Spring of 2000, former State Superintendent Delaine Eastin established an advisory task force to identify ways to implement the [California Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000](#) (PDF; 1.62MB; 27pp.). The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 (Assembly Bill 537) was enacted to amend California *Education Code* specifically prohibiting discrimination against and harassment of students and staff in schools on the basis of sex, ethnic group identification, race, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability. This law added the provision that all students and staff in public schools have the same right to a safe learning environment, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Senate Bill 1234

The Legislature has recently defined "gender" for purposes of identifying hate crimes and eliminating unlawful discrimination in public schools in SB 1234, amending Penal Code Section 422.58 as follows:

"Gender" means sex, and includes a person's gender identity and gender related appearance and behavior whether or not stereotypically associated with the person's assigned sex at birth.

[Senate Bill \(SB\) 1234](#) Senate Bill 1234 (Chapter 70, Stats of 2004).

Why is education about creating safe school environments for people of all sexual orientations important?

Bullying, harassment, and violence based on sexual orientation are extremely common in our nation's schools. According to the GLSEN 2007 School Climate Survey:

- 86.2% of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) students reported being verbally harassed, 44.1% reported being physically harassed and 22.1% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
- 73.6% heard derogatory remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" frequently or often at school.
- More than half (60.8%) of students reported that they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, and more than a third (38.4%) felt unsafe because of their gender expression.
- 31.7% of LGBT students missed a class and 32.7% missed a day of school in the past month because of feeling unsafe, compared to only 5.5% and 4.5%, respectively, of a national sample of secondary school students.

(Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network 2007 National School Climate Survey)

Violent hate crimes against LGBT people are a reality. Every six hours in the United States someone is violently attacked for being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (Human Rights Campaign, 2009). This violence affects us locally; in February 2008 8th grade student Lawrence King was killed by a classmate in Oxnard, CA because of his sexual orientation. This violence affects us today; in November 2009 15-year-old Jason Mattison Jr. of Baltimore and 19-year-old George Steven Lopez Mercado of Puerto Rico were killed in violent hate crimes because they identified as gay.

The harassment, violence, and lack of support faced by LGBTQ youth take a devastating toll on their mental health. Gay youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than non-gay teens (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1989).

Education regarding LGBTQ safety and inclusion is a critical step in preventing bullying, harassment, violence, and suicide and in promoting safe, equitable campuses for all students. Just Communities' efforts to foster school communities that are safe and respectful for LGBTQ students are part of our larger efforts to ensure that all students have access to safe and respectful learning environments regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, socio-economic status, ability, or any other identity.

JUST COMMUNITIES CENTRAL COAST

VISION

Just Communities envisions an equitable and inclusive Central Coast where all people are connected, respected and valued.

MISSION

Just Communities advances justice by building leadership, fostering change, and dismantling all forms of prejudice, discrimination and oppression.

HISTORY

Just Communities Central Coast was established in 2001 as The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) of California's Central Coast.

Knowing of NCCJ's expertise in providing effective and professionally implemented human relations programs, community leaders from Santa Ynez and Santa Barbara contacted the Los Angeles NCCJ Office in 1998 to develop a program for high school students in the area. *Camp Unity*, a unique program customized to the needs of the Central Coast area, resulted from this collaboration. Based on the success of *Camp Unity* and requests from local leaders, NCCJ established a regional office in Santa Barbara to develop a full complement of services for schools, workplaces, and communities throughout Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo Counties. In 2007, the Central Coast office separated from NCCJ and changed its name to *Just Communities*. This change reflects our growing commitment to focus our efforts and resources on local work to promote more just, inclusive and equitable communities throughout California's Central Coast. *Just Communities* Central Coast is a founding member of the National Federation for Just Communities – a national network of independent local organizations that share similar missions to promote justice and equity for all people.

FOCUS

Just Communities' work is directed at transforming communities, making them more inclusive and just for all people. We do this by empowering existing and emerging leaders through enhancing their understanding of structural inequality and inclusion so that they are able to create change in the institutions over which they have influence to provide greater access for all people. *Just Communities* focuses on 6 community sectors . . .

- Youth
- Education (K-College)
- Business & Philanthropy
- Government
- Faith
- Media