

# The Educators' Guide to the Day of Silence

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**DAY of SILENCE**®

**APRIL 16, 2010**





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## The Educators' Guide to the Day of Silence

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GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.





What are you going to do to end the silence?

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# Introduction

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Welcome to the Educators' Guide to the Day of Silence. This guide was designed to inform you about the Day of Silence (DOS), what actions students may take during the Day of Silence and how you as an educator can support them. This guide will take you through GLSEN's timeline for Day of Silence preparation and gives you suggested actions for both students and educators.

## What is the Day of Silence?

The Day of Silence is the largest single student-led action towards creating safer schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. From the first-ever Day of Silence at the University of Virginia in 1996, to the organizing efforts in over 8,000 middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities across the country in 2008, its textured history reflects its diversity in both numbers and reach. Thank you for becoming part of that history. Find more information and a complete history of the Day of Silence at [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org).

## What happens during the Day of Silence?

On the 15th annual **National Day of Silence, Friday, April 16, 2010**, students across the country will take a vow of silence to call attention to the silencing effect of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in schools. Hundreds of thousands of students across the country will take part in this student-led action to educate their schools and communities and to encourage others to address the problem of anti-LGBT behavior in schools. Students may hand out "speaking cards" to other students and school staff that read:

*"Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I am participating in the Day of Silence, a national youth movement bringing attention to the silence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their allies in schools. My deliberate silence echoes that silence, which is caused by name-calling, bullying and harassment. I believe that ending the silence is the first step toward fighting these injustices. Think about the voices you are not hearing today. What are you going to do to end the silence?"*

Other activities students may engage in can include wearing Day of Silence shirts or buttons, displaying information about anti-LGBT bias in schools, conducting workshops during school club hours about combating anti-LGBT bias in schools and Breaking the Silence events. Breaking the Silence events are usually a celebration and recognition of the day's action in a public forum.

For more information, visit [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org).

## What you should know

*From GLSEN's Day of Silence: The Freedom to Speak (Or Not) Common Questions, Answered by Lambda Legal*

*Do students have the right to participate in the Day of Silence?*

In most circumstances, yes. Under the Constitution, public schools must respect students' right to free speech. The right to speak includes the right not to speak, as well as the right to wear buttons or T-shirts expressing support for a cause. School officials may not censor a student just because they disapprove of the student's ideas, because the student's speech makes them uncomfortable or because they want to avoid controversy.

There are some limits on free speech rights at school. For example, schools have some control over students' speech in the classroom or during other supervised, school-sponsored activities. If a teacher tells a student to answer a question during class, the student generally doesn't have a constitutional right to refuse to answer.

Educators who want to support students' participation in the Day of Silence can ask their students to alert them in advance, if they wish to participate. Educators can also choose to engage their students in classroom activities that involve little speech from students.

*Do students have a right to display posters and make announcements about the Day of Silence?*

In many circumstances, yes. If a public school opens up an opportunity for students' speech – for example, by allowing students or student organizations to display posters or make announcements on the public address system – the school may not create restrictions based on the message or viewpoint that students want to express.

For more information about legal rights around the Day of Silence, visit <http://bit.ly/dB4LEY>.

## Support

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Here are six simple ways you can support your students' Day of Silence efforts.

1. **Tell your students**

Discuss the Day of Silence with your students! Share with them the reason for this day of action, the history of the Day of Silence and let them know what activities other students may be engaging in. Create a classroom display of Day of Silence materials or books and other materials that explore LGBT topics. This can give students a chance to discuss the Day of Silence or other LGBT topics. Find books and other resources at [www.glsen.org/educator](http://www.glsen.org/educator).

2. **Tell other school staff**

Other school staff may be unaware of the Day of Silence, or may have incorrect or misleading information. You can support your students' Day of Silence efforts by telling other school staff about the Day of Silence, what actions students may take and how they can get involved. Your active support can help build awareness and generate support among other school staff in a way students may not. Tell school staff at a faculty meeting, during lunch time, write a letter or e-mail to school staff or hold a forum for discussing the event.

3. **Get involved**

Day of Silence is a student-led action, but you can still be involved. As an educator you have the opportunity to help students gauge the appropriate actions for the Day of Silence in the context of your school community. Having knowledge of the school's policies, procedures and other staff, you can offer suggestions on how they can create safe and effective environments to participate in the Day of Silence. You can also help students negotiate with administrators and other students who may oppose the Day of Silence.

4. **Make your classroom/office a Safe Space**

One way to support the Day of Silence and LGBT students in your school, is to ensure a Safe Space in the school. A safe space is a welcoming, supportive and safe environment for LGBT students and allies. To learn how to create a safe space in your school, download GLSEN's *Safe Space Kit* at <http://bit.ly/9rLfUh>.

5. **Intervene when DOS participants are name-called, bullied or harassed.**

During the Day of Silence, students will be making a vow of silence for part or all of the day. Other students may use this opportunity to engage in name-calling and bullying. You can use these as teachable moments to model support for LGBT students and the Day of Silence by intervening and establishing school as a safe space for ALL. Let other students know the reasons for the Day of Silence, and that they should respect their fellow students struggles and actions. For tips on how to intervene, check out GLSEN's *Safe Space Kit* at <http://bit.ly/9rLfUh>.

6. **Ways to participate**

Anti-LGBT name-calling impacts all of your students. No matter what subject you teach or what role you play in school, you can explore lessons or activities that can be conducted in silence and cover topics related to the Day of Silence, such as censorship, prejudice and social justice issues. You can also begin or end your class with five minutes of silence to show support and solidarity for the students participating in the Day of Silence. As a staff member with knowledge of the culture of your school community, you would have the best knowledge about how you can safely and appropriately participate in the Day of Silence.

## Organize

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This is a timeline with suggested actions for students and educators. Follow these steps to ensure a successful Day of Silence in your school.

### **Week 6 (March 8-12): Getting Started**

We recommend you start planning for your Day of Silence at least six weeks before the event, but you can always start earlier. For this week focus on laying the groundwork for your organizing.

<u>Students</u>	<u>Educators</u>
<p><b>Register:</b> Register or update your profile information to receive DOS materials. <a href="http://www.studentorganizing.org">www.studentorganizing.org</a></p>	<p><b>Register:</b> Tell your students to register at <a href="http://www.studentorganizing.org">www.studentorganizing.org</a> to receive free DOS materials.</p>
<p><b>Gather Information:</b> You can find planning resources at <a href="http://www.dayofsilence.org">www.dayofsilence.org</a></p>	<p><b>Gather Information:</b> You can find more information about the Day of Silence and some activities your students may participate in at <a href="http://www.dayofsilence.org">www.dayofsilence.org</a>. Try to familiarize yourself with all DOS material to better prepare yourself for questions or concerns from students or other staff.</p>
<p><b>Find Support:</b> Discuss your participation with the advisor of your GSA or student club or another trusted faculty member.</p>	<p><b>Give Support:</b> Students interested in the Day of Silence will be looking for support. Let all your students know that you can support their Day of Silence efforts.</p>
<p><b>Get Permission:</b> Your Day of Silence is likely to be more successful if the school approves of your activities. Research and follow the proper protocol for approving an activity at your school. Ask your supportive staff member to help.</p>	<p><b>Get Permission:</b> Help your students follow the school's protocol for approving activities. Use your connection with school administration to help explain the purpose and actions of the Day of Silence, and the need to support student efforts.</p>
<p><b>Build a Team:</b> Find peers who want to contribute. Talk to members of your GSA and/or other allies. Tell them about the Day of Silence and ask if they would be interested in getting involved.</p>	<p><b>Support the Team:</b> Students will be building their Day of Silence teams during this time. You can support them by linking interested students together. If you know of several different students who are interested in the Day of Silence, suggest that they work together as a group and support their efforts.</p>
<p><b>Schedule for next week:</b> Make sure you schedule a meeting with your supportive faculty members and interested students for the upcoming week.</p>	<p><b>Schedule for Next Week:</b> Help support your students by making yourself available for the next meeting.</p>

**Week 5 (March 15-19): Holding your Meeting**

It's time to get the ball rolling! Plan a meeting with your DOS Team. This could be your GSA or student club, or a group of interested students and your sponsoring faculty member.

<u><b>Students</b></u>	<u><b>Educators</b></u>
<b>Be Prepared:</b> Make an agenda so that your meeting flows smoothly and you accomplish everything necessary to take the next steps. Print out some Day of Silence material for the meeting.	<b>Help Prepare:</b> Support your students by assisting in meeting preparation. Do you have access to school printers? Can you provide materials for the meeting?
<b>Brainstorm:</b> What will your event look like? Who will be involved? Will you have a Breaking the Silence event? Discuss with your team all the possibilities for your DOS event.	<b>Brainstorm:</b> Brainstorm with your students. Remind students of any barriers and ways to overcome them. Offer to facilitate sections of the meeting, but be sure to encourage students to lead this process.
<b>Decisions:</b> There are a lot of ways to hold a successful DOS, but you can't do them all. Involve your team in a decision-making process to assure their support as you organize the event.	<b>Decisions:</b> As you are an educator in your school, you may have knowledge of school policies, practices and culture that the students don't. Support your students by helping them to decide which DOS events are the best fit for your school community.
<b>Set Goals:</b> Goals are a great way to determine if your organizing is on the right track. How many people do you want to take a vow of silence? How many cards do you want to pass out?	<b>Set Goals:</b> Help your students set realistic goals. Throw in your ideas and suggestions while respectfully supporting their decision-making power.
<b>Delegate:</b> No one person should do all the work alone. Split up the tasks to make the work easier and get more people involved.	<b>Delegate:</b> Help your students decide who should take on a task. Volunteer to take on tasks you know could be easier for you to complete than students. Think about the opportunities and connections you have as an educator in the school. Offer to facilitate tasks to ensure success.
<b>Register:</b> Make sure all members of your team register at <a href="http://www.dayofsilence.org">www.dayofsilence.org</a> .	<b>Register:</b> Encourage all of your students to register for more information and free materials at <a href="http://www.dayofsilence.org">www.dayofsilence.org</a> .



**Week 4 (March 22-26): Spread the Word**

Now that you know what your DOS event is going to look like, it's time to let everyone know! Split up outreach tasks among your team members so that you each can contribute to getting the word out.

<u><b>Students</b></u>	<u><b>Educators</b></u>
<b>Posters:</b> Design posters to put up around school. Make sure to include the name of your club, the date of the event and contact info so people can get involved. Consider holding a party to design posters as a group.	<b>Posters:</b> Provide support to your students' poster-making. You can work with other educators and school administration to ensure students will be able to post Day of Silence materials without vandalism or improper removal.
<b>Notify the Press:</b> How do you tell the local news about your event? With a press release! Send a press release to your local newspaper, television and radio news channels. Check out the Sample Press Release in the Day of Silence Organizing Manual to help.	<b>Notify the Press:</b> Help your students create a press release sure to attract some media attention. As an educator in the school, you may know of media outlets that have covered stories about the Day of Silence or your school. Encourage students to reach out to those outlets.
<b>Fundraising:</b> Do you need money for supplies, promotional materials, DOS t-shirts? Begin fundraising by this week. Ask family members, businesses or community organizations for donations. You could plan a raffle or a bake sale.	<b>Fundraising:</b> Your students may need help raising funds for the Day of Silence. Begin your own fundraising campaign and ask other school staff, your friends and family and other sources to which your students may not have access.
<b>Follow Up:</b> At this point it's probably good to start having short meetings with your DOS Team every week. Schedule a time where you can follow-up on your tasks. Can't meet in person? Set up Yahoo or AIM chat to keep in touch!	<b>Follow Up:</b> Work with your students to set up short meetings or help coordinate the dissemination of important information and updates to other DOS team members.

**Week 3 (March 29-April 2):** Grow your Support

The more support you have, the more effective your event can be. Continue talking with teachers, students and community members about ways they can support your Day of Silence activities.

<u><b>Students</b></u>	<u><b>Educators</b></u>
<p><b>Educate:</b> There are a lot of ways that your teachers can support the Day of Silence. Print out the Educators' Guide and give it to teachers you think would be interested and supportive.</p>	<p><b>Educate:</b> Use your class time to educate other students about the Day of Silence and how they can participate.</p>
<p><b>Find Community Support:</b> It's good to notify local supportive community groups of your events, especially if you're holding a rally, training or social to Break the Silence. Notify and, if applicable, invite community groups. Also, there are 30 local GLSEN Chapters across the country. Visit <a href="http://bit.ly/9V3zzX">http://bit.ly/9V3zzX</a> to find out if one is near you!</p>	<p><b>Find Community Support:</b> If appropriate, invite your community members to Day of Silence events students may be hosting. Help students by suggesting local groups and other ways to find support outside of the school.</p>
<p><b>Cross it Off:</b> It's possible that there are a few items on your task list that didn't get completed in the past few weeks. Take some time to prioritize and make sure that everyone is taking care of their tasks.</p>	<p><b>Cross it Off:</b> As you get closer to the Day of Silence, you can help your students by offering to handle a task or two that hasn't been completed yet. Help your students keep track of all the things that need to get done.</p>
<p><b>Show Appreciation:</b> It's important to let your Team members know that you and others appreciate their work. Build in time during your weekly meeting to let everyone express their appreciation to their fellow teammates.</p>	<p><b>Show Appreciation:</b> You should let your students know that you are proud of the work that they do, and they should be as well. Show them that you appreciate all their efforts.</p>

**Week 2 (April 5-9): Ramp it Up!**

Day of Silence is almost here! It's time to pump up the excitement and to make sure everyone is prepared!

<u><b>Students</b></u>	<u><b>Educators</b></u>
<p><b>Notify Faculty:</b> You've already connected with supportive teachers; now it's time to let all staff know. Give each staff member a letter explaining what to expect on the Day of Silence. Include the contact people for the event, including the supportive staff member on your Team. Remember to be open and available to questions and concerns about the day.</p>	<p><b>Notify Faculty:</b> Help your students notify other faculty about the Day of Silence and any actions they will take. Students may not have access to other school staff in the way you do. Your active support can help build awareness and generate support among other school staff. Tell other school staff at a faculty meeting or during lunch time, write a letter or e-mail to school staff or hold a forum for discussing the event.</p>
<p><b>Participant Meeting:</b> This meeting is for everyone who intends on participating in the Day of Silence. Talk with the group about their expectations, goals, fears and hopes for the event. Staying silent for the Day isn't easy, so it's good to allow students to practice how to respond to questions or resistance from students and faculty. Try using the Concentric Circles Activity in Jump Start Guide # 1 at <a href="http://bit.ly/9AvgOT">http://bit.ly/9AvgOT</a>.</p>	<p><b>Participant Meeting:</b> You can support your students by helping to secure space for the meeting, helping them develop an agenda, offer to facilitate part of the meeting, take notes during the meeting and distribute Day of Silence materials. You can also tell all your students about the upcoming meeting.</p>
<p><b>Back to the Press:</b> Send your press release to local news media again now that Day of Silence is around the corner.</p>	<p><b>Back to the Press:</b> As an educator in the school, you may know of media outlets that have covered stories about the Day of Silence or your school. You can offer to speak to the media as an educator supporting the Day of Silence.</p>
<p><b>Make new Posters:</b> If you put up a new set of fliers and posters around the school it will cause people to take notice a second time.</p>	<p><b>Make new Posters:</b> Help your students create new posters to draw attention to their Day of Silence efforts. Help secure space to display these posters. These new posters can list what Day of Silence actions they may be engaging in and any Breaking the Silence events they are hosting or attending.</p>

## Week 1 (The Day of Silence)

You've been preparing for weeks, and now the Day of Silence is here! Remain safe and respectful, remember your rights and follow your plans.

### Educators

**Spread the Word:** Help your students spread the word during the Day of Silence. Your students may be taking a vow of silence for the day, but you can use your voice to support them. Tell other staff and students. Let them know what the day is all about.

**Be Visible:** Make yourself visible as a supporter of the Day of Silence. Wear Day of Silence buttons, shirts or stickers. Display a Day of Silence poster in your classroom or office.

**Be Respectful:** Help your students remain respectful during the Day of Silence. Remind them that they may need to speak during class time and that other students may not understand the reasons for the Day of Silence. They should respond to criticism respectfully.

**Know Your Rights:** Help your students by familiarizing yourself with their rights to participate in the Day of Silence. You can help by letting other school staff and administrators know about the students' right participate.

## Additional Resources

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### Day of Silence Resources

#### Day of Silence Contact Information

Email us at [info@dayofsilence.org](mailto:info@dayofsilence.org)

#### Join the conversation on Facebook

<http://bit.ly/DOSFB>

#### History of the Day of Silence

<http://dayofsilence.org/content/history.html>

#### Day of Silence Frequently Asked Questions

[http://dayofsilence.org/content/getinformation\\_faq.html](http://dayofsilence.org/content/getinformation_faq.html)

#### LAMBDA LEGAL: The Freedom to Speak (or Not) 2009

Common questions about the Day of Silence® answered by Lambda Legal

[http://dayofsilence.org/downloads/DOS\\_Legal\\_FAQ\\_2009.pdf](http://dayofsilence.org/downloads/DOS_Legal_FAQ_2009.pdf)

#### DAY of SILENCE® Organizing Manual

[http://dayofsilence.org/downloads/2009\\_Manual\\_FINAL.pdf](http://dayofsilence.org/downloads/2009_Manual_FINAL.pdf)

#### SPEAKING CARDS

[http://dayofsilence.org/downloads/dos\\_speaking\\_card\\_09.pdf](http://dayofsilence.org/downloads/dos_speaking_card_09.pdf)

#### WEB BUTTONS - Put one on your web site!

<http://dayofsilence.org/content/buttons.html>

### Other Resources

#### GLSEN's *Safe Space Kit*

Make your school safe for LGBT youth. The NEW *Safe Space Kit* features *the Guide to Being an Ally*, which provides concrete strategies for supporting LGBT students, educating about anti-LGBT bias and advocating for changes in your school.

<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1641.html>

#### K-12 Curricular and Lesson Plans

Free curricula and lesson plans for facilitating classroom discussion and engaging students in creating safer schools for all.

<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/2461.html>

#### Booklink

Through GLSEN's BookLink, you can review and order any of our published works and other pre-screened videos and publication.

<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/booklink/index.html>

