



Educators' Guide to Ally Week

Use this guide to learn how educators can participate in Ally Week and support students' efforts.

Introduction

GLSEN and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) students and their Allies across the country thank you for taking the time to learn more about Ally Week and how you as an educator can participate. Ally Week is an important event because it helps to identify, support and celebrate Allies against anti-LGBT language, bullying and harassment in America's schools.

From GLSEN's 2009 National School Climate Survey, we know that schools nationwide are hostile environments for a distressing number of LGBT students – almost all of whom commonly hear homophobic remarks and face verbal and physical harassment and even physical assault because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

- 88.9% of LGBT students heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “that’s so gay”) frequently or often at school, and 86.5% reported that they felt distressed to some degree by this language.
- 72.4% of LGBT students heard other homophobic remarks (e.g., “dyke” or “faggot”) frequently or often at school.
- 84.6% of LGBT students were verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation and 63.7% because of their gender expression.

In addition, we know that many LGBT students feel forced to miss classes or entire days of school rather than face a hostile environment.

- 30.0% of LGBT students missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.
- 29.1% of LGBT students skipped a class at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

This school-based victimization denies these students their rights to an education. Ally Week works to bring these issues to light, with particular attention to the work that Allies have done to combat anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools. Participating in Ally Week is an effective way for educators to show their support for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Continue reading through this guide to learn how you can participate in Ally Week.

Ally Week Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Ally?

An ally is an individual who speaks out and stands up for a person or group that is targeted and/or discriminated against. An ally works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for people who are stigmatized, or treated unfairly because of who they are. We refer to Allies as people who do not identify as LGBT students, but support this community by standing up against the bullying and harassment LGBT youth face in school. Allies should be celebrated for their contribution to making schools safe for LGBT students.

What is Ally Week?

During Ally Week, student organizers plan events and actions to identify, support and celebrate Allies, with particular attention to those Allies who stand up against anti-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) name-calling, bullying and harassment in schools.

This year, GLSEN and students across the country, often as members of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) or similar student clubs, will celebrate Ally Week on **October 18-22**. Student leaders will be planning various events appropriate to their school communities, including ally trainings, discussion groups, rallies or other community projects. Many students will encourage their peers and school staff to sign the Ally Pledge.

What Happens During Ally Week?

During Ally Week, student leaders may organize several activities and actions to celebrate Allies to LGBT students. You can support Ally Week and your students' efforts by offering to help with these activities.

Pledges: Student organizers will be asking other students to sign a pledge stating:

I believe all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, deserve to feel safe and supported. That means I pledge to:

1. *Not use anti-LGBT language and slurs;*
2. *Intervene, if I safely can, in situations where other students are being harassed;*
3. *Support efforts to end bullying and harassment.*

Activities: Students may organize several different types of Ally Week actions or events. These may include:

- Daily Announcements
- Lunchtime Discussions
- Film Screenings
- Ally 101 Workshops
- Information Tables
- Presentations to Students
- GSA Collaborations with other Student Clubs
- Presentations to Staff
- Display Cases

Ally Week Participation for Educators

Ally Week Pledges

Take the Ally Week Pledge.

Support your students' Ally Week efforts by taking the pledge. You can take the pledge in a public forum, such as the classroom, lunch room or an assembly, to show students that they too can be an ally to LGBT students. Encourage students to take the pledge. Use your class time and have pledge forms available for students.

Ask other School Staff to Take the Pledge.

You can spread the word about Ally Week and the importance of being an ally to other school staff. Print out the Ally Week Educator Pledge Sheet and have your fellow educators take the pledge. You can do this one-on-one or during a staff meeting. Send the pledges back to GLSEN and help us support educators.

Ally Week Actions

Ally Week 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 Ally Week in the context of your school community. Having knowledge of the school's policies and procedures, you can offer suggestions on how students can develop effective Ally Week activities. You can also help students negotiate with administrators and other students who may oppose Ally Week.

Intervene if Ally Week participants are called names, bullied or harassed

During Ally Week, students will be interacting with their peers and asking them to take the Ally Week Pledge. Some students may respond with name-calling and bullying. You can use these as teachable moments to model support for LGBT students and Allies by intervening and insisting that your school be a safe space for ALL. For tips on how to intervene during anti-LGBT behavior, check out GLSEN's [Think B4 You Speak Guide](#).

Be an Ally to LGBT students

Being an ally can help make LGBT students feel safe and included in school, and will increase the visibility of Ally Week. One simple way you can be an ally is to create a safe and inclusive space in your classroom or office. To learn how to be an ally to LGBT students, read GLSEN's [Safe Space Kit](#). The Safe Space Kit will outline step-by-step ways to show visible support for LGBT students, educate about anti-LGBT bias and advocate for inclusive changes in your school.

Support students' Ally Week efforts

If you are not already involved, attend your school's GSA meetings leading up to Ally Week. Offer to take on tasks and help the students with their organizing efforts. Work with other educators to secure space for students to display Ally Week information. Volunteer to staff an information table and answer students' questions about Ally Week. Work with students and administrators to help students secure the time and space for an auditorium or staff presentation.

Class Discussions

Dedicate some class time during Ally Week to discuss anti-LGBT bias in schools and the need for Allies. Engage your students in discussion using the following questions.

- Have you witnessed anti-LGBT name-calling, bullying or harassment in school?
- Have you been name-called, bullied or harassed because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression?
- Do you think our school is safe for LGBT students?
- Why do you think it's important to be an ally to LGBT students?
- What can we do as Allies, to help make this school safer?

Use GLSEN's [National School Climate Survey](#) to share some statistics about the effects of name-calling, bullying and harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Staff Presentation

As an educator, you have the unique opportunity to engage other school staff. If possible, invite a student leader to make a presentation on the importance of supporting LGBT students. Set up a presentation during a staff meeting or host an after school session. Provide your colleagues with the Educators' Guide to Ally Week, information about GLSEN's Safe Space Kit and discuss with them the need for Allies in the school. Use the "Engage School Staff" section of the [Safe Space Kit](#) for more details on staff presentations.

Film Screening

During Ally Week you can engage students in discussions about the importance of being Allies to LGBT students by screening one or more of the films listed below.

<i><u>Coming Out</u></i>	A short documentary about the impact of heterosexism and homophobia on the identities of LGBT youth. Produced by both LGBT youth and their allies. www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/booklink/record/2119.html
<i><u>No Dumb Questions</u></i>	A funny and touching documentary profiling three sisters, ages 6, 9 and 11, struggling to understand why and how their Uncle Bill is becoming a woman. www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/booklink/record/1561.html
<i><u>One of Them</u></i>	This discussion-starter drama for high school students explores bullying, name-calling, and violence in school. Jamie is shocked when she and her best friend become victims of homophobic name-calling. But she must face up to her own reactions as she realizes that her friend is "one of them." www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/booklink/record/1504.html
<i><u>Straightlaced</u></i>	Straightlaced includes the perspectives of teens who self-identify as straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual or questioning and represent all points of the gender spectrum. With courage and unexpected humor, they open up their lives to the camera: choosing between "male" and "female" deodorant; deciding whether to go along with anti-gay taunts in the locker room; having the courage to take ballet; avoiding the restroom so they won't get beaten up; or mourning the suicide of a classmate. www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/booklink/record/2622.html
<i><u>Out in the Silence:</u></i>	Out in the Silence captures the remarkable chain of events that unfold when the announcement of filmmaker Joe Wilson's wedding to another man ignites a firestorm of controversy in his small Pennsylvania hometown. www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/booklink/record/2507.html

EDUCATOR



ALLY week PLEDGE FORM

I believe schools should be safe, supportive places for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

This is why I have pledged to:

- Not use anti-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) language or slurs.
- Intervene, if I safely can, in situations where students are being harassed.
- Support efforts to make this, and every, school safe for all students.

Your email address may be shared with GLSEN to provide you with more resources and information on safer schools and organizing.

I pledge to be an ally

Name	E-mail Address	Position at School
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
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20.		

Please fax or e-mail this form to GLSEN at 212-727-0254 or jrosado@glsen.org.

Ally Week Resources

[Student Guide](#)

[Ally Week Information and Planning Tips](#)

[Ally Week Merchandise](#)

[GLSEN Educator Forum](#)

Other Important Resources

[GLSEN's Safe Space Kit, Guide to Being an Ally](#)

Use this guide to learn how you can support LGBT students, teach about anti-LGBT bias and advocate for changes in your school.

[GLSEN.org/research](#)

The 2009 National School Climate Survey, the most comprehensive report ever on the experiences of LGBT students, shows that nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students experienced harassment at school in the previous year. Find more research statistics to support your organizing by going to www.GLSEN.org/research.

[GLSEN Lessons](#)

On GLSEN's website you can find grade appropriate lessons to teach about LGBT and bullying issues in the classroom.

[Booklink](#)

You can use Booklink to find grade appropriate LGBT themed or inclusive books for reading assignments and your classroom or school library.