

# LGBT Day of History Frequently Asked Questions

## **Why LGBT Day of History?**

GSAFE student planners and staff developed Wisconsin LGBT Day of History in conjunction with bringing the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945 traveling exhibition to Wisconsin for the first time. Leading up to the arrival of the exhibition we realized that most students receive little to no positive information about LGBT people, their history, and related events in K-12 schools. For those who do receive some instruction on this group of people it is usually relegated to a short unit or day in health class. While this is a great start, we know that LGBT people and issues are an invisible subject matter that has connections to every field of study in school. We wanted to use LGBT Day of History to make the invisible visible.

## **Why is Wisconsin LGBT Day of History in March when LGBT History Month is in October?**

March 2<sup>nd</sup> is the day that marks the anniversary of Wisconsin becoming the first state in the country to make it illegal to discriminate against gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in housing and employment. This law was signed into law by Republican Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1982. It went into effect on March 2<sup>nd</sup> of that same year.

## **What if March 2<sup>nd</sup> isn't a good time for us to organize a Wisconsin LGBT Day of History?**

The "official" day is March 2<sup>nd</sup> but we encourage you to consider any day a chance to uplift and learn about the important contributions of LGBT people and their allies. If March 2<sup>nd</sup> doesn't work for you, pick another day and make it happen. It could be a week, month, or several months earlier or later. Give yourself enough time to properly plan the activity or event you ultimately decide upon.

## **What are the benefits of learning about LGBT people and issues in school?**

The GLSEN 2007 National School Climate Survey revealed several key findings linking the existence of LGBT inclusive curricula in schools and the well-being of LGBT students. In summary the survey found that students in schools with an inclusive curriculum (ie, positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events):

- Heard fewer homophobic remarks than those in schools without an inclusive curriculum.
- Were less likely to be harassed or assaulted because of their sexual orientation or gender expression than those without an inclusive curriculum.
- Were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender expression and were less likely to miss school because of their safety concerns than students without an inclusive curriculum.
- Reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community than those without an inclusive curriculum.

While this report does not directly address the impact LGBT inclusive curricula has on non-LGBT identified students, it might be reasonable to infer that as students are exposed to positive representations of LGBT people, history and events they develop a greater degree of respect for LGBT individuals in school. This could help explain, in part, the drop in homophobic remarks and anti-gay/anti-trans harassment and assault experienced by students in schools with inclusive curricula. Clearly, more study is needed in this area.

Additional findings from the 2007 GLSEN National School Climate Survey reveal that:

- Almost 90% of students say that they never learn about LGBT people, history and events in the classroom.
- Less than half of students reported being able to find resources about LGBT people, history and events in their school library.
- Less than a fifth of students reported that LGBT-related topics were included in their textbooks or assigned readings.

LGBT Day of History is designed to give students the tools they need to promote positive representations of LGBT people, history and events through their clubs, classrooms, and school communities. We hope this emphasis on an often invisible past will help all students better appreciate and respect the dignity inherent in all members of the school community.

**Adapted in part from The GLSEN 2007 National School Climate Survey.**