



SSAFE IN SCHOOLS NETWORK NEWSLETTER # 4

Hello there once again,

We hope you all had fabulous Summer holidays and a smooth start to the year and are back on deck with batteries recharged. We spent the Summer working on resource development and planning for the first half of this year. In this newsletter we're keen to let you know about upcoming events, available resources and exciting projects, and to feature the work of some schools that are challenging homophobia and supporting same-sex attracted students.

In the last newsletter we gave you advance notice of our conference. Now titled "Class Act" the one-day conference on Friday May 16th will feature the work of a number of schools in challenging homophobia and supporting same-sex attracted students, new research on the experiences of same-sex attracted youth, drama performances and presentations by students and practical strategies for working towards a whole-school approach. For more details and a registration form, check out the other attachment we've sent you with this newsletter.

Responding to your requests

In completing your membership forms to join the SSAFE Network, a number of you identified particular ways in which we could support your work in schools. This included provision of professional development, descriptions of useful resources, and strategies and activities in use in other schools. We hope that through this newsletter we're meeting some of those needs.

We've run nine full days and five half days of professional development, as well as letting you know about what's available from other sources. We've tailored the professional development to the

needs of participants, focusing on research in to same-sex attracted youth and their needs, relevant policies and legislation, implementation of whole-school approaches that are inclusive of same-sex attracted students, resources and community networks.

If your school is in the Northern metropolitan region there's a day of training you can attend on Wednesday 2nd April. The morning session is an overview of the research in to the needs of same-sex attracted and gender non-conforming youth, and the afternoon focuses on creating safe school environments. Participants can attend for one or both sessions. Cost is just \$10 – to cover lunch. The training is presented by the Northern Schools Health Promotion Network and the Northern Region Same Sex Attracted and Transgender Youth Network. Contact Anne Boscutti on 9496 5910 for further info or to register.

If there is specific professional development that you or your school require, send us an email and let us know how we can help.

Additionally, LaTrobe University's Australian Research for Sex Health and Society run a program titled 'Safety in our Schools: A whole school approach to responding to homophobia'. This is designed for the whole school community, all staff and any interested parents. For more information or to book contact Sylvia Azzopardi, Australian Research Centre In Sex, Health and Society, (03) 9258 5125 S.Azzopardi@latrobe.edu.au

A couple of you have asked for an overview of where in the CSF2 issues of same-sex attraction might be included in curriculum. At the end of this newsletter you'll find a KLA by KLA list of relevant learning outcomes.

Resources, Projects and Professional Development Opportunities.

Talking Out : An information bulletin for teachers from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues reference group, produced by the Equity Standards Branch, Department of Education, Tasmania.

The Talking Out Bulletin is an electronic resource on the Supportive School Communities website from the Department of Education in Tasmania. Find the website at www.discover.tased.edu.au/sse Click on "resources" and go to the Talking Out Bulletin.

Talking Sexual Health Materials: A Teaching and Learning Resource for Secondary Schools

This resource is part of the Talking Sexual Health national framework for education about STI's, HIV/AIDS and Blood-Borne Viruses in Secondary Schools, developed by the Australian Research Centre for Sex, Health & Society and funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. Intended for the Health classroom, and designed primarily for use with students in years 9 and 10, many of the activities can be modified to use with students in years 7 & 8. The resource provides experienced health educators with teaching and learning activities to assist in achieving a number of learning outcomes appropriate for year 9 and year 10 students. This resource is inclusive of the sexual health and drug use issues of same sex attracted youth. It includes advice on setting up programs and creating supportive and safe learning environments for all students, framed by a whole school approach. *Talking Sexual Health* has specific units of study around diversity, gender and power, and sexuality.

This resource is only available to teachers who participate in a Talking Sexual Health professional Development program

The Talking Sexual Health training and resource is available from: Family Planning Victoria: (03) 9257 0100, and, Australian Research Centre for Sex Health & Society: (03) 9285 5382

The cost of the training is inclusive of the Talking Sexual Health materials. Call Family Planning and ARCSHS for up-coming training dates.

Breaking Through Project

"I feel differently about all kids at school now. Especially those who get teased. I'm aware of how judgmental I was before. It's important to make lots of different friends" (Year 11 student).

The Breaking Through Project has been developed in response to broad concern with bullying and violence in schools, and the link between that and depression and suicide in young people, particularly in rural communities. The aim of the Breaking Through Project has been to involve the school, families and their community working in partnership to support a greater acceptance of diversity in all aspects of school community life. Six schools in the Macedon Ranges/Outer

Western region of Victoria have participated in Breaking Through from 2001 to 2003.

In 2001/2002, groups of year 10 and 11 students from each of the participating schools, came together for two weeks, to rehearse, develop and perform a number of dramatic performances focusing on difficult issues experienced in their respective school communities. The students performed to all year 9, 10, 11 & some year 12 students, the staff and the community. Performances involved the audience in an interactive exploration of the issues, highlighting homophobia, raised by the students around discrimination and oppression. Staff and students worked together following the performances to produce school specific resource booklets for use in the classroom and as a stimulus for discussion in social sciences, and the health areas, based on various responses to the issues raised in the performances and discussions. Focus groups, community forums, workshops and curriculum materials have also been developed and used in different levels of the school community, including feedback from parents and friends.

In 2002, the Breaking Through Project facilitated the training of 11 teachers and counselling staff from a number of the schools and agencies involved, in using the theatre format for working with students at the schools and young people in the community to continue to workshop issues that school communities find difficult to deal with.

Since its inception, The Breaking Through Project has had a significant impact on its target school communities, and also on the development of strategic policy and programming in school communities and agencies statewide. Quantitative data on attitude change, social connectedness, and self esteem has been collected in the five schools (this data is currently being analysed). The Breaking Through Project has also resulted in the development of anti- discrimination strategies in the respective regional agencies involved in the project. *Breaking Through* won a VicHealth *High Achievement Award in Health Promotion* Dec. 2001 due to it's unique and best practice contribution to the promotion of tolerance of diversity in rural communities.

For more information contact Kerry Proctor
The Bouverie Centre 50 Flemington St. Flemington. 3021 Ph: 9376-9844 or email: k.proctor@latrobe.edu.au

What are other schools doing?

In showcasing the work of individual schools in this challenging area, we're keen to illustrate the variety of approaches available, and the wide range of supports and resources that can be utilised. We need to remain clear that real change in schools must come from the school; community agencies and projects are there to assist the work, but cannot drive the process. If your school is doing innovative work in this area, drop us a line by return email.

In 2002, **Swan Hill College** introduced the Pride and Prejudice Program in to their new Personal Development program for Years 9 and 10. Pride and Prejudice was taught at Year 10, by two male English teachers. There was no adverse response to the work and comments overheard from conversations amongst the students suggests that the program has helped to develop some awareness and appreciation of diversity.

The school feels that at this point there has been little change in the attitude of the majority of students but acknowledges that the program is only new and can only be a part of the process of developing a more caring and supportive whole-school culture.

The program has been implemented alongside and in conjunction with **MindMatters** material, and the school feels that this is why it has not created any conflict or dissent in the school community. The school has not made the contents of Pride and Prejudice its 'soapbox' but instead has concentrated on delivering it as part of a complete package aimed at challenging, supporting and teaching Year 9 and Year 10 students.

Four schools in the eastern metropolitan region are currently working with **The Gay and Lesbian Youth Project** to implement whole school approaches to dealing with homophobia and supporting SSAY. Two of the schools are Upper Yarra Secondary College and Aquinas College.

Upper Yarra Secondary College, a semi-rural government school in Yarra Junction in the Yarra Valley, has been committed to addressing the issue of homophobia in their school since 2001. A professional development session for welfare staff was implemented, to raise awareness of the issues same sex attracted (SSA) students face, and provide strategies to support them and to address homophobia.

In 2002, the school expressed enthusiasm to tackle the issue further with the support of the Gay and Lesbian Youth Project Worker (Shelley Walker). In October, Shelley did a presentation to a number of key staff at the school, including the Principal and Assistant Principal about current national research for SSAY, policies that support the need for schools to respond to the issue, and what a school would need to do to address the issue.

On the first day back at school this year, Shelley ran an information session for all staff that again included info about the experiences of SSA students and what the school needs to do to address the issue. A questionnaire was distributed to staff to get feedback about how they view the issue of homophobia in the school and to get a sense of their commitment to learning more about how to support SSA students and ensure the school is safe and supportive of all students. The feedback was extremely positive in that it showed a real enthusiasm from many staff to be involved in the process of striving for cultural change within the school.

A working group is being set up in the school that will meet on a regular basis to ensure strategies are implemented. Strategies will include anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy development, developing inclusive curriculum, professional development for staff, and ensuring that the whole school community is involved.

For more information contact Alison Fulu, Assistant Principal, Upper Yarra Secondary College, ph: 5967 1877, or Shelley Walker, Gay and Lesbian Youth Project Worker, ph: 9298 8858 or 0408 689 715.

And from **Aquinas College** –

Aquinas College, a Catholic secondary school in Ringwood, has embraced the Gay and Lesbian Youth Project and is looking forward to working with the project worker, over the next few years. The school's involvement began in late 2002 when Shelley came to talk to our Student Support Services staff about the issues for SSA students and strategies to effectively support them. After hearing Shelley talk with great clarity and conviction about the project and enthusing the welfare staff, she returned to address the College executive and a small group of invited staff. From that point, the Principal, Tony O'Byrne, formalised the College's involvement by agreeing to become one of the pilot schools in the eastern sector. Shelley then returned in the last week of term 4 to address the whole staff about the project. Philippa Lovell from the Catholic Education Office also attended this

session and spoke about the CEO's work in this area. A small working party has been formed to meet with Shelley in term 1 to begin mapping out the project direction at Aquinas. For more info contact Annie Gowing on 9259 3054.

The Gay and Lesbian Youth Project in the eastern region, which has been funded by DHS has a plan to work together with 8 – 10 secondary schools in the region to develop whole-school approaches that will create safe and supportive environments for same sex attracted students. Pilot schools will receive support and resources to implement strategies that build on already existing policies and frameworks, such as Mind Matters, Health Promoting Schools, and the Framework for Student Support Services. The process will include professional development and training for staff, policy and curriculum development, student education and support, and work with the broader community.

If your school is in the eastern region and is interested in being a pilot school committed to implementing a whole school approach to support same sex attracted young people and addressing homophobia in 2003 or for more information about the project, please contact Shelley on 9298 8858 or 0408 689 715 or shelley.walker@knox.vic.gov.au.

AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS FRAMEWORK II THAT OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCLUSION OF SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY ISSUES

Health and Physical Education (H&PE)

The Health and Physical Education KLA has three strands. One relates to physical education, whilst the other two look at "Health of Individuals and Populations" and "Self and Relationships". Some of the Learning Outcomes that could include curriculum on same-sex attracted and gender diverse young people follow. I have provided further detail with some of these as examples.

At Level 5 (to the end of Year 8) –

Strand – Health of Individuals and Populations.

Learning Outcome 5.1 – Describe health issues about which young people make decisions, and strategies that are designed to maintain or improve their health.

Achievement in this area is said to be evident when the student is able

to:

- identify important physical, social and emotional factors that contribute to young people's health and wellbeing
- compare the health interests and concerns of young people with those of other age groups
- identify appropriate ways of responding to areas of concern at a personal, home or community level
- identify positive and negative aspects of risk taking and specify strategies to minimise harm in different situations

Strand – Self and Relationships

Learning Outcome 5.2 – Describe the effect of family and community expectations on the development of personal identity and values.

Achievement in this area is said to be evident when the student is able to:

- describe family influences that shape personal values and identity
- explain community attitudes and laws that influence a sense of right or wrong, good or bad
- describe actions to respond to challenges

At Level 6 (to the end of Year 10) –

Strand – Health of Individuals and Populations

Learning Outcome 6.1 – Analyse the positive and negative health outcomes of a range of personal behaviours and community actions.

Learning Outcome 6.3ext – Review national or State strategies for addressing contemporary health-related issues.

Achievement in this area is said to be evident when the student is able to:

- identify the current health status of groups relevant to a particular health issue
- examine the factors – social, political and economic – that contribute to this issue getting public attention
- critically analyse the personal, social and environmental factors that contribute to the issue
- identify strategies used to address the selected issue
- evaluate the health outcomes of the action taken

Learning Outcome 6.4ext – Review the policies and priorities of major health bodies in meeting the health needs of a selected group.

Strand – Self and relationships

Learning Outcome 6.3 – Analyse ways in which individuals and groups seek to influence the behaviours of others concerning friendships and relationships.

Achievement in this area is said to be evident when the student is able to:

- explain the contribution of different roles and responsibilities in friendship and sexual relationships to young people's health and wellbeing
- describe and explain ways in which sexual relationships are portrayed and promoted in society and the impact of these on young people's views of relationships
- demonstrate communication and cooperation skills necessary to cope effectively with changes in relationships and groups
- identify the range of people and services available to support young people's sexual and emotional health needs

Learning Outcome 6.6ext – Analyse the changing nature of stereotypes and how this affects individual, family and community expectations.

Achievement in this area is said to be evident when the student is able to:

- outline stereotypes associated with gender, age, sexuality, friendship, relationships and culture
- identify changes that have occurred in stereotypes
- explain how stereotypes affect individual experiences, understandings, attitudes and relationships
- explain how stereotypes influence family and community expectations

The Arts

The Arts KLA contains eight strands referring to different areas of Arts practice. One of these is 'media', which contains the following Learning Outcome.

Learning Outcome 6.4 – Analyse the characteristics and role of the media in different cultural contexts (explain ways in which media texts reinforce or challenge social, cultural and artistic values).

English, including English as a Second Language (ESL)

English as a KLA offers many opportunities for discussion on a wide range of issues. The three English strands are aimed at skills improvement in speaking and listening, reading, and writing. Useful Learning Outcomes include –

Learning Outcome 5.1 – Listen to and produce a range of spoken texts dealing with some challenging themes and issues.

Learning Outcome 5.9 – Use a range of text types to write about some Challenging themes and issues.

Learning Outcome 6.1 – Listen to and produce a range of spoken texts to examine different perspectives on complex themes and issues.

Learning Outcome 6.2 – Compare and contrast the use of language in spoken texts that present different perspectives on complex themes and issues.

Learning Outcome 6.5 – Read a range of texts and use them to discuss different perspectives on complex themes and issues.

Learning Outcome 6.9 – Use a range of text types to convey detailed information and discuss different perspectives on complex themes and issues in writing.

Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE)

The SOSE KLA includes four strands, relating to 'society and environment', 'history', 'geography' and 'economy and society'.

Relevant Learning Outcomes from this area include –

Learning Outcome 5.2 – Examine the origin of Australia's legal system and how Australian laws are made.

Learning Outcome 6.5 – Explain the key changes in social and political attitudes and values in modern Western society.

Achievement in this area is said to be evident when the student is able to:

- describe the ways in which significant events affected change in such areas as family structures, gender roles and work organisation
- explain how the values of particular societies changed as a result of significant events
- examine the ways in which advances in technology affected other areas, such as health, medicine, transport, education
- evaluate the effect of significant events and ideas on groups

Learning Outcome 6.2 – Analyse a proposed change in the law in Australia and explain the legal processes to implement the change.

Civics and Citizenship Education has been identified as a cross-curriculum area of education which should be

prioritised. It encourages students to understand citizenship rights and responsibilities, and to participate in school-based decision making (DEET, 2000:18, A-Z Guide for Parents). Civics and citizenship is taught mostly within the SOSE KLA, and offers many opportunities for discussion of LGYP issues.

Science, Technology, LOTE and Mathematics

The **Science** KLA includes a biology strand. Whilst Learning Outcomes in this area do not focus on social issues, homosexuality can clearly be discussed in such curriculum areas as reproduction and genetics.

The remaining three KLAs (**Technology, Languages Other Than English (LOTE)** and **Mathematics**) appear to offer the least opportunity in curriculum for discussion of sexuality based issues. But, as with the other five KLAs, these three are bound by “principles of gender equity and equal opportunity for students from all ethnic, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds” and the “requirement that the learning outcomes of students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds should, over time, better match those of other students”

from Seal, Masters thesis, soon to be published