



Meeting Notes

LGBTQ Parents Meeting
January 11, 2011
6-8 p.m.
DCPS Central Office—1012B

Overview:

This meeting was convened to gain the input of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) parents in the DCPS community on how to better support their families and make our schools safe, inclusive and welcoming learning environments for all. The input gathered will contribute to the development of a comprehensive plan for supporting the DCPS LGBTQ community of students, staff and families. A newly formed LGBTQ Steering Committee of students, school administration and staff, parents and community experts will guide the Central Office staff in the development and implementation of this plan.

Attendance:

8 parents, 6 DCPS Central Office employees

Notes:

Issue	Comments
Update on DCPS's current LGBTQ Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of DCPS core beliefs• Public policies: DC Human Rights Act, DCPS Discipline Policy, DC Health Standards, etc.• The Office of Youth Engagement works to ensure that every DCPS student is present and ready and able to engage in academic and extracurricular programs.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Attendance,○ School culture: bullying prevention policy and programming○ Targeted Student Support: student behavior tracker○ Support for our most disengaged youth○ Health and Wellness• Health and Wellness Work includes risk reduction activities such as sexual health capacity building in the middles schools, mental health programming activities such as Question, Persuade, Respond (QPR)—

	<p>suicide prevention training for all social workers who will then train all staff; Professional development of staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Advisory Committee—coalition of DCPS and charter school student leaders who meet weekly and learn how to be health advocates and their schools and communities • Family Engagement activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gender-neutral parent language on enrollment forms ○ Schools developing plans to better engage families ○ “Parents Matter!” curriculum ○ New parent/family resources on the health and wellness webpage http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/In+the+Classroom/Health+and+Wellness • Partnerships with Community Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GLSEN, SMYAL, La Clinica, Rainbow Families, Youth Pride, Metro DC PFLAG, Trevor Project, etc. • The Central Office convened a meeting in the Fall of 2010 with students, staff and administrators to gather feedback on LGBTQ issues in the schools • This meeting with LGBTQ parents is the last “listening” session—next step will be to form a steering committee that will meet monthly to ensure that a comprehensive plan for this work is developed and being carried out • The 2007 DC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) shows that 7.1% of high school males and 9.9% of high school females (charter and DCPS) self-identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.
<p>How does your family feel welcomed and supported in our schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-neutral parent language on the enrollment forms • Teachers are friendly to two moms when we go to conferences • Forged good relationships with our principals • Other families have been very friendly and welcoming • School is intentional about its diversity—the Parent Teacher Association president sets the tone of diversity at one school, making it clear that the school is a place that welcomes diversity and thrives on it; also makes it clear that intolerance won’t be accepted • Very welcoming and sensitive to LGBTQ families • Our participation in the classroom is welcomed • I feel largely invisible—both good and bad • School administration publicly states that the school welcomes LGBTQ parents

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the student manual doesn't use gender specific language (i.e. "girls wear this, boys wear that") • Library has LGBTQ materials • Open/out LGBTQ staff members • Acknowledgment of two-mom families • Diversity trainings for staff; paid for by the PTA • How do we make every school like this on this issue? What can we do at the school for parents/school staff?
Where do we fall short?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender roles—staff often encourage traditional gender roles (i.e. pink is for girls, blue is for boys; boys are supposed to toughen up) • Principals/teachers don't always know how to respond to LGBTQ concerns, even if they have the best of intentions • No training on gender issues—not only LGBTQ, but more generally too; important because gender role policing is central to most adolescent bullying • Teacher told a preschool girl that "two girls can't get married—that would be silly"—this is just inaccurate and should not be said to any child • Teachers need to know how to intervene when homophobic comments are made by kids at school—teachers need training on this • Staff making disparaging remarks about gender/LGBTQ issues • There is no avenue to be open at the school in any kind of public way; no group established to support my family's specific needs • Schools need to talk about gender intolerance with their students and staff • Conversations around these issues need to be intentional (though age appropriate) at an earlier age • Teaching about alternative families in health? Don't know if they already do • Need to discuss bullying in health or other classes • LGBTQ staff at school is not out • The Boy Scouts are still allowed to recruit at the schools (this is tied in with federal funding—schools lose funding if they don't allow the Boy Scouts to recruit at their school), but the school community could still be educated on the inherent discrimination of the Boy Scouts • Curriculum needs to include LGBTQ families • There was an issue with name-calling at a school recently—probably LGBTQ name-calling and parents were never told explicitly what

	<p>happened and what was done to solve the problem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying, and “gay” slurs on the playground without consequence
<p>What improvements can be made? How can we better welcome and support our diversity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have administrators and principals go out of their way to support families/kids • Values should be articulated • Make sure materials are gender neutral • Have gender neutral books in the library and classrooms • DCPS-wide support group for LGBTQ families • LGBTQ books that are in the libraries need to actually make it into the classrooms • Comprehensive diversity trainings for elementary schools • Teach staff correct LGBTQ terminology • More tolerance training (for school staff and for kids) • Gay-straight alliances in all middle and high schools • School-wide discussions on bullying, diversity, inclusion • Create a group or have inclusive language as a part of a letter or poster that would be visible to everyone in the school • use the language “two mothers” or “two fathers” rather than two daddies or mommies—this language is confusing for some kids • training for teachers, even at schools with no known gay parents, to sensitize them to “innocent” comments that might be hurtful or conflicting • better education and higher expectations around knowledge of LGBTQ family issues • Teacher trainings (PTA funded or DCPS funded?) • more discussions on diversity • Todd Parr books • Beef up gender component of tolerance/anti-bullying programs • It’s ok to say gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender to elementary school kids • Welcoming Families Program at the HRC- parts of it could be integrated into the classroom • The Trevor Project offers lots of resources • Training for existing staff • Making knowledge of LGBTQ diversity a part of the hiring process • Need to talk about LGBTQ issues earlier than 6th grade

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There's a family strand in the DC Health Standards (can read standards on dcps.dc.gov) ○ But if you have a teacher that doesn't want to talk about family diversity, they just won't do it—no accountability/mandate ● Principals/PTA need to set the tone of acceptance at each school (PTA can nudge a principal); some schools don't have a well-funded PTA, or don't have a PTA at all ● How do we get DCPS to pay for diversity trainings like the one at Oyster? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The sexual health capacity building program is working on this in ten DCPS middle schools, and will be expanding this year
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do we need to get more voices at the table? ● Need input from schools all across the city—schools with PTAs, schools with no PTA, etc. ● Training of staff is a big piece ● Need to build school culture around this topic; give teachers language to combat a student using a LGBTQ slur ● What does an inclusive school community look like, sound like, etc.? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need a common agreement as to what this will be like/how this will work in every DCPS school ○ Hopefully the steering committee will help to guide that process ● Let the steering committee build/define what we're trying to do here ● Short term steps may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher trainings ○ Trainings for kids (led by teachers) ○ Let parents know city-wide that the steering committee exists, and that their input is wanted/valued ○ Have a hearing or community forum for the steering committee—this will give all parents/staff/administrators the chance to give their input on this topic ○ Have an LGBTQ-friendly contact person in every school ○ Have the steering committee make recommendations for change ● Everyone should forward any additional comments they have about the meeting to Andrea DeSantis, Risk Reduction Coordinator at andrea.desantis@dc.gov, 202.442.5040

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First meeting of LGBTQ Steering Committee is January 25, 2011 at 5:30pm. Participation on the Steering Committee will require a monthly meeting commitment in the coming months to develop the plan, and a quarterly meeting commitment after that to monitor implementation. LGBTQ parents interested in serving on the committee should contact Andrea DeSantis, Risk Reduction Coordinator at andrea.desantis@dc.gov, 202.442.5040.
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