

Lesson Plan **Dan Savage’s “It Gets Better” Project**

Grade level: 10-12

Materials needed: access to a computer, video cameras

Rationale: This assignment creates awareness around homophobic bullying in secondary schools and the devastating consequences it has for some youth. Furthermore, it encourages students to promote a learning environment that is welcoming and accepting of everyone. After hearing some of the statistics around LGBTQ youth suicide and depression, students will learn about the “It Gets Better” project started by Dan Savage, an author and newspaper columnist from the USA. This project asks students to reflect on the harmful effects of homophobic bullying and invites them to promote a school environment that allows people to be themselves free of judgment and harassment.

Objectives: As a result of this assignment students will:

- learn some statistics about LGBTQ youth and homophobic bullying in schools and the effects on LGBTQ youth as a result.
- discuss what constitutes as “homophobic” bullying.
- learn about the “It Gets Better” project and discuss its effectiveness.
- discuss ways to make their school more accepting and how to protect LGBTQ youth who may be vulnerable.
- create their own videos promoting antihomophobia education which highlight positive and accepting school environments.

Procedure:

Introduction

1. Have the following statistics written up on the board before students come into the room:
 - Three-quarters of LGBTQ students and 95% of transgender students report feeling unsafe at school, compared to one-fifth of straight students.
 - Over half of LGBTQ students report not feeling accepted at school, and almost half feel like they can’t be themselves, compared to one-fifth of straight students.
 - Six out of ten LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed about their sexual orientation.
 - Almost two in five transgender students and one in five LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed due to their expression of gender.(The above statistics taken from Egale’s *National Climate Survey on Homophobia in Canadian Schools*.)
 - Gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens are twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to think about or attempt suicide. (from a study published by McGill University)

LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or two-spirited, queer).

Note: “Queer” is a term reappropriated by LGBTQ people and may be inappropriate to use unless it is understood that the person using the term is LGBTQ themselves or an ally.

2. After going over these statistics with your class and possibly answering some questions about terminology (if students aren't familiar with terms like LGBTQ), ask students to discuss in small groups the following questions:
 - What is homophobic bullying?
 - What are some of the issues that an LGBTQ youth might have to deal with in secondary school that a straight youth probably wouldn't?
 - What are some of the ways we can promote and encourage antihomophobia education and respect for people's differences in our school?

After groups have had some time to discuss these questions amongst themselves, open up the discussion to the whole class. Brainstorm students' ideas on the board or on poster paper.

3. Introduce students to Dan Savage's "It Gets Better" project. Tell students about why Dan Savage started the "It Gets better" project using the summary we have provided. Show them the video Dan Savage created to launch the project at www.youtube.com/itgetsbetterproject#p/f/0/7IcVyvg2Qlo.

Also view the "It Gets Better" video made by the LGBTQ Action Group (BCTF Committee for Action on Social Justice) at www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2l60Repr7s.

Discuss the project with students. Ask them these questions.

- Why is this an important message for youth to hear? Why or why not?
- Is using YouTube a good way to get this message to youth? Why or why not?
- Do you think this campaign will be effective in helping to decrease LGBTQ youth suicides? Why or why not?
-

Project

1. Have students work in small groups to create their own antihomophobia videos. Student videos can focus on any of the following:
 - Everyone has the right to be themselves at school without fear of harassment.
 - Homophobia is hurtful and people should speak up against it if they hear or see it.
 - Being an LGBTQ youth is a positive thing that students should be proud of.
 - Diversity should be celebrated and people should not be discriminated against for being different.
2. Have students show their videos to the rest of the class. Have them explain their motivation and intentions behind the video.
 - Who did they create their message for?
 - What are they hoping their video will inspire in others?
3. Have students upload their videos on to YouTube or your school's web page. Or host a viewing of your students' videos one evening after school; you could invite other students, parents, and colleagues to come and watch!
 Note: If you are posting students' videos on the web, make sure you have their parents' permission to do so.

Evaluation

	1	2	3	4	5
Students level of involvement in classroom/group discussions					
Video: How well does the video address the issue of homophobia? Is the message being presented clear?					
How well has the video been put together/edited?					
Was the group able to effectively communicate their ideas and intentions behind their video as part of their final presentation?					

jb\JC 10-11\Gets better
JC/cep:jb/tfeu