

GALE FORCE

The Newsletter of Friends and Members of the Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC

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GALE BC: Working to Change BC's Public Schools

Student safety, education, and support continue to be at the top of GALE BC's priorities and we remain a major source of resources and/or support for our members and others who want to learn about or advocate for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (glbt) issues in education. GALE BC offers a mentor program to assist and support BC educators (new or experienced) who would like resources or just the chance to talk to a mentor about their personal and/or job situations (specifically around glbt issues). To this end, some GALE members have volunteered and are willing to talk or meet to discuss various issues important to you. Although we may not be experts in all areas, we will certainly do our best to make sure we connect you to the right people, if necessary.

If you are a student looking for guidance, please contact Prideline BC at 1-800-566-1170, PFLAG Canada at 1-888-530-6777 or Transgender Health Program at 1-866-999-1514 (also see other community organizations listed in our Resource section).

Another option permissible would be that school counselors and/or educators could consult with us on behalf of a

student. Check the mentorship link on our web site for more details.

GALE BC continues to support and encourage the growth of Gay-Straight Alliances in schools in BC. We have given grants to groups to educate students about how to start and maintain a GSA in their school or community. GSA workshops and conferences have been held in Vernon (Nov 2007), and in Nanaimo (April 2008).

Another GSA Conference will be held in Feb 6, 2009 in Cranbrook, serving students from the entire East Kootenay region. Speakers and presenters from Vernon, Prince George, Cranbrook and Edmonton will help students, educators, and parents develop a more accurate and complete understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as learn tactics to teach about diversity in their classrooms, and to build safer school communities for students, school staff and family members.

This East Kootenay conference is supported by School Districts 5 (Southeast Kootenay) and SD 6 (Rocky Mountain), as well as many community youth and family support agencies, including ANKORS, PFLAG Canada.

For more information about the EK conference, contact Earl at 250-919-0514 or ejwaugh@mac.com.

"Looking for Something to Look Forward To..."

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth in BC. The BC Coroners Service has released a report based on a detailed study of the child and youth suicides of the past 5 years. The goal of the report is to prevent future deaths by suicide.

According to the report, two-thirds of youth suicides are male, and at least 12% of the youth suicides were teens who identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual or who had been questioning their sexuality prior to their death.

The report, including a set of recommendations, can be found at

<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/coroners/child-death-review/docs/cdru-suicidereportfull.pdf>

This issue . . .

... engages issues facing queer youth by looking briefly BC, in an overview of policy development by Glen Hansman; by checking research done by GLSEN; then by focusing on personal stories by youth and advocates, first, in Edmonton, then in West Vancouver. Abbotsford School District has disallowed Social Justice 12; the onset of these events is reported here, along with letters by citizens who support the offering of the SJ12 course.

A more positive direction is shown in summary of BCTF policies supporting LGBT rights, and in the report from the Pride in Schools conference in October. The closing review of an article by Kris Wells highlights Wells' encouraging suggestions for pro-active approaches in school and districts, measures that can and should be engaged by all of us.