

Safe Schools - Peer Perspectives

Presentation:

1. Who is AMES / What do we do
2. What is PEER PERSPECTIVES
3. What are the issues PP addresses
4. How this speaks to Safe Schools

AMES

- provide access to media technology and training
- enable people to voice what is important to them
- we do this through: facility, identity and ISSUE based programming (PP)

PP

- briefly, a series of youth made resources for educators, teachers that address discrimination
 - o High School (forgive my youth focus)
 - o focus on racism, homophobia, and first nations
- funded in part by Vancity, Canada Council, Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
- goals of PP
 - o youth voice on issues that are important to them
 - o create dialogue around those issues
- How it was made

Two issues:

RACISM

- None of us are racist, but we witness, or we experience racism
- Its either a non-issue, or teachers are at a loss □ see it but don't know how to address it
- We are incredibly diverse
- In our schools there may be cultural segregation, racial slurs or jokes in the hallways
- We don't talk about it □ so its not there □ but skin colour/language does come into play in the lives of youth
- incidences of bullying, harassment and violence, not attributed to racism, often masked in other terms

- but bullying is based on DIFFERENCES (on creating division) and underlying bullying/violence is discrimination that is based on cultural difference, skin colour, ethnicity
- we need to address this
- we need to challenge all the ways that racism plays into our social interactions
- teachers and students need to know how to address racial slurs and comments
- racism does affect BC youth, both as individuals in social settings, and in institutionalized settings
- part of making schools safe is enabling students to talk about differences and how they experience those differences

HOMOPHOBIA

- closely related, more timely, challenging in different ways
- over and over again, teachers are saying that they need resources and education on homophobia and yet most are not supported by parents or by their administrations
- students using derogatory language, homophobic behaviour
- uncool = fag ; lame = gay
- Kids are not being called on inappropriate language
- going uncalled and unchallenged in schools creates an environment of hostility, danger and violence
- not just for queer youth, but for questioning youth, and for those just perceived as queer or different
- it is down right dangerous; homophobia is a weapon students use against each other
- This danger affects not only queer and questioning students, it affects anyone who is perceived or labeled as gay because being gay is 'wrong'. It's a weapon used against kids to say you are uncool, you are different, you are not accepted as who you are.

What is peer perspectives all about:

- aims to give youth a voice especially those who are normally denied one
- we want to create a dialogue about discrimination everyone's issue
- We use the medium of video to do this.
 - o Video is a catalyst for dialogue and for social change
- We use an ancient technology of storytelling

- Youth Made so it speaks to youth in their own language, they talk about issues that youth are experiencing today in our schools and in our communities
 - We use peer education, youth talking to youth (not top down, but equal)
 - if we are striving to make our schools safe we need to provide a vehicle whereby students are encouraged and supported in telling their own experiences
 - We use peer education as a way to get youth thinking about **safety** and **discrimination** in their school: what **incidences** have happened in your community, what are they interactions you see on a daily basis that affect the inclusion and safety of everyone of your classmates.
 - remember that students are the experts about their experiences and the positive changes they want
 - PP is a resource to get this dialogue started.
 - Youth talking to youth about the homophobia and racism that they have experienced is powerful, because it sets an example that youth voices matter.

 - We provide teacher's packages and youth facilitated workshops to bring the issue of discrimination, of racism and homophobia, to the students of BC.
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