

Nevada Receives Failing Grade In New Report From GLSEN

The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) has failed 42 states, including Nevada, in a newly published report analyzing the policies and practices that make schools safer for LGBT students. The report gives Nevada a grade of “F” despite being ranked as the 11th best state in the nation overall.

In “State of the States 2004,” GLSEN rates schools on such factors as inclusive anti-harassment laws, school sanctioned Gay Straight Alliances, teacher to student ratios, graduation rates and more. In a previous report, the 2003 GLSEN National School Climate Survey, the group found that 84% of LGBT students reported verbal harassment, 40% reported physical harassment, and more than 90% heard anti-gay comments at school. This year’s report is meant to highlight the ways states and school might improve their policies to create a safe learning environment.

“This report highlights what many safe schools advocates have feared – that our nation’s policymakers have failed to give schools the policies and programmatic support they need to change environments where bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity are the rule and not the exception,” notes GLSEN Executive Director Kevin Jennings. “In classrooms where ‘faggot’ is heard more often than the pledge of allegiance and 39% of LGBT students report being physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation, our schools and the states that govern them are failing.”

Grading was based on a points scale, adding points for policies and laws which protected LGBT students, and docking points for laws that stigmatized LGBT students. Many states have adopted laws which either prevent positive depictions of homosexuality in schools or require the promotion of heterosexual marriage, sometimes both.

The highest scoring state was New Jersey, which scored 95 points in the report. Mississippi scored lowest with a grade of –3. Nevada was penalized in the scoring for lacking a state-wide law that protected students based on sexual orientation or gender identity, low graduation rates, overcrowded student to teacher numbers and the lack of a statewide law protecting all people from discrimination based on gender identity. Working in Nevada’s favor was the statewide Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 1999, state mandates to teach sexuality education and HIV/STD prevention, and local school districts (Clark and Washoe) adopting inclusive anti-harassment policies.

Note on graphic: Nevada received an “F” Grade from GLSEN in their new report on creating safe schools for LGBT students. The left-hand column indicates the points possible and the right-hand column indicates the points Nevada received in each area.



Gay/ Straight 101:



Meeting The Needs Of The Diverse Classroom

BY JERE KEYS

The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) is becoming a driving force in Las Vegas for equality for LGBT students in the public school system. Originally founded as a networking and support system for teachers and educators, the group has expanded its purpose over time to creating and fostering a healthy environment for all students regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Nationally, GLSEN

regularly monitors the school climate for teachers and students alike, releasing report cards on states based on the tolerant environments created. They also publish a number of resource guides and reference materials to help parents, teens and educators make schools safe and effective for all.

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The Southern Nevada chapter has many of the same goals as the national organization. In the past few years, the local chapter has taken on increasingly active roles in raising the visibility of LGBT students and teachers, leadership training and advocating for harassment-free environments.

In the upcoming school year, GLSEN of Southern Nevada is planning their second annual Back to School event (September), will participate in National Coming Out Day (October), a Winter Pride Hunt being planned, the national No Name Calling Week and Day of Silence (April) and more. Other GLSEN-sponsored plans for the school year include a city-wide get-together for Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) from different schools, and participation in national workshops and retreats.

The local chapter of GLSEN now has over 300 paid memberships which include teachers and educators as well as community members, some students and even supportive businesses. GLSEN is aware of about a dozen high school GSAs valley-wide to which they lend their support.

Information about GLSEN of Southern Nevada can be found by logging onto their website, www.glsennv.org. Information about the national organization is available at www.glsen.org.

NEVADA GRADE F

GENERAL EDUCATION	(20): 8
Student/Teacher Ratio	(5): 1
Teacher Salary	(5): 4
Per-pupil Expenditure	(5): 2
Graduation Rate	(5): 1
STATE SAFE SCHOOLS LAW	(30): 0
Sexual Orientation Inclusive	(24): 0
Transgender Inclusive	(6): 0
STATE NON-DISCRIMINATION LAW	(20): 16
Sexual Orientation Inclusive	(16): 16
Transgender Inclusive	(4): 0
SEXUALITY EDUCATION	(15): 15
Statewide Requirement to Teach HIV/STD Education	(5): 5
Statewide Requirement to Teach Sexuality Education	(10): 10
LOCAL SAFE SCHOOLS POLICIES	(15): 13.5
Sexual Orientation Inclusive	(12): 12
Transgender Inclusive	(3): 1.5
SCHOOLS LAW THAT STIGMATIZES LGBT PEOPLE	(-10): 0
TOTAL:	52.5