



# **Supporting the Day of Silence!**

## **6 Steps Educators Can Take to Support the Day of Silence**

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Here are some steps you can take in order to show your commitment to creating safer schools for all and supporting the Day of Silence. Consider taking one or more of the following actions:

### **1. Prepare Your Students**

Discuss the Day of Silence with your students! Explain the reasons for this day of action and let students know what will be taking place throughout the day in your particular school. Make connections between this action and other forms of actions that students have studied. Describe the event as a responsible personal expression and let students know that you support their participation.

### **2. Inform Colleagues**

Many of the adults in your school community may be unaware of the Day of Silence or may view it as a disruption to the school day. In advance of the Day of Silence, make time to educate administrators, colleagues and family members about the meaning and importance of the Day of Silence. Consider providing examples on how the Day of Silence can serve as an educational tool. Inform your colleagues by discussing it at a faculty or PTA meeting, writing a letter or e-mail to staff, or holding a forum to discuss the event. Because students may not have full access to these audiences, your proactive support can go a long way in building awareness and generating support among people who might otherwise remain uninvolved.

### **3. Get Involved**

Though the Day of Silence is a student-led action, it is important that adults in the school community participate in Day of Silence planning meetings and the implementation of activities before, during and after the event whenever possible. As a teacher, administrator or other faculty member, modeling leadership and involvement is a critical aspect of your role as an educator. Help students gauge the appropriate actions for the Day of Silence in the context of your own school community. Offer suggestions on how they can create safe environments where they can participate throughout the day.

### **4. Make Your Place a Safe Space**

One way to let students know you are an ally is to display "safe space" or "safe zone" materials in your classroom, office or on your desk. Stickers, flags, buttons, posters, pencils and other items that say "safe space," depict a pink/black triangle, or otherwise convey support for LGBT people/issues let students know that they have a nonjudgmental place to go for guidance and resources. Safe Space stickers are available from GLSEN at: <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/educator/library/record/1641.html>.

In addition, the National Consortium of Directors of LGBT Resources in Higher Education provides information about Safe Zone and Heterosexual Ally programs and materials at: [http://www.lgbtcampus.org/faq/safe\\_zone.html](http://www.lgbtcampus.org/faq/safe_zone.html).

### **5. Ways to Participate**

No matter what subject you teach or what your role is in the school, anti-LGBT name-calling impacts *all* of your students. If you are a teacher, explore lessons or activities that can be conducted in silence and explore issues such as censorship, prejudice and social justice. Consider holding a brief silence during each period or class that encourages students to reflect on the day. You could also start and/or end each class or session with 5 minutes of silence and encourage students to do some reflective writing during this time about invisibility, censorship or how it feels to be silenced. Remember, in order for students to participate in the Day of Silence, they do not need to remain silent throughout instructional time. Each school is different and support may vary from school to school. Depending on your own school community and the needs for instruction during the actual Day of Silence, assess how you can support student throughout the day.

### **6. Create a Display**

Create a special display in your classroom or library of books, posters and other materials that explore LGBT topics, censorship, discrimination and other social justice issues. If possible, include literature about the Day of Silence project and resources from organizations like GLSEN and PFLAG. Give students the opportunity to respond to the literature they read in nonverbal ways—through writing, visual art, music, movement or performance.