SCHOOL DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

New research from GSA Network and Crossroads Collaborative finds that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, gender nonconforming youth, and youth of color not only face bullying and harassment from peers, but also harsh and disparate discipline from school staff, relatively higher levels of policing and surveillance, and blame for their own victimization. Based on these findings, Advancement Project and GSA Network make the following recommendations for youth, teachers, school administrators, and policy makers. To read the full report visit **gsanetwork.org/Pushout-Report.**

YOUTH:

1. Take the Pledge
Join the movement against criminalization! Youth across the nation are pushing back against harsh disciplinary policies and practices of schools that target LGBTQ and gender nonconforming youth of color. Sign up your GSA in a statement against the criminalization of queer and trans youth of color and get updates and resources to fight the criminalization of youth: **http://unite.gsanetwork.org/ petitions/on-ferguson-calling-gsas-to-action**

2. Become a GSA for Justice
Join the growing movement of LGBTQ youth activists who are advocating for a broad range of social and educational justice issues. Educate yourself, your GSA, and your school about how to create meaningful change! Find more resources here: **http://www.gsanetwork.org/gsas4justice**

3. Fight for Restorative Justice
#GSAs4Justice and youth across the nation are demanding solutions not suspensions! Work with your GSA advisor and other student groups to demand your school adopt the best practices for restorative justice as recommended by AFT and NEA. Start a Campaign here: **http://unite.gsanetwork.org/ efforts/push-for-restorative-justice**

TEACHERS:

1. Support Alternatives
Alternatives to exclusionary and punitive discipline exist! Explore "Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools," a new guide from Advancement Project, AFT, NEA, and the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign. **http://bit. ly/1mjpbKH**

2. Do Your Homework
When you have disciplinary discretion, challenge yourself to find creative solutions that don't deny LGBTQ and gender nonconforming youth of color educational instruction time.

ADMINISTRATORS AND POLICY MAKERS:

1. Implement the Guidance
Full implementation of the recent Department of Education and Department of Justice Guidance on School Climate and Discipline.[1] The guidance acknowledges the existence of the School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP) as it affects students of color and LGBTQ students and provides best practices to create positive school climate. These best practices include appropriate consequences for misbehaviors, limiting the role of law enforcement, and the need for community involvement.

2. Eliminate Zero Tolerance
Eliminating zero tolerance policies and the use of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests for minor infractions.[2]

3. Curb Unnecessary Discretion
Curbing the use of discretionary and biased "catch-all" discipline categories such as willful defiance,[3] insubordination, disobedience, and disrespect. These discipline categories disproportionately affect students of color, students with disabilities, gender nonconforming students, and LGBTQ students. Policies that clearly delineate the appropriate common sense responses to minor student misbehaviors can ensure that all students are treated fairly and students are not pushed out of school when minor incidents occur.[4]

4. Limit the Role of Police in Schools
Creating agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), which appropriately limit the role of police in schools and keep LGBTQ and gender nonconforming students of color safe.[5] These agreements must include clear language which limits the use of school-based arrests and referrals to the juvenile justice system to behavior that poses a serious, ongoing threat to the safety of students or staff. They must also include opportunities for community stakeholder input, data collection, training, and accountability.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Create Positive School Climates
Creating positive school relationships and climates through alternatives such as restorative justice practices.[6] Restorative practices can help educators understand the root causes of student misbehavior, provide opportunities for appropriate student, educator, and community accountability, and give educators and students an opportunity to build positive, productive relationships.

6. Address Bullying
Addressing bullying[7] by doing the following:

a. Passing statewide legislation which accurately defines bullying, delineates the appropriate responses to bullying, trains staff on how to handle bullying, and ensures the creation of a safe, positive school climate.[8]

b. Requiring that educators effectively intervene to prevent bullying.

c. Requiring reporting of bullying to appropriate school officials and a prompt, thorough investigation.

d. Emphasizing age-appropriate responses and interventions that focus on education, support, and remediation rather than on exclusionary measures and referral to law enforcement.

7. Reallocate Funding
Reallocating funding dedicated to school police, security officers, metal detectors, and surveillance cameras to support staff such as guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists, restorative justice facilitators, and nurses. These support staff members can directly address LGBTQ students' academic, behavioral, health, and personal needs.

gsanetwork.org   **safequalityschools.org**

8. Require Training
Requiring training for all school administrators, teachers, police and security officers,[9] school staff, and expulsion hearing officers on the following topics: the mental health challenges, strains, and duress endured by LGBTQ and gender nonconforming youth of color; the adverse consequences of exclusion from school; effective classroom management techniques; adolescent development and relationship-building; conflict resolution, restorative justice, and other disciplinary alternatives; and student engagement through challenging and culturally relevant curricula.

9. Create Safe Spaces
Creating safe spaces in schools for LGBTQ and gender nonconforming youth of color through -

a. Establishing and implementing an anti-harassment policy that includes actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and presentation.

b. Training staff to intervene when they hear slurs or negative comments based on sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, or presentation.

c. Supporting Gay-Straight Alliance clubs and other similar clubs.

d. Providing identifiable resources where students and their parents and/or guardians can find information or support regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

e. Introducing a curriculum that embraces family diversity, and includes LGBTQ people and information about sexual orientation and gender identity.

10. Collect Data
Collecting school discipline data, including referrals to law enforcement and school-based arrests, disaggregated by offense, age, gender, grade, race/ethnicity, disability, school, teacher/school staff, and outcome. Data should also be used to measure program success, diagnose areas of improvement, and develop alternative programs tailored to the identified disciplinary issues.

1 The DOE and DOJ's School Climate and Discipline Guidance is available at http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/index.html

2 In 2008, Padres y Jovenes Unidos passed Denver Public School's Policy JK-R which eliminated zero tolerance policies and has since resulted in decreased suspensions, expulsions, and arrests, increased graduation rates, and improved school climates. Policy JK-R is available at http://ed.dpsk12.org:8080/policy/FMPro?-db=policy.fp3&-format=detail.html&-lay=policyview&File=JK&-recid=32967&-find=

3 In 2014, California became the first state to ban all expulsions for "willful defiance" and ban suspensions for "willful defiance" for K-3 students. Read more about that new law here - http://www.publiccounsel.org/press_releases?id=0088

4 For an example of a straightforward discipline chart which contains a clear list of behaviors and their conse-

quences, see Buffalo Public School's Code of Conduct Developing Safe and Supportive Schools, available at http://www.buffaloschools.org/files/57596/code%20of%20conduct%20official%20%202014-2015.pdf

5 Padres y Jovenes Unidos in Denver, Colorado recently worked with Denver Public Schools and the Denver Police Department to pass an Intergovernmental Agreement [IGA] which limits the role of police in schools. - http://safequalityschools.org/resources/entry/Padres-IGA. For an example of a flowchart which clearly explains the limited role of police in schools, see Broward County's Collaborative Agreement - http://safequalityschools.org/resources/entry/broward-agreement-on-school-discipline.

6 For an example of how restorative practices can help foster positive relationships in schools, please see Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships and Promoting Positive School Discipline in Schools at

http://safequalityschools.org/resources/entry/restorative-practices-fostering-healthy-relationships-promoting-positive-di

7 For a report on why zero tolerance to bullying is the wrong approach, see Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right – Why Zero Tolerance Is Not the Solution to Bullying - http://www.gsanetwork.org/files/aboutus/APJ-005_D5-FINALsmall.pdf

8 A coalition of groups in Minnesota recently passed comprehensive statewide legislation that addresses bullying. More information is available at http://www.outfront.org/safeschools/bill

9 Denver's IGA calls for training of school principals and school resource officers on the creation of safe spaces for LGBTQ students. More information is available at http://safequalityschools.org/resources/entry/Padres-IGA