



Project Prom: 2014

The Pikes Peak Safe @ School Coalition (PPS@SC) conducted “Project Prom: 2014” surveying local high schools in our community regarding their prom policies. The PPS@SC would like to thank all the local high schools who answered all our questions and who are safe and affirming. We would also like to thank all the coalition members who helped us conduct this year’s survey from e-mailing, making phone calls to making personal visits to schools.

About the Survey

In 2012, Inside/Out Youth Services identified a need to conduct this survey based on youth sharing testimonials of not being allowed to attend prom with a same gender partner. At the time, stories nationwide focused on transgender students not being allowed to attend prom in the attire which corresponded with their gender identity. In 2013, we launched our first Project Prom surveying local high schools on prom policies. At the time, many schools were uncomfortable answering our questions, and found schools did not have policies in place.

The goals of the project are (1) to ask these questions and get answers on behalf of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning youth we serve; (2) introduce the PPS@SC to every local high school in our community; (3) obtain a landscape of local high schools efforts in LGBTIQ inclusivity and get conversations started; and (4) act as a follow up to Project Prom: 2013 which asked identical questions.

Methods

Project Prom: 2014 kicked off on February 2nd, 2014 with the PPS@SC emailing every local high school principal. The email introduced the PPS@SC, provided ways their school could be more inclusive towards students i.e. having “Prom Royalty” or extending couples discounts to same gender couples. The e-mail directed them to pass along the e-mail to the appropriate staff involved with prom and to take a brief survey online.

In the upcoming weeks PPS@SC would follow up with a phone call asking to speak to a staff person in charge of prom, and document their responses. The PPS@SC reached out to 26 local high schools; of the 26 local high schools 16 answered all of our questions. A few schools had personal visits made to ask the questions in person.

Below are the questions asked and our Key Findings:

Will students be allowed to bring a date of the same gender?

Of the 16 reported local high schools 15 answered, “Yes.” One school did not have an answer to this question.

A student asked if they would be able to wear the opposite gender’s clothing. Does your school have a prom dress code and would be willing to share it with us? Could you explain if wearing opposite gender clothing would be accepted?

Of the 16 reported schools 12 answered, “Yes.” Including having transgender students attend prom before. The remaining 4 schools were unsure, and one school reported a conversation has begun, “for those kids who identify as a different gender and want to come as who they identify as.”



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Project Prom: 2013 found many of the schools could not answer the question and answered, "This has never come up before."

If your school is offering discounts to couples, will this offer be extended to same gender couples as well?

One of the findings in GLSEN'S 2011 National School Climate Survey, is some of the most common forms of discrimination mentioned by students were policies or practices that reinforced male-female couples as the norm. Many students remarked that same-gender/sex couples were not allowed to attend school dances together, or were penalized for doing so, such as being ineligible for "couples discounts."

Our survey found many schools do not provide couples discounts. One school mentioned they did not want to students who could not find a date for the dance to feel worse by having to pay more. The high schools which did offer the couples discounts would extend them to same gender couples.

We learned one school is going the extra mile with posters advertising dates of the same gender/sex are welcome.

Has your school considered having "Prom Royalty" rather than "Prom King and Queen" to be more inclusive?

Of the 16 reported schools all 16 school said they are not having "Prom Royalty" rather than "Prom King and Queen." However, 4 of the schools said they would bring the idea up with student council to see if it would be an idea they would like to implement.

Solutions

Having comprehensive bullying/harassment policies.

Intervening when bias-based remarks are made.

Supporting Gay Straight Alliances.

Knowing support resources available.

Curricular resources.

If you are interested in having the Pikes Peak Safe @ School Coalition help your school become safe and affirming for all students contact us at director@insideoutys.org or call (719) 328-1056.