

Subject: GLBTQ Online High School Update

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Conversation: GLBTQ Online High School Update

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Saving Lives

I am one of the privileged ones. Not only did I survive 12 years of formal education; I excelled. Just last week, I even graduated college as a highly-decorated honor student. But none of that would have been possible without the support of mentors, educators, family, and like-minded peers.

Unfortunately, my story is not shared by all young people of nonheterosexual attractions, non-normative gender expressions, or those questioning their respective sexualities or genders. This extends to those youth who do not fit these categories, but are perceived to do so by their classmates.

Little over a month ago, at least two young people took their own lives as a direct result of day-in, day-out verbal harassment, and threats of violence from other youth. One was Carl Walker-Hoover, 11, who hanged himself after a particularly bad incident of bullying one afternoon, despite his mother's personal support. The other, also only 11 years old, was Jaheem Herrera, similarly committed suicide just over a week later, also because of persistent bullying. In both these cases, their school administrations knew they were being bullied, but did not take serious enough actions to prevent further harassment.

Progress Update

Plans for GLBTQ Online High School are moving right along! We have received over 50 staff applications, several student applications, and countless inquiries. Our Advisory Board has grown to two dozen members from across the country. Check out the website for additional updates and the complete (and still growing) list of board members.

Look for our new website and new look coming in the next couple weeks!

Funding Update

We are currently in need of funding for two specific items. The first is for our learning management system. We will be using the next-generation system from SynapticMash, www.synapticmash.com to provide all the interactions, recordkeeping and courses that our students and families need. We need \$20,000 to launch this work. If we have just 200 people donate just \$100, we'll be there! If you can't do that, how about \$50, \$10 or \$5?

Neither of these young students was gay-identified, but it was anti-gay epithets which were cited as the most frequent kind they were each forced to endure.

Theirs are not the only lives lost because of sexuality- and/or gender-related harassment. Just last year, mere days before Valentine's Day, Lawrence King, 15 years old, was murdered by a classmate for his same-sex attractions and gender-variant behaviors. In this case, the school's administration had been supportive of Lawrence, and yet he still died needlessly at the hands of another student. Two years ago, Eric Mohat, then 17, violently took his own life because of pervasive anti-gay bullying. Eric's school, when pressed by his family to investigate said bullying, has continued to deny the problem despite more than a few student suicides in recent years. In 2003, Sakia Gunn was stabbed fatally by an "angry" individual when she declared herself a lesbian one night while out with friends. Sakia was only 15 at the time. They are by no means the only young people who have suffered to an extreme degree due to sexuality- and gender-based prejudices.

I cannot help but feel chills and an immense sense of mourning when I consider that today, Sakia would be my age (I'm 22). Still younger, Carl Walker-Hoover would have turned 12 little more than a week after his death. Sakia and I would have been part of the same graduating class of college, in all likelihood. Carl could have been one of my students when I teach next year. Others might have been peers within a few semesters of college graduation themselves. But none of them had the chance to even finish high school. Some of them didn't even get there in the first place.

For this very reason, there is a demonstrated need for GLBTQ Online High School, and what it will offer students and their families: opportunities to thrive in an academically challenging, supportive environment.

When I think of all this, all my accomplishments seem almost meaningless. I can only be enormously grateful that my story is not one of theirs. It is with both these feelings in mind that I dedicate myself to working towards creating spaces where such students

The second item is scholarship funds. Some of the students who have already applied to the school need help paying the tuition. We dream of a school where we can welcome these students fully, but we need help to be able to do that. If you are fortunate enough to be able to help students attend our school, please consider a donation to our scholarship fund.

Donations can be sent to:
GLBTQ Online High School
540 Dorland Road South
Maplewood, MN 55119

or made via credit card on our website at

www.gltbqonlinehighschool.com

Thanks for any support you can offer or solicit!

will not only have the basic human right to mental and physical safety met, but will be able to incorporate their sexual and gender identities as merely part of their lives, and accomplish whatever they set their minds to do. And it is with both feelings in mind that I dedicate myself to creating the GLBTQ Online High School.

And so, I ask you, with all this in mind, to dedicate yourself to GLBTQ Online High School in whatever way(s) you can. Talk about us to potential staff members and encourage them to apply. Talk to students and parents, and suggest us to them or someone they know. Solicit donors or donate yourself. Link to us from your own website. Join our cause on Facebook. It's not just us, the faculty and staff working toward creating this school, who need all the help we can get. The very lives of young people are at stake.

Proactively working for better opportunities for youth of all kinds,

c.j. rock

Youth Outreach Coordinator

Board of Directors

GLBTQ Online High School

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