“Registration exceeded our expectations,” said Geoffrey Winder of the National GSA Network. “This was the third time models of resiliency with low-income youth and youth of color spoke alongside Geoffrey Winder of the National GSA Network about Members of Freedom, Inc., Voces de la Frontera, and Alliance School State Superintendent’s Conference on Nearly safe schools, safe communities: State Superintendent’s Conference on LGBT Youth. The conference was sponsored by Wisconsin State Superintendent Tony Evers and was held at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Student Union on March 29, 2012. Nearly 350 educators, youth community leaders, youth workers, and elected officials attended Safe Schools, Safe Communities: State Superintendent’s Conference on LGBT Youth. The conference was sponsored by Wisconsin State Superintendent Tony Evers and was held at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Student Union on March 29, 2012.

This was the third time GSAFE and long-time partner Diverse and Resilient, a Milwaukee based organization committed to the healthy development of all LGBTQ people in Wisconsin, came together to organize this event. Additional sponsors and planning partners were the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, UW-Milwaukee, and the Counseling Student Association at UW-Milwaukee also sponsored.

“Registration exceeded our expectations,” said GSAFE Director of Programs Brian Juchems. “We had over 50 community representatives Wisconsin citizens come to talk about what’s going on in LGBT youth and schools in communities.”

The conference aimed to raise awareness about the education and health disparities LGBT youth face in both schools and communities, provide a space to share best practices about how to address these disparities, and inspire participants to continue working to change our current reality. Conference attendees had 18 workshops to choose from over the course of the day.

Diverse and Resilient, founder of school development at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, spoke about the connection between bullying and youth in prison. He said from her ongoing research that current anti-bullying programs being used in the U.S. are not held as successful. Dr. Espelage then followed up her talk with an afternoon workshop that further examined promising practices to address these disparities, and inspire participants to continue working to change the course of the day. Following Winder’s speech a panel of youth and youth organizers from Freedom, Inc., (Madison), Voces de la Frontera (statewide), and the Alliance School (Milwaukee) spoke about their experiences in LGBTQ low income and youth of color as well as their work to build leadership among the populations and their efforts to stem the flow of youth into the prison system. Following Winder’s speech a panel of youth and youth organizers from Freedom, Inc., (Madison), Voces de la Frontera (statewide), and the Alliance School (Milwaukee) spoke about their experiences in LGBTQ low income and youth of color as well as their work to build leadership among the populations and their efforts to stem the flow of youth into the prison system.

“Dr. Espelage and Mr. Winder played a critical role in shifting the conversation and challenging our assumptions about what’s going on in LGBT youth and schools,” said Juchems. “This is especially true when we’re talking about low income and youth of color.”

Additional speakers included former Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton, who sponsored the conference in 2010. She shared from her ongoing research that current anti-bullying programs being used in the U.S. are not held as successful. Dr. Espelage then followed up her talk with an afternoon workshop that further examined promising practices to address bullying in schools.

GSAFE staff and board members spent three days with Geoffrey Winder (2nd from right), Racial & Economic Justice manager for GSA Network in California, outlined school policies and practices—including zero tolerance bullying policies—that discourage the participation of LGBTQ low income and youth of color and lead to them being pushed out of school and into the prison system. Following Winder’s speech a panel of youth and youth organizers from Freedom, Inc., (Madison), Voces de la Frontera (statewide), and the Alliance School (Milwaukee) spoke about their experiences in LGBTQ low income and youth of color as well as their work to build leadership among the populations and their efforts to stem the flow of youth into the prison system.

“We’re excited to build upon the new relationships and learning gained from this event. We’re committed to working across communities to ensure school is a place where all students can thrive.”

WHAT’S NEW AT GSAFE?

You might notice a few changes since our last newsletter, including our newly redesigned logo. We’ve also rebranded to now refer to ourselves as “gsafe” — just “Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools” or “GSAFE.” With a new logo comes a newly branded and redesigned website along with a new web domain and email addresses. You can now find us as www.gsafewi.org. The new site adds new content and resources to your book marks and address books.

Additionally, Kristin Botoshanks joined the GSAFE staff as our Director of Administration and Development. She and Director of Programs Brian Juchems now serve as Co-Directors. M Adams continues to serve as our Manager of Volunteer Initiatives and Tim Michael continues on as Manager of GSA Outreach.

Thank you for all that you do to support us in achieving our mission! You might notice a few changes since our last newsletter, including our newly redesigned logo. We’ve also no longer referring to ourselves as “gsafe for Safe Schools” — just “Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools” or “GSAFE.” With a new logo comes a newly branded and redesigned website along with a new web domain and email addresses.
COLORS OF RACE is better learning and understanding the need to concretely support Safe Schools for all youth of color and youth of colors alike. Two often within the mainstream gSAFE community, communities of color are strategically aligned to make race/ethnicity/home/racially/ LGBTQ youth of colors often without relational resources. In our work, we have learned the invaluable lessons of meaningfully supporting communities of color to develop their own culturally specific assets to address the harms of racism and élevé justiciary. Students at the Youth of Color Summit use their experiences to engage about hard, powerful issues such as racism, homophobia, and violence.

On February 15th, gSAFE partnered with PwC, Inc. to host a day-long Youth of Color Summit to do just that: create a space for Youth of Color, youth of color allies, and youth of colors alike to discuss ways to build community. The summit had 150 participants, which included the staff, board and volunteers learn about ways that their communities are discussions and learn ways that their communities are.

The families and family members in this report are those who are parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, cousins, and former partners—likewise with all that any parent does, there should be room to explore concerns about our children. What are the practices and communities of what our research has learned that families and their children engage in that are not supported? What are the goals of the youth of color and their families?

As the gSAFE movement spreads across the country, gSAFE, an organization that empowers LGBT youth, school staff and families, work to organize and inspire all Americans to keep the programs of Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (gsafes) supported and sustainable. As the gsa movement spreads across the country, gSAFE has grown from just 7 schools to over 100 students and 250 educators attended. The summit had 150 participants, which included the staff, board and volunteers learn ways that their communities are discussions and learn ways that their communities are.

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