

fYrefly in Schools

What is fYrefly in Schools?

fYrefly in Schools is a new educational initiative developed to help reduce discrimination against sexual and gender minority youth, increase awareness of the impacts of homophobia and transphobia, and create safe and inclusive school environments for all students. The program is free and reflects the focus on safety stated in Section 45 of the provincial School Act. This requires all students in Alberta's schools to be provided with a safe and caring environment where they do not experience discrimination based on personal characteristics including sexual orientation and gender identity. fYrefly in Schools is delivered to schools on a request basis, as resources of the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services permit. Designed for junior and senior high school students, fYrefly in Schools workshops are student-centred and activity-based to focus on personal and social development and comprehensive health. Workshops follow the peer-to-peer mentorship model of our award-winning summer leadership retreat, Camp fYrefly.

Who facilitates fYrefly in Schools workshops and how are they structured?

Trained and experienced educators facilitate fYrefly in Schools workshops, which range from 40 – 80 minutes in length. Each session consists of a number of targeted activities that address the following themes: Awareness, De-stigmatization, Humanization, and Empowerment. Through a series of student-centred activities, these interactive workshops are designed to increase students' understanding of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) related terminology, engage with common assumptions and stereotypes, and address some of the unique safety, health, and educational challenges that sexual and gender minorities face in schools. Specifically, these sessions provide participants with a safe learning environment to reflect upon the impacts of homophobic and transphobic language and bullying. Students are encouraged to be proactive and construct positive and productive ways to reduce discrimination and harassment of sexual and gender minority youth and those perceived to be LGBTQ by their peers.

What are some other goals of the fYrefly in Schools program?

A key component of all fYrefly in Schools presentations is providing students with the opportunity to hear firsthand from a panel of peers who are sexual or gender minorities, self-identified allies who support sexual and gender minorities, and/or youth that have a family member who identifies as non-heterosexual. Along with providing a safe place for students to ask age-appropriate questions, the program's activities enable students to learn from their peers about (1) the coming out experience and processes of self and familial acceptance; (2) consequences of homophobic and/or transphobic bullying and guidelines to promote safety and wellbeing; and (3) positive aspects about "being who they are" in the world and the importance of recognizing diversity and difference as fundamental aspects of our society.

For further information, please contact:

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