

**Bridges of Respect:
Homophobia Reduction Workshop**
HiTOPS Teen Council

Designed for: Males and females, grades 8-12

“We are the community of tomorrow. How we are treated now, our experiences now, who we are able to become, will affect the world of tomorrow. Even though we’re young and gay, we’re people just like you.”

Chris, age 17

Homophobia – defined as the fear or hatred of lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender (LGBT) people – is so interwoven into our society that LGBT youth face a constant struggle for positive self-esteem and a sense of community. Even today, with many LGBT people living openly and becoming more visible in the media; LGBT youth feel isolated. Sexual orientation is a topic that few people have the opportunity to discuss in an honest, factual, and respectful way.

This peer-led workshop uses age appropriate skits and small group discussions to define and explore homosexuality and homophobia. Participants discuss the anger, confusion and fear that is often associated with homosexuality and begin to explore ways to make their schools safe for all students. A lesbian, gay and/or bisexual young adult accompanies the Teen Council as a guest speaker to provide personal experience about growing up “different” in our society.

Our goals are to help students:

- Increase respect for the differences of others
- Explore personal attitudes and values about sexual orientation
- Evaluate the messages they receive about homosexuality and about people who are LGBT in order to move beyond stereotypes
- Consider the impact that being lesbian, gay or bisexual has on the lives of people growing up in this society
- Consider healthy practices students can take to create a school environment where all students feel welcome

Average length of workshop: 90 minutes

Recommended number of participants: 20-100