American Friends Service Committee
Charles Wright Academy
Comprehensive Health Education Foundation
Diversity Productions
Gay Parent Support Group (Honolulu)
GLSEN: The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (national office)
Greater Seattle Business Association
Hate Free Zone Washington
Ingersoll Gender Center
Kalakaua High School Gay Straight Alliance
King County Sexual Assault Resource Center
Kitsap County Health District
Kitsap Safe Schools Network
Lake Washington Education Association
Lake Washington Technical Academy in Lake WA Technical College
Lambert House
Lifelong AIDS Alliance
Multifaith Alliance of Reconciling Communities
National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC)
Norup School (Michigan)
Oregon Safe Schools and Community Coalition
OSPI, The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Parents, Family & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG national) and five local chapters: Bellevue, Everett/Snohomish, Olympia, Seattle, Yakima/Yakima Valley
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Washington
Power of Hope
Pride Foundation
Public Health - Seattle & King County
Rainbow Families of Puget Sound
Safe Schools of Wyoming
School Nurse Organization of Washington
Seattle Academy of Arts & Sciences
Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities
Seattle Education Association
Seattle LGBT Community Center
Shorewood High School
Snohomish County GLOBE Youth Program
Spokane Public Schools
Stonewall Youth
Teaching Tolerance (a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center)
Turning Institute
University of Puget Sound - Multicultural Student Services
Verbena
Washington Association of Churches
Washington Association of School Social Workers
Washington Education Association and its Women’s Caucus
Washington State University’s Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Allies Program
Western Washington Fellowship of Reconciliation
Women’s Educational Media
Youth Guardian Services

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Safe Schools Coalition warns the community about Focus on the Family’s “Love Won Out” events and Exodus International’s “Groundswell” events

These conferences promote what they call “re-orientation therapy” and religious ministries that teach that heterosexuality is better and can be “chosen.” They frame it as a matter of rights - that we all have a right to choose our sexual orientations and gender identities. But they don’t teach teachers to support the right of happily gay-identified youth to a safe education. “Choice” is a smokescreen. They believe – and they teach – that it’s wrong to be gay.

We believe these conferences are potentially very dangerous. They reinforce the beliefs and fears of parents and youth workers who see gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT-identified) youth as mentally ill or sinful and destined for a lonely, self-destructive life. They may increase the chances a family will forcibly subject a youth to reprogramming efforts.

Such efforts are not supported by credible research. Mainstream health and mental health organizations representing nearly half a million professionals -- the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the National Association of Social Workers -- consider it unethical for a helping professional to attempt such psychotherapy. It can increase a person’s internalized homophobia and their likelihood of engaging in self-harm.

When groups like Exodus and Focus on the Family say they want to affirm gay-identified kids as valuable people without affirming their behavior, maybe they are assuming that all GLBT youth are having sex. That’s nonsense. Besides, those who are, just like heterosexual active teens, should be helped to make safe, respectful choices, not shamed for who they happen to like. Maybe it’s not sex so much as same-sex dating that they find troubling – taking your boyfriend or girlfriend to a dance or a football game. We find that attitude wholly offensive and inappropriate to a public school that’s supposed to serve all our children.

And we believe that:

- GLBT people can be perfectly healthy and happy.
- GLBT people do not need to change (even if there were a magic pill that did change your sexuality) in order to be mentally healthy, moral human beings.
- Whether a public school makes you feel safe and affirms your presence shouldn’t depend upon how masculine or feminine you are or who you want to go out with or grow up and fall in love with.
- Religious beliefs should be taught at home and in church, not in our public schools.

We think young people need to hear that their teachers and counselors; ministers, rabbis, imams and other spiritual leaders; and especially their parents love and support them just the way they are.

Helping schools become safe places, where every family can belong, where every educator can teach and where every child can learn, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.