Session A: Creating inclusive schools and making them safe for everyone
Mary Jane Karger, L.M.S.W, A.C.S.W
The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network’s (GLSEN) research shows that 85% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth are verbally harassed in their schools because of their sexual orientation and 64% because of their gender expression. This discouraging statistic is one of many that should force us to think about what we need to do to make our schools more respectful communities. Learn about GLSEN's resources, including its new Safe Space Kit and No Name-Calling Week Campaign, to address this issue, and the larger issue of making our schools safe for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression or identity.

May be of special interest to all.

About the presenter: Mary Jane Karger, a school social worker in the Carmel Central School District in Carmel, NY for 31 years before retiring in 2008, is a parent of two grown sons, one of whom is gay. Mary Jane has been volunteering with GLSEN since 1997. She has been their Hudson Valley, NY chapter co-chair since 1997 and a member of their national Board of Directors and their National Advisory Council since 2004. She has received several awards based on her advocacy for LGBT youth, including the 2006 Westchester County Youth Bureau’s Youth Service Achievement Award, the first ever GLSEN Educator of the Year Award (2009), the National Education Association’s Virginia Uribe Creative Leadership in Human and Civil Rights Award (2009), and, the Westchester County, NY LGBT Advisory Board’s Leadership Award (2011).

Session B: On the spectrum and on the web: The vulnerabilities of ASD* students to social networking abuse, Mary Riggs Cohen, PhD
The internet can be a wonderful tool or a dangerous minefield to those on the autism spectrum, who are particularly vulnerable. Along with increased social contact through social networking and special interest groups, cyber-bullying, sexual predators, internet scams and safety are also part of the cyber world. Schools and parents must be actively engaged and aware of internet activities that can become destructive and emotionally traumatic and put children at risk. The identification of problem-linked behaviors and implementation of harm-prevention strategies for school personnel and parents will be discussed. (*Autism Spectrum Disorder)

May be of special interest to parents.

About the presenter: Mary Riggs Cohen, PhD is an autism specialist and a licensed psychologist in New York and Pennsylvania who, as Clinical Director of the Social Learning Disorders Program of the University of Pennsylvania Psychiatry Department, developed the Social Skills Seminar for young ASD adults. The program specifically addresses internet use among adolescents and young adults and has been taught at the University, at various locations in the Philadelphia metropolitan area, and most recently in New York City. Dr. Cohen is an associate of the Asperger Center for Education and Training in New York and has her clinical practice at Spectrum Services in Manhattan. She is the author of Social Literacy: A program for young adults with ASD, NLD, and Social Anxiety, currently available at www.brookespublishing.com and www.amazon.com.

Session C: Reduction of Stigma in Schools (RSIS): A professional development curriculum for educators, Elizabethe Payne, Ph.D.
RSIS is an innovative research-based program that brings training and professional resources into schools to help teachers, counselors, administrators and all other school employees meet the challenges of creating supportive environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning
(LGBTQ) youth and the children of LGBTQ parents. Founded by Dr. Elizabethe Payne in 2006, RSIS seeks to actively create opportunities for dialogue and change around the issues facing LGBTQ youth in K-12 schools and to bridge the gap between research and practice. This presentation will include several core components of the professional development model, which provides educators with tools and knowledge to make LGBTQ identities visible in the school environment, challenge structures that marginalize students who do not conform to the heterosexual norm, and create strategies for school-wide efforts to end physical and verbal harassment. The presentation will also address school administrators’ role in establishing a culture where all members of the community can feel secure in the school’s commitment to provide a safe and affirming learning environment for every student.

**May be of special interest to school and district leaders and teachers.**

**About the presenter:** Elizabethe C. Payne, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in The Cultural Foundations of Education Department at Syracuse University and an affiliate of the LGBT Studies Program. She is also Director of QuERI – The Queering Education Research Institute (www.queeringeducation.org) at Syracuse University School of Education. As a sociologist of education, she specializes in qualitative research methodology, critical theory, youth culture, and LGBTQ youth. Her research interests include the life histories of adolescent lesbians, experiences of LGBTQ youth in schools, adolescent discourses of sexuality, and educators’ responses to LGBTQ professional development.

**Session D: Speak up for yourself! Teaching teens self-advocacy skills through models of legal intervention, Stacey Violante Cote, JD, MSW**

This presentation will describe innovative models of teaching teens about self-advocacy and legal rights as a means to improving their educational outcomes. What does it mean to teach teens to speak up? How can these interventions be used to overcome the barriers that keep kids from being successful in school? Models of school-based legal advocacy, written materials for teens, and training components for teens utilized by the Center for Children’s Advocacy in Hartford, CT will be presented and discussed.

**May be of special interest to social workers, afterschool educators and attorneys.**

**About the presenter:** Stacey Violante Cote, JD, MSW, is Director of the Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic, and Principal Attorney of the “Immigrants and Refugees: New Arrivals Advocacy Project” at the Center for Children’s Advocacy in Hartford, Connecticut (http://www.kidscounsel.org). She works with teens in the Greater Hartford, Connecticut area, including youth in the care of the Department of Children and Families. The Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic, providing legal and educational advocacy to remove barriers that prevent youth from completing high school, addresses civil legal issues such as the improper denials of state and federal benefits programs, the educational rights of homeless students, teens in the care of the DCF and pregnant/parenting students, as well as the rights of victims of abuse/neglect and teen dating violence.

**Session E: Supporting an anti-bullying culture in schools: Empowering the bystander**

Gina Cappiello, Director of Curriculum & Professional Development, Nyack Public Schools

While many programs incorporate strategies to deal with bullies and victims of bullying, the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program also addresses the role of the bystander. By providing strategies to those who witness or hear about bullying, we can empower bystanders to move away from the bully and constructively support those who are victims of bullying. Participants in this workshop will become acquainted with these strategies and learn specific techniques for building a school-wide (K-8) anti-bullying culture.

**May be of special interest to teachers and school leaders.**

**About the presenter:** Gina Cappiello, Director of Curriculum and Professional Development for the Nyack Public Schools since 2003, is responsible for the implementation and coordination of the Olweus Anti-Bullying Program. Certified as an elementary, special education, and secondary social studies teacher, she has over 20 years of teaching experience. Prior to moving to Rockland County with her family, she served as a Department Chair in special education and social studies, as well as District Director of Social Studies, for the Valley Stream Central High School District on Long Island.

The opinions expressed by any program presenter are the presenter’s own, and do not reflect the official position of Pace law School or Pace University School of Education.