



SAGA Advocates

LGBTQ+

ACCEPTANCE & UNDERSTANDING

By Wayne Larsen, Writer

From rainbow flag stickers on teachers' laptops to gender-neutral washrooms and modifications to the school's dress code, LCC is nurturing an LGBTQ+ -friendly environment where students can focus on learning, understanding and discovery. This is thanks, in part, to a small group of students and their staff advisors.

LCC's Sexuality and Gender Acceptance club (SAGA) began meeting four years ago, and has since grown into a regular gathering for Middle and Senior School students who spend one lunch-time per week with science teacher Ettore Zuccheroso and school counsellor Veronica Kost '09.

"We average about 15 students from Middle School, and 10 Senior School students," Ms. Kost says of the informal drop-in sessions which are open to all. They offer a safe, welcoming environment for students to discuss gender and LGBTQ+ issues without fear of judgment or bullying.

She proudly points out that SAGA's advocacy has led to changes in LCC's dress code policy. "There are rules about hair length and makeup, but our students asked for change so that the policy is now gender-neutral," she says, adding that the uniform is no longer gender-based and students are free to choose the formal dress code that most appeals to them.

SAGA has three primary goals: to support, advocate and educate. "We're here to support our students — whether they identify as LGBTQ+ or not — and offer them a safe space to connect with each other," says Ms. Kost. "We also advocate for their needs and try to educate by asking questions such as 'What does LGBTQ+ mean?' or making an announcement on Trans Visibility Day." ►

LEFT SAGA 2018-2019



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Mr. Zuccheroso believes the welcoming nature of SAGA meetings can mean a lot to students looking for a safe space to openly discuss their sexuality, and that can help their academic performance.

“Students should have the right to speak openly about their struggles with identity and gender issues,” says Mr. Zuccheroso, who got involved with SAGA last year when he shared his own coming out story. “I would have loved to have had something like this when I was a kid.”

Instead of leading the group, both staff members see their roles primarily as facilitators. “They talk and I listen,” Mr. Zuccheroso says.

The group is based on the concept of inclusivity, and some members are not part of the LGBTQ+ community. “I don’t identify as LGBTQ+ myself, but I’ve been around the subject for a long time so I figured I would come and join just to see what it was all about,” said a Middle School student who now attends regularly.

While SAGA continues to make its mark on campus, its message is being heard beyond the school. Earlier this year, a group of SAGA members wrote a screenplay for Interligne’s “Take Action Against Bullying!” contest, which called for short screenplays “that would help fight bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.”



LCC’s entry, written by Middle School students about the benefits of support groups, was one of five scripts chosen from schools across Quebec to win the Grand Prix Desjardins.

“I didn’t do this to win the contest,” says one student who co-wrote the script, which was professionally produced as a three-minute video in March. “I just thought it was a cool idea because it let me express the stories of others with my personal touch.”

“It’s nice that our group thought of including a trans male in this script because I think that’s what made us stand out from other groups,” added another student. “We should include more trans awareness in our society.”

The students agree that a big part of winning this contest is the chance to educate the world about bullying and LGBTQ+ issues, which reflects the general mandate of SAGA. “This school is very progressive,” says another student who attends SAGA meetings. “The world is moving toward a more progressive state of mind.” ■



LEFT MIDDLE SCHOOL SAGA MEMBERS; WINNERS OF THE “TAKE ACTION AGAINST BULLYING!” CONTEST