

WWE

ARE

ONE

WYSUT

## **Overview**

The Task Force was created by Resolution 3 of 2013, at the NYSUT Representative Assembly. We met four times for a total of seven days, three times meeting at NYSUT Headquarters in Latham, New York, and once by conference call.

### **Resolution 3 of 2013**

RESOLVED, UUP asks NYSUT to study the status of its LGBTQ members as to benefits, openness and, particularly, the impediments to full and equal access to the services, protection and recognition of these employees and report back to the representatives at the next Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED, UUP asks NYSUT to produce a specific plan to educate, advocate and promulgate information and successful programs within the union to include training at the presidents' conferences, as well as new-member materials; and be it further

RESOLVED, UUP asks NYSUT to engage other New York state unions and associations, particularly as they relate to our members, to engage their membership and information in a similar, positive and supportive way; and be it further

RESOLVED, UUP asks NYSUT to appoint a representative task force of members and staff to gather information, provide support to locals, if requested, and to make recommendations for further action and implementation to the board of directors and officers of NYSUT for their review and action, including a summary report of findings and actions to be presented at the 2015 Representative Assembly.

Members represented each region of the state and educators from Pre-k to 12 and higher education. School Related Professionals and retirees were included in the make-up of the task force. The members were:

Dorothy Ahl – Massapequa Federation of Teachers  
Nicholas Azzarella – Niagara Wheatfield Teachers' Association  
Mark Babcock – Hamburg Teachers' Association  
Patricia Bentley – United University Professionals (UUP)  
Katherine Brezler – Yonkers Federation of Teachers  
Sandra Carner-Sharfran – Saratoga Adirondack BOCES Employees' Association  
Patricia Crispino – United Federation of Teachers  
Martin Daly – New Rochelle Federation of United School Employees  
Rona Freiser – United Federation of Teachers  
Diane Gonzalez – East Rampo Teachers' Association  
Karen Grace – Pittsford District Teachers' Association  
Anthony Harmon – United Federation of Teachers  
Nancy Henry – Copenhagen Teachers' Association  
Bill Herman – Professional Staff Congress  
Natasha Homa – New Hartford Teachers' Association  
Donna Hope – Nassau Community College  
Michael Mitchell – Bethlehem Central Teachers' Association  
Richard Ognibene – Fairport Educators' Association

Greg Rabb – Faculty Association of Jamestown Community College  
Stephen Rechner – Union of Clerical, Administrative and Technical Staff  
Charlie Richter – Saratoga Springs Teachers’ Association  
Kathleen Roach – Peru Association of Teachers  
Maureen Singer – East Greenbush Teachers’ Association  
Raymond Stazzone – Syracuse Teachers’ Association  
Thomas Vacanti – Albany Public School Teachers’ Association  
Edward R. Vasta – Manhasset Education Association  
Elisa Waters – Jericho Teachers’ Association.

Four committees undertook the work of the Task force and produced several outstanding outcomes and additional recommendations to present to the Board of Directors and the 2015 Representative Assembly.

Below you will find the actions and recommendations of the four committees that are the report by the entire task force, as called for in Resolution 3 of 2013, to the NYSUT Representative Assembly.

## Visibility and Outreach

### Actions taken:

In response to Resolution 3 of 2013, the Visibility and Outreach Committee of the LGBTQ Educators' Task force undertook several actions to fulfill the resolution. One of the charges of Resolution 3 was to "engage other New York state unions and associations, particularly as they relate to our members, to engage their membership and information in a similar, positive and supportive way."

- The committee invited the regional president of Pride at Work, the AFL-CIO LGBTQ labor coalition to speak at a task force meeting about the part that the LGBTQ labor community plays within the larger Labor family.
- The committee created a social media campaign including Facebook and Twitter, as well as a NYSUT dedicated webpage to support and engage the LGBTQ educator community in New York state.
- The committee is working to create a presence at both the NYSUT Representative Assembly and regional PRIDE celebrations including a t-shirt and pin support campaign for LGBTQ issues within NYSUT and the Labor family. We will also have the first LGBTQ gathering at the NYSUT Representative Assembly.
- The committee is working with NYSUT member benefits to ensure that LGBTQ educators and their families are represented in both the publicity and the services provided by the Member Benefits Trust to all NYSUT members.
- The committee advocated for the inclusion of two articles in the NYSUT United December 2014/January 2015 edition.
- The committee worked with NYSUT Communications to produce three YouTube videos featuring task force members speaking out on the importance of being out at school and the importance of having tenure protection.
- Several members of the task force presented at their election districts about the work of the task force.
- The committee drafted a resolution to the NYSUT board to make the NYSUT LGBTQ task force a permanent, standing committee going forward.
- A LGBTQ link from the NYSUT webpage is being created for member's access ([www.nysut.org/LGBTQ](http://www.nysut.org/LGBTQ)). On the page, a list of task force members' names and contact information will be provided.

### Recommendations for further action:

- Currently, there are only two active Pride @ Work (P@W) chapters in New York state (Rochester-Finger Lakes and Buffalo). The task force recommends that NYSUT work with other unions to establish more P@W chapters in New York state. One step recommended would be to add a link to the NYSUT website on how to start a P@W chapter.

- The task force recommends that local unions promote LGBTQ issues and advocacy within their local, including posting the “We Are One” NYSUT posters.
- The Task force recommends that NYSUT communications develop drop in ads for newsletters, including a digital version, and other graphic pieces for use on social media.
- The task force recommends LGBTQ issues continue to have a presence in NYSUT United, the NYSUT newspaper.
- The task force recommends development of LGBTQ History month posters.
- The task force recommends continuing to grow a social media presence.

## Research

### Actions taken:

In response to Resolution 3 of 2013, the Research Committee of the LGBTQ Educators' Task force undertook several actions to fulfill the resolution. One of the charges of Resolution 3 was to "study the status of its LGBTQ members as to benefits, openness and, particularly, the impediments to full and equal access to the services, protection and recognition of these employees."

- The committee created a survey of the membership and publicized it via social media, leader emails, the NYSUT staff, and task force members. The survey is ongoing, but the results received thus far provide an initial snapshot of our LGBTQ members in the field.
- The committee collected information and studies conducted by other unions on LGBTQ members and scholarly articles on the effect of protections, or lack thereof, for LGBTQ union members in education that will inform NYSUT's future actions.

### Findings:

In some selected results from the survey, the Committee found that:

- 25 percent of the respondents have faced discrimination in the workplace within the last 10 years.
  - At the time of the incident, 38 percent of respondents would have been comfortable reporting an issue to their union. Today, 60 percent would feel comfortable.

A survey respondent offered this statement: "I had a student shout a derogatory statement at me during a class. It was while I was untenured, and I felt very helpless to solve the issue. I felt that if I pushed back with administration, I would possibly risk jeopardizing my job."

- 22 percent have faced verbal abuse.
  - At the time of the incident, 34 percent of respondents would have been comfortable reporting an issue to their union. Today, 66 percent would feel comfortable.

A survey respondent offered this statement: "I had a parent tell me to my face, in a very public setting, that I shouldn't ever mention my 'husband' to my students (though she would not set that parameter on a heterosexual female teacher). I've had a principal tell me that I need to be 'less gay' when I'm with my eighth graders."

- 47 percent have witnessed, participated in or have been informed of verbal abuse.
  - At the time of the incident, 42 percent of respondents would have been comfortable reporting an issue to their union. Today, 63 percent would feel comfortable.

A survey respondent offered this statement: "There seems to be a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy. We are invisible."

- 56 percent feel that they can adapt their curriculum to ensure they are LGBTQ inclusive and 54 percent can access resources to support LGBTQ inclusive materials.

Recommendations for further action:

- The task force recommends that LGBTQ information and educational resources be shared at local general membership meetings, such as videos, presentations and handouts.
- The task force recommends that NYSUT should continue to survey the LGBTQ membership, as well as allies, to measure trends within the workplace.
- The task force recommends that NYSUT should provide best practices and examples of proven curricular resources that are inclusive of the LGBTQ community, our history and our issues.
- The task force recommends that NYSUT should continue to compile research on LGBTQ issues in all levels of education to be a resource to our membership.
- The task force recommends that NYSUT create information regarding LGBTQ benefits which have changed with the overturning of DOMA, to assist in clarifying topics such as financial decisions, medical rights and responsibilities and taxes.

## **Advocacy**

### Actions taken:

In response to Resolution 3 of 2013, the Advocacy Committee of the LGBTQ Educators' Task force undertook several actions to fulfill the resolution. One of the charges of Resolution 3 was to "produce a specific plan to educate, advocate and promulgate information."

- The committee drafted and worked with NYSUT locals to submit two proposed resolutions for the RA. The resolutions: on the Child-Parent Security Act (S.2765 (Hoylman)/A.4319 (Paulin)) and the Prohibition on the Practice of Conversion Therapy (S.121 (Hoylman)/A.4958 (Glick)), are currently in the 2015 NYSUT Civil and Human Rights Committee (Working resolutions # 25 and #26) awaiting approval at the 2015 Representative Assembly.
- The committee worked to increase LGBTQ visibility at NYSUT lobby days. To that end, several LGBTQ Educators attended the Committee of 100 in Albany, March 2-3, and will make lobby "in district" in May.
- The committee used NYSUT communication routes and social media to create awareness of, and increased participation in, Equality and Justice Day on April 28, with a goal of twenty-five educators.
- A committee member is working to educate his local and Labor Council about issues that surround supporting the Salvation Army during the holiday season. The Salvation Army discriminates on the basis of sexual orientation in both the delivery of services they provide and their employment policies, and the topic of continued support will be further discussed at the Niagara County Labor Council as well as the labor council exploring the support of other agencies that embrace diversity.
- A member of the task force alerted NYSUT to a high school's ban on Halloween "cross dressing," that is discriminatory and harmful to Trans\* students and faculty. NYSUT worked with the Empire State Pride Agenda and the State Education Department to bring attention to this issue. The school district reversed their policy and the rights of Trans\* students and faculty were not inadvertently discriminated against.
- A member of the task force attended the Supreme Court arguments on the Constitutionality of marriage equality on April 28, 2015.

### Recommendations for further action:

- The task force recommends that NYSUT work to find majority members of the Senate to sponsor both bills.
- The task force recommends that the NYSUT Legislative & Political Department approach the chairs of each of the committees and request the bills be moved.
- The task force recommends that the NYSUT Legislative & Political Department speak with individual senators and urge them to support the bills.
- The task force recommends that NYSUT reaffirm its support of the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA).



- The task force recommends that NYSUT expand its monitoring, reporting and support on policy issues, both at the state and national level related to LGBTQ employees, such as but not limited to, the discriminatory practices of giving blood, adoption rights and marital rights.

## **Workplace Climate**

### Actions taken:

In response to Resolution 3 of 2013, the Workplace Climate Committee of the LGBTQ Educators' Task force undertook several actions to fulfill the resolution. One of the charges of Resolution 3 was to "produce a specific plan to educate, advocate and promulgate information and successful programs within the union to include training at the presidents' conferences, as well as new-member materials."

- The committee invited the Gay Alliance of Rochester to attend a task force meeting and conduct a sample training on LGBTQ terminology, issues, and areas of work to be done in the workplace and in educational settings.
- The committee worked to develop a centralized directory of LGBTQ support programs, services, organizations, social networks, and training programs for all members, locals and staff. The directory will be posted on the NYSUT website and will be able to be linked to local union's websites.

### Recommendations for further action:

- The task force recommends that NYSUT continue to implement LGBTQ supportive policies. Comprehensive training programs and the provision of LGBTQ employee support services and resources, at all organizational levels, as critical components of any LGBTQ policy.
- The task force recommends training for both NYSUT staff and for all the members of NYSUT including; teachers, aides, bus drivers, administrators, local union leaders and NYSUT staff at all organizational levels, including: headquarters, regional offices and the local workplace. Trained NYSUT staff, such as Labor Relations Specialists (LRS), should be designated as a resource person(s) to address LGBTQ workplace issues at the regional level.
- The task force recommends that NYSUT institute "Training of Trainer" programs with regard to LGBTQ issues in order to enhance the capacity of local affiliates to provide such training. Programs should include, but not be limited to the following:
  - Development of curriculum and instructional materials, resource lists and programs designed to meet the needs of LGBTQ educational employees;
  - Awareness of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation;
  - Develop age-appropriate, inclusive and respectful language surrounding gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Normalize language and introduce terminology to reflect the evolving climate. Grow awareness of common issues faced by LGBTQ people and incorporate more gender-neutral language into policies and practices.
  - LGBTQ workplace concerns, particularly bias and discrimination;
  - Strategies for supporting LGBTQ employees;
  - Information about LGBTQ health challenges;
  - The inclusion of LGBTQ educators and their allies in developing training materials;
  - Dissemination of programs that support LGBTQ educational employees;

- Recognition of the importance of LGBTQ education employees as role models;
  - Accurate portrayal of the roles and contributions of LGBTQ people throughout history;
  - Dissemination of programs and information that include the contribution, heritage, culture and history, of LGBTQ people; and
  - Coordination with LGBTQ organizations and concerned agencies that promote the contributions, heritage, culture, and history of LGBTQ people.
- The task force recommends that NYSUT expand the directory into a comprehensive interactive web-based “toolkit” which can provide an evolving variety of resources and information.

## **Conclusion**

The LGBTQ Task force as set in motion by Resolution 3 of 2013, provided the first glimpse into the working conditions and lives of LGBTQ NYSUT educator members. Bringing together LGBTQ educators from each region of the state provided a good foundation for both the work presented in this report but also the next steps that both the LGBTQ NYSUT members and NYSUT are ready to take. In order to create a more open, accepting, and supportive workplace and to create a stronger NYSUT, this work must continue. By creating and supporting open and “out” educators and school professionals, NYSUT and its locals mirror the rich and diverse tapestry of our society, in our schools, in our union, in our community, and for the benefit of the children we teach.