

# **Understanding the Experiences and Needs of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Middle Level Schools – Part I**

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## TERMINOLOGY REVIEW

*Though sometimes connected and overlapping, the following categories of sexual and gender identity are often distinct and unique. The same is true for terms describing bias against these groups.*

**Biological Sex:** This can be considered as our "packaging" and is determined by our chromosomes (XX for females and XY for males); our hormones (estrogen and progesterone for females, testosterone for males); and our internal and external genitalia (vulva, clitoris, vagina for females, penis and testicles for males). About 1.7% of the population can be defined as intersexuals born with biological aspects of both sexes to varying degrees. So, in actuality, there are more than two sexes.

**(Core) Gender Identity (sometimes called Sex Identity):** This is the individual's innermost concept of self as "male" or "female" – what we perceive and call ourselves. Individuals are conscious of this generally between the ages of 18 months and 3 years (though many researchers report it may be formed in utero). Most people develop a (core) gender identity aligning with their biological sex. For some, however, their gender identity is different from their biological sex. We sometimes call these people transsexuals, some of whom hormonally and/or surgically change their sex to more fully match their gender identity.

**Gender Role (sometimes called Sex Role):** This is the set of socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to females and males. This can vary from culture to culture. Our society recognizes basically two distinct gender roles. One is the masculine, having the qualities or characteristics attributed to males. The other is the feminine, having the qualities or characteristics attributed to females. (A third gender role, rarely, though possibly increasingly, condoned in our society, is androgyny, combining assumed male (andro) and female (gyne) qualities). Some people step out of their socially assigned gender roles and are referred to as Transgender. Though transgender has increasingly become an umbrella term referring to people who cross gender and sex barriers, many people find any umbrella term problematic because it conflates and confuses many different categories into one oversimplified category.

**Transgender:** A broad term for all gender-variant people, including transsexuals, cross-dressers, some butch lesbians and people who choose to identify as neither of the two sexes as they are currently defined. Transsexuals are individuals who do not identify with their birth-assigned genders and sometimes alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally. The Transition (formerly called "sex change") is a complicated, multi-step process that may take years and may include, but is not limited

to, Sex Reassignment Surgery. Some people step out of their gender roles by cross-dressing. Cross-Dressers regularly or occasionally wear the clothing socially assigned to the other sex, but are usually comfortable with their birth-assigned sex and do not wish to change it. Most men who cross-dress as women are heterosexual. Very few women call themselves cross-dressers. Gay men who cross-dress usually refer to themselves as Drag Queens, and lesbians Drag Kings. Some "masculine" lesbians who do not identify as women, but may not identify as men either sometimes call themselves Transgender Butch. They may consider this to be a third gender option. When referring to transgender people, use the pronoun they have designated as appropriate, or the one that is consistent with their presentation of themselves.

**Gender Expression:** Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hair cut, voice, and emphasizing, de-emphasizing, or changing their bodies' characteristics. Typically, transgender people seek to make their gender expression match their gender identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex. Gender expression is not necessarily an indication of sexual orientation.

**Sexual Orientation:** This is determined by whom we are sexually (or erotically) attracted to – our sexual-erotic drives, desires, fantasies. Categories of sexual orientation include homosexuals – gay, lesbian – attracted to some members of the same sex; bisexuals, attracted to some members of more than one sex to varying degrees; heterosexuals, attracted to some members of another sex; and asexuals, attracted to no other sex. Sexual orientation is believed to be influenced by a variety of factors including genetics and hormones, as well as unknown environmental factors. Though the origins of sexuality are not completely understood, it is generally believed to be established during early childhood, usually before the age of five.

**Sexual Behavior:** This is what we do sexually and with whom. Though we are not sure what influences determine a person's primary sexual attractions (sexual orientation), our culture can heavily influence people's actions and sexual behaviors. For example, one may have a "homosexual" orientation, but due to overriding condemnations against same-sex sexual expression, may "pass" by having sex only with people of the other sex. Sexuality researcher Alfred C. Kinsey and his colleagues devised a seven-point scale to chart the full spectrum of human sexual behavior, with "0" representing those whose histories are exclusively heterosexual, and "6" for those who are exclusively homosexual in behavior. Others were placed along the scale depending on the percentage of heterosexual (other sex) or homosexual (same sex) sexual expression in relation to overall behavior. Kinsey's findings and other studies also suggest that sexuality is indeed more fluid and complex than once believed.

**Sexual Identity:** This is what we call ourselves. Such labels include "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," "bi," "pansexual," "pomosexual," "queer," "questioning," "undecided," "undetermined," "heterosexual," "straight," "asexual," and others. Sexual Identity evolves through a multistage developmental process that has been charted by a number of researchers. This progression varies in intensity and duration depending on the individual. Our sexual behavior and how we define ourselves (identity) can be chosen. Though some people claim

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## TERMINOLOGY REVIEW (CONTINUED)

their sexual orientation is also a choice, for others this does not seem to be the case.

**Homophobia:** Coined by psychologist George Weinberg in his 1972 book, *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*, homophobia refers to a fear or hatred of homosexuality, especially in others, but also in oneself (internalized homophobia). The amount of homophobia in American society is open to speculation. A 1993 study reported that 41% of Americans "would prefer not to be around gay people." Psychologists and sociologists have advanced many theories to explain homophobia. One links homophobia to a generalized fear of sexuality. Another defines it as a mechanism for enforcing rigid gender distinctions. Freud claimed that homophobes are frightened by their own latent homosexual feelings and project their negativity onto others. Whatever the origins, homophobia can be understood as a destructive force that prevents many non-heterosexual people from securing safe, open, and equal lives.

**Heterosexism:** An overt or tacit bias against non-heterosexuals based on a belief in the superiority or, sometimes, the omnipresence of heterosexuality. Heterosexism is a broader term than homophobia in that it need not imply the fear and loathing the latter term suggests. It can describe seemingly benign statements, such as "She'd drive any man wild" or "He's every woman's dream husband," based on the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm.

**Transphobia:** Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination.

# Terminology Related to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People

## A Note About Definitions:

It is important to remember that when trying to refer appropriately to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people, the way certain words and terms are used is fluid and evolving. Sometimes, word usage depends on context. For example, referring to a lesbian as a "dyke" can be an insult—if used insultingly—or it can be a recognition of that person's identity and their community. In addition, there is a movement towards reclaiming words that have been used historically in negative and derogatory ways and using them in positive and empowering ways. The terms included below are those that are most commonly used in the English language in North America.

## Biological Sex

- Biological Sex*      The sum of the biological (chromosomal, hormonal, and anatomical) factors that make one male, female, or intersex. Terms include *male*, *female*, and *intersex*.
- Intersex*            *Intersex* refers to people who are born with atypical or ambiguous genitalia. An older term, "hermaphrodite", is now considered inappropriate.

## Sexuality

- Sexual Orientation*      Sexual orientation is how a person identifies sexually - meaning the physical and emotional ways we are attracted to persons of the same gender, another gender, or all genders. Sexual orientation and sexual behavior are not necessarily the same. For example, not everyone acts on their attractions.
- Heterosexual*          Someone who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of opposing genders; also referred to as *straight*.
- Homosexual*          Someone who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. Because the term *homosexual* has been (and is) used medically and psychologically in derogatory and marginalizing ways, the terms *lesbian*, *gay* and *bisexual* are more appropriate.
- Lesbian*                A woman who forms physical and emotional relationships with some women.
- Gay*                     Commonly used to describe men, this term refers to people who form physical and emotional relationships with persons of the same gender. The term *gay* can be used to refer to both men and women or, more generally, to the gay community.
- Bisexual*                Someone who is attracted physically and emotionally to persons of the same and different genders. Bisexual people are not necessarily attracted equally to both men and women and are not always attracted to both men and women at the same time.
- Queer*                  Developed primarily for social/political/intellectual purposes, this umbrella term seeks to encompass rather than compartmentalize a broad range of sexual identities, behaviors and expressions. Although this term has historically been used as an insult, it is also an identity that has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ people (see: *A note about definitions*). Sometimes *queer* is used to refer to all people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning.



<i>LGBTQ</i>	A shortened acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning. Appears in various acronyms.
<i>Sexual Minority Youth (SMY)</i>	A term used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth. Can be used to reflect sexual identity and/or behavior.
<i>Coming Out</i>	<i>Coming out</i> (as in <i>Coming Out of the Closet</i> ) is the process through which LGBTQ people acknowledge and express their sexual orientation to themselves and/or others.
<i>Homophobia</i>	Homophobia is a fear or hatred of LGBTQ people that can be expressed through prejudice, discrimination, harassment, or acts of violence. There are many different kinds of homophobia, including <i>internalized homophobia</i> , which is often what happens to LGBTQ people who grow up internalizing the prejudices of the world around them. Violence against transsexual and transgender people is known as <i>transphobia</i> . Homophobia and transphobia are not just experienced by people who are LGBTQ, but by people who are perceived to be LGBTQ.
<i>Heterosexism</i>	The assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual and that heterosexuality is the only normal, natural expression of sexuality. It implies that heterosexuality is superior and therefore preferable to being gay, lesbian or bisexual.

## **Gender**

<i>Gender Identity</i>	A person's self-identified sense of being male or female (or neither or both). <i>Gender identity</i> refers to how people think about and express their gender. A person's gender identity may or may not correspond with their biological sex.
<i>Gender Role</i>	<i>Gender role</i> refers to characteristics attached to culturally defined notions of masculinity or femininity.
<i>Transgender</i>	<i>Transgender</i> is an umbrella term that includes transsexual, and gender non-conforming people.
<i>Transsexual</i>	This term refers to someone whose gender identity is different from the biological sex they were assigned to at birth. A transsexual person might change their physical gender by having surgery, taking hormones, having electrolysis done, or dressing as the opposite gender. The process of change is known as <i>transitioning</i> . Transsexuals may identify as female-to-male (FTM) OR male-to-female (MTF). An MTF person should be referred to as <i>she</i> and an FTM person as <i>he</i> . Transsexual and transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or otherwise.
<i>Two-Spirit</i>	A term for Native American people who identify as transgender. It may include gay, lesbian, or bisexual people, but the term does not definitively refer to sexual orientation. Two-Spirit people had positive and elevated status among many Native American tribes prior to the arrival of Europeans.
<i>Cross-Dresser</i>	This term refers to a person who wears the clothing considered typical for another gender on occasion, but does not desire to change their gender. <i>Drag queens/kings</i> are people who cross-dress for entertainment purposes.

These definitions were adapted and reprinted with permission from T.E.A.C.H Toronto (Teens Educating And Confronting Homophobia) available online at [www.teachtoronto.ca](http://www.teachtoronto.ca).



# The Language of Sexual Orientation

When we teach about sexual orientation we will either use or hear language from our students that we have learned from other sources. Oftentimes, these words or phrases can provide misinformation and even offend without our intending to do so. This handout is designed to give some guidance on certain terms.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION** – is the gender(s) of the people to whom we are attracted, sexually and romantically.

**SEXUAL BEHAVIOR** – is what we do with these individuals to whom we are attracted, or alone.

**SEXUAL IDENTITY** – is what we call ourselves. In our society, there are currently three common labels for sexual orientation and identity: Heterosexual, Lesbian or Gay, and Bisexual. As you will read below, you may also hear the term “queer” as an identity.

## TO DO:

✓ Try to refer to **SAME-SEX** or **SAME-GENDER** vs. **gay** or **lesbian relationships** until a sexual identity has been established.

It is common for teens to engage in same-gender behaviors and relationships but not yet be ready to claim a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity. Therefore, labeling a relationship or sexual behavior within that context can freak teens out. In addition, it is not always accurate. A person can identify as heterosexual, have a same-gender relationship, but still consider herself to be heterosexual. Behavior is not what makes a person lesbian, gay, or bisexual. One's own personal feelings do.

✓ Use the term **“GAY”** or **“LESBIAN”** rather than **“homosexual”**. While “homosexual” is a factually accurate term, it is also very loaded. “Homosexuality” was listed for many years as a psychological disorder, and was only removed from the American Psychological Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1973, with all mention of other related issues (such as ego-dystonic homosexuality) in 1987.

✓ Whenever possible, include the word **PEOPLE** after “lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual.” It is a simple way of reminding students that we are all individuals. In addition, referring to “heterosexuals” or “gays” as a group is inaccurate. Men and women have different experiences. So to generalize about “heterosexuals” can't be accurate. A good comparison here is with race and ethnicity – for example, call a person from the Caribbean African-American, and watch her reaction. Tell someone who is Latino and Native American and Swedish that he's Latino. Kids in particular can really relate to being forced into a particular box.



## TO AVOID:

⊗ Avoid using the terms sexual preference, sexual lifestyle, or choice, for the following reasons:

- “Preference” implies that a person would consider someone of a different gender than the one to which they are attracted. For example, if I *prefer* blueberry pie to pumpkin pie, that means that I would, on occasion, consider having some pumpkin pie. If, however, I do not like pumpkin pie at all, don’t find it even remotely appealing, and would never consider eating it, I do not *prefer* blueberry pie. I’m just a blueberry pie person.

Similarly, heterosexual individuals do not *prefer* someone of another gender, that’s who they’re attracted to. Lesbian and gay people do not *prefer* to be with people of the same gender, that’s who they’re attracted to. Even bisexual individuals will not necessarily say they *prefer* one gender over another. It has to do with an individual – the individual comes first, that person’s gender comes second.

- Similar to “preference,” “choice” implies that someone chooses to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual. We will often hear people who are trying to understand lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals say, “Whatever you choose to do is your business.” However, we do not say this about heterosexual individuals.

- “Lifestyle” refers to the manner in which a person lives her or his life. There is no such thing as a heterosexual lifestyle. Heterosexual people live very diverse lives. They have all different kinds of jobs. They are in short- and long-term relationships, they marry, they divorce, they have children, they travel, etc.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people also lead very diverse lives. They have all different kinds of jobs. They are in short- and long-term relationships – and although they cannot legally marry, they commit to lifetime relationships that sometimes last and sometimes don’t. They have children, travel, etc.

“Lifestyle” is a term that often comes from a media depiction of one portion of gay male life. When there is a reference to homosexuality, the accompanying visual image presented will usually be of very well-chiseled, half-naked men dancing at a party, of men dressed in leather, of men dressed in drag, and more. While these are aspects of gay culture, the vast majority of gay men do not look like or engage in these practices. However, since they are less visible, what we see stays with us. This is how stereotypes begin – and how they stick.



## Myths/realities of bisexuality

Sharon Forman Sumpter

Sexuality runs along a continuum. It is not a static "thing" but rather a process that can flow, changing throughout our lifetime. Bisexuality falls along this continuum. As Boston bisexual activist Robyn Ochs says, bisexuality is the "potential for being sexually and/or romantically involved with members of either gender."

**MYTH:** Bisexuals are promiscuous/swingers.

**TRUTH:** Bisexual people have a range of sexual behaviors. Some have multiple partners; some have one partner; some go through partnerless periods. Promiscuity is no more prevalent in the bisexual population than in other groups of people.

**MYTH:** Bisexuals are equally attracted to both sexes.

**TRUTH:** Bisexuals tend to favor either the same or the opposite sex, while recognizing their attraction to both genders.

**MYTH:** Bisexual means having concurrent lovers of both genders.

**TRUTH:** Bisexual simply means the potential for involvement with either gender. This may mean sexually, emotionally, in reality, or in fantasy. Some bisexual people may have concurrent lovers;

deed, we are finding that homosexuality may be a transitional phase in the coming-out process for bisexual people.

**MYTH:** Bisexuals spread AIDS to the lesbian and heterosexual communities.

**TRUTH:** This myth legitimizes discrimination against bisexuals. The label "bisexual" simply refers to sexual orientation. It says nothing about sexual behavior. AIDS occurs in people of all sexual orientations. AIDS is contracted through unsafe sexual practices, shared needles, and contaminated blood transfusions. Sexual orientation does not "cause" AIDS.

**MYTH:** Bisexuals are confused about their sexuality.

**TRUTH:** It is natural for both bisexuals and gays to go through a period of confusion in the coming-out process. When you are an oppressed people and are constantly told that you don't exist, confusion is an appropriate reaction until you come out to yourself and find a supportive environment.

**MYTH:** Bisexuals can hide in the heterosexual community when the going gets tough.

**TRUTH:** To "pass" for straight and deny your bisexuality is just as painful and damaging for a bisexual as it is for a gay. Bisexuals are

not heterosexual and we do not identify as heterosexual.

**MYTH:** Bisexuals are not gay.

**TRUTH:** We are part of the generic definition of gay (see Don Clark's *Loving Someone Gay*). Bngays lump us all together. Bisexuals have lost their jobs and suffer the same legal discrimination as other gays.

**MYTH:** Bisexual women will dump you for a man.

**TRUTH:** Women who are uncomfortable or confused about their same-sex attraction may use the bisexual label. True bisexuals acknowledge both their same-sex and opposite-sex attraction. Both bisexuals and gays are capable of going back into the closet. People who are unable to make commitments may use a person of either gender to leave a relationship.

It is important to remember that *bisexual, gay, lesbian, and heterosexual* are labels created by a homophobic, biphobic, heterosexist society to separate and alienate us from each other. We are all unique; we don't fit into neat little categories. We sometimes need to use these labels for political reasons and to increase our visibilities. Our sexual esteem is facilitated by acknowledging and accepting the differences and seeing the beauty in our diversity.



# **National Associations and Organizations with Policies in Support of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth**

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**American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**  
**American Academy of Pediatrics**  
**American Association of School Administrators**  
**American Counseling Association**  
**American Federation of Teachers**  
**American Library Association**  
**American Medical Association**  
**American Psychological Association**  
**American Psychiatric Association**  
**American School Counselor Association**  
**American School Health Association**  
**Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development**  
**Child Welfare League of America**  
**National Association for Gifted Children**  
**National Association of Elementary School Principals**  
**National Association of School Nurses**  
**National Association of School Psychologists**  
**National Association of Secondary School Principals**  
**National Association of Social Workers**  
**National Association of State Boards of Education**  
**National Education Association**  
**National Middle School Association**  
**National School Board Association**



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# Answers to Your Questions ABOUT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE, GENDER IDENTITY, AND GENDER EXPRESSION

## What does transgender mean?

*Transgender* is an umbrella term for persons whose *gender identity*, *gender expression*, or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth. *Gender identity* refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female, or something else; *gender expression* refers to the way a person communicates gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice, or body characteristics. "Trans" is sometimes used as shorthand for "transgender." While transgender is generally a good term to use, not everyone whose appearance or behavior is gender-nonconforming will identify as a transgender person. The ways that transgender people are talked about in popular culture, academia, and science are constantly changing, particularly as individuals' awareness, knowledge, and openness about transgender people and their experiences grow.

## What is the difference between sex and gender?

*Sex* is assigned at birth, refers to one's biological status as either male or female, and is associated primarily with physical attributes such as chromosomes, hormone prevalence, and external and internal anatomy. *Gender* refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for boys and men or girls and women. These influence the ways that people act, interact, and feel about themselves. While aspects of biological sex are similar across different cultures, aspects of gender may differ.

Various conditions that lead to atypical development of physical sex characteristics are collectively referred to as *intersex conditions*. For information about people with intersex conditions (also known as disorders of sex development), see APA's brochure *Answers to Your Questions About Individuals With Intersex Conditions*.

## Have transgender people always existed?

Transgender persons have been documented in many indigenous, Western, and Eastern cultures and societies from antiquity until the present day. However, the meaning of gender nonconformity may vary from culture to culture.

## What are some categories or types of transgender people?

Many identities fall under the transgender umbrella. The term *transsexual* refers to people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex. Often, transsexual people alter or wish to alter their bodies through hormones, surgery, and other means to make their bodies as congruent as possible with their gender identities. This process of transition through medical intervention is often referred to as sex or gender reassignment, but more recently is also referred to as gender affirmation. People who were assigned female, but identify and live as male and alter or wish to alter their bodies through medical intervention to more closely resemble their gender identity are known as transsexual men or transmen (also known as female-to-male or FTM). Conversely, people who were assigned male, but identify and live as female and alter or wish to alter their bodies through medical intervention to more closely resemble their gender identity are known as transsexual women or transwomen (also known as male-to-female or MTF). Some individuals who transition from one gender to another prefer to be referred to as a man or a woman, rather than as transgender.

People who *cross-dress* wear clothing that is traditionally or stereotypically worn by another gender in their culture. They vary in how completely they cross-dress, from one article of clothing to fully cross-dressing. Those who cross-dress are usually comfortable with their assigned sex and do not wish to change it. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression and is not necessarily tied to erotic activity. Cross-dressing is not indicative of sexual orientation (See *Answers to Your Questions: For a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality* for more information on sexual orientation.). The degree of societal acceptance

for cross-dressing varies for males and females. In some cultures, one gender may be given more latitude than another for wearing clothing associated with a different gender.

The term *drag queens* generally refers to men who dress as women for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events. The term *drag kings* refers to women who dress as men for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events.

*Genderqueer* is a term that some people use who identify their gender as falling outside the binary constructs of "male" and "female." They may define their gender as falling somewhere on a continuum between male and female, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms. They may also request that pronouns be used to refer to them that are neither masculine nor feminine, such as "zie" instead of "he" or "she," or "hir" instead of "his" or "her." Some genderqueer people do not identify as transgender.

Other categories of transgender people include androgynous, multigendered, gender nonconforming, third gender, and two-spirit people. Exact definitions of these terms vary from person to person and may change over time, but often include a sense of blending or alternating genders. Some people who use these terms to describe themselves see traditional, binary concepts of gender as restrictive.

### **Why are some people transgender?**

There is no single explanation for why some people are transgender. The diversity of transgender expression and experiences argues against any simple or unitary explanation. Many experts believe that biological factors such as genetic influences and prenatal hormone levels, early experiences, and experiences later in adolescence or adulthood may all contribute to the development of transgender identities.

### **How prevalent are transgender people?**

It is difficult to accurately estimate the number of transgender people, mostly because there are no population studies that accurately and completely account for the range of gender identity and gender expression.

### **What is the relationship between gender identity and sexual orientation?**

*Gender identity* and *sexual orientation* are not the same. *Sexual orientation* refers to an individual's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person, whereas *gender identity* refers to one's internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual, just as nontransgender people can be. Some recent research has shown that a change or a new exploration period in partner attraction may occur during the process of transition. However, transgender people usually remain as attached to loved ones after transition as they were before transition. Transgender people usually label their sexual orientation using their gender as a reference. For example, a transgender woman, or a person who is assigned male at birth and transitions to female, who is attracted to other women would be identified as a lesbian or gay woman. Likewise, a transgender man, or a person who is assigned female at birth and transitions to male, who is attracted to other men would be identified as a gay man.

### **How does someone know that they are transgender?**

Transgender people experience their transgender identity in a variety of ways and may become aware of their transgender identity at any age. Some can trace their transgender identities and feelings back to their earliest memories. They may have vague feelings of "not fitting in" with people of their assigned sex or specific wishes to be something other than their assigned sex. Others become aware of their transgender identities or begin to explore and experience gender-nonconforming attitudes and behaviors during adolescence or much later in life. Some embrace their transgender feelings, while others struggle with feelings of shame or confusion. Those who transition later in life may have struggled to fit in adequately as their assigned sex only to later face dissatisfaction with their lives. Some transgender people, transsexuals in particular, experience intense dissatisfaction with their sex assigned at birth, physical sex characteristics, or the gender role associated with that sex. These individuals often seek gender-affirming treatments.



### **What should parents do if their child appears to be transgender or gender nonconforming?**

Parents may be concerned about a child who appears to be gender-nonconforming for a variety of reasons. Some children express a great deal of distress about their assigned sex at birth or the gender roles they are expected to follow. Some children experience difficult social interactions with peers and adults because of their gender expression. Parents may become concerned when what they believed to be a "phase" does not pass. Parents of gender-nonconforming children may need to work with schools and other institutions to address their children's particular needs and ensure their children's safety. It is helpful to consult with mental health and medical professionals familiar with gender issues in children to decide how to best address these concerns. It is not helpful to force the child to act in a more gender-conforming way. Peer support from other parents of gender-nonconforming children may also be helpful.

### **How do transsexuals make a gender transition?**

Transitioning from one gender to another is a complex process and may involve transition to a gender that is neither traditionally male nor female. People who transition often start by expressing their preferred gender in situations where they feel safe. They typically work up to living full time as members of their preferred gender by making many changes a little at a time. While there is no "right" way to transition genders, there are some common social changes transgender people experience that may involve one or more of the following: adopting the appearance of the desired sex through changes in clothing and grooming, adopting a new name, changing sex designation on identity documents (if possible), using hormone therapy treatment, and/or undergoing medical procedures that modify their body to conform with their gender identity.

Every transgender person's process or transition differs. Because of this, many factors may determine how the individual wishes to live and express their gender identity. Finding a qualified mental health professional who is experienced in providing affirmative care for transgender people is an important first step. A qualified professional can provide guidance and referrals to other helping professionals. Connecting with other transgender people through peer support groups and transgender community organizations is also helpful.

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), a professional organization devoted to the treatment of transgender people, publishes *The Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders*, which offers recommendations for the provision of gender affirmation procedures and services.

### **Is being transgender a mental disorder?**

A psychological state is considered a mental disorder only if it causes significant distress or disability. Many transgender people do not experience their gender as distressing or disabling, which implies that identifying as transgender does not constitute a mental disorder. For these individuals, the significant problem is finding affordable resources, such as counseling, hormone therapy, medical procedures, and the social support necessary to freely express their gender identity and minimize discrimination. Many other obstacles may lead to distress, including a lack of acceptance within society, direct or indirect experiences with discrimination, or assault. These experiences may lead many transgender people to suffer with anxiety, depression, or related disorders at higher rates than nontransgender persons.

In the United States, payment for health care treatment by insurance companies, Medicare, and Medicaid must be for a specific "disorder," defined as a condition within the *International Classification of Diseases (ICD)* or the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*. According to *DSM-IV*, people who experience intense, persistent gender incongruence can be given the diagnosis of *gender identity disorder*. This diagnosis is highly controversial among some mental health professionals and transgender communities. Some contend that the diagnosis inappropriately pathologizes gender noncongruence and should be eliminated. Others argue that it is essential to retain the diagnosis to ensure access to care.

### **What kinds of discrimination do transgender people face?**

Anti-discrimination laws in most U.S. cities and states do not protect transgender people from discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression. Consequently, transgender people in most cities and states face discrimination in nearly every aspect of their lives. The National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force released a report in 2001 entitled *Injustice at Every Turn*, which confirmed the pervasive and severe discrimination faced by transgender people. Out of a sample of nearly 6,500 transgender people, the report found that

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transgender people experience high levels of discrimination in employment, housing, health care, education, legal systems, and even in their families. The report can be found at <http://endtransdiscrimination.org>.

Transgender people may also have additional identities that may affect the types of discrimination they experience. Groups with such additional identities include transgender people of racial, ethnic, or religious minority backgrounds; transgender people of lower socioeconomic statuses; transgender people with disabilities; transgender youth; transgender elderly; and others. Experiencing discrimination may cause significant amounts of psychological stress, often leaving transgender individuals to wonder whether they were discriminated against because of their gender identity or gender expression, another sociocultural identity, or some combination of all of these.

According to the study, while discrimination is pervasive for the majority of transgender people, the intersection of anti-transgender bias and persistent, structural racism is especially severe. People of color in general fare worse than White transgender people, with African American transgender individuals faring far worse than all other transgender populations examined.

Many transgender people are the targets of hate crimes. They are also the victims of subtle discrimination—which includes everything from glances or glares of disapproval or discomfort to invasive questions about their body parts.

### **How can I be supportive of transgender family members, friends, or significant others?**

- Educate yourself about transgender issues by reading books, attending conferences, and consulting with transgender experts.
- Be aware of your attitudes concerning people with gender-nonconforming appearance or behavior.
- Know that transgender people have membership in various sociocultural identity groups (e.g., race, social class, religion, age, disability, etc.) and there is not one universal way to look or be transgender.
- Use names and pronouns that are appropriate to the person's gender presentation and identity; if in doubt, ask.

- Don't make assumptions about transgender people's sexual orientation, desire for hormonal or medical treatment, or other aspects of their identity or transition plans. If you have a reason to know (e.g., you are a physician conducting a necessary physical exam or you are a person who is interested in dating someone that you've learned is transgender), ask.
- Don't confuse gender nonconformity with being transgender. Not all people who appear androgynous or gender nonconforming identify as transgender or desire gender affirmation treatment.
- Keep the lines of communication open with the transgender person in your life.
- Get support in processing your own reactions. It can take some time to adjust to seeing someone you know well transitioning. Having someone close to you transition will be an adjustment and can be challenging, especially for partners, parents, and children.
- Seek support in dealing with your feelings. You are not alone. Mental health professionals and support groups for family, friends, and significant others of transgender people can be useful resources.
- Advocate for transgender rights, including social and economic justice and appropriate psychological care.
- Familiarize yourself with the local and state or provincial laws that protect transgender people from discrimination.

ORGANIZATION

**WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSGENDER HEALTH, ADVOCACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS?**

○ ○ **American Psychological Association**

750 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
lgbc@apa.org  
www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/index.aspx  
www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/transgender/index.asp

○ ○ **Children's National Medical Center**

Gender and Sexuality Advocacy and Education  
111 Michigan Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20010  
202-884-2504  
www.childrensnational.org/gendervariance

○ ○ **Family Acceptance Project**

San Francisco State University  
3004 16th Street, #301  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
fap@sfsu.edu  
http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/

○ ○ **FTMInternational**  
(FTM means Female-to-Male)

601 Van Ness Ave., Suite E327  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
877-267-1440  
info@ftmi.org  
www.ftmi.org

○ ○ **Gender Education & Advocacy**

http://gender.org

○ ○ **Gender Spectrum**

539 Glen Drive  
San Leandro, CA 94577  
520-567-3977  
info@genderspectrum.org  
www.genderspectrum.org

○ ○ **National Center for Transgender Equality**

1325 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-903-0112  
202-393-2241 (fax)  
NCTE@NCTEquality.org  
http://transequality.org

○ ○ **Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Transgender Network (TNET)**

PFLAG National Office  
1828 L Street, NW, Suite 660  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-467-8180  
info@pflag.org  
http://community.pflag.org/page.aspx?pid=380

○ ○ **Sylvia Rivera Law Project**

147 W. 24th Street, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10011  
212-337-8550  
212-337-1972 (fax)  
info@srp.org  
www.srp.org

○ ○ **Transgender Law Center**

870 Market Street Room 400  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415-865-0176  
info@transgenderlawcenter.org  
www.transgenderlawcenter.org/cms

○ ○ **TransYouth Family Allies**

P.O. Box 1471  
Holland, MI 49422-1471  
888-462-8932  
http://imatyfa.org/aboutus/index.html

○ ○ **World Professional Association for Transgender Health**

1300 South Second Street, Suite 180  
Minneapolis, MN 55454  
612-624-9397  
612-624-9541 (fax)  
wpath@wpath.org  
www.wpath.org



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*Produced by the APA Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns Office and the APA Office of Public and Member Communications*

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## 2009 National School Climate Survey: Nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT Students Experience Harassment in School

Media Contact:  
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646-388-6577  
dpresgraves@glsen.org

Sep 14, 2010

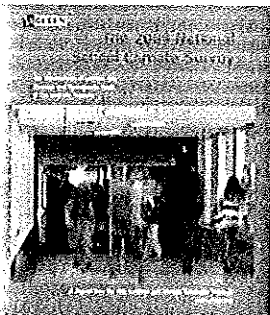
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Report Includes Analysis of 10 Years of Data, Finds Little Change in Victimization; Download Report on Top Right of Page

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, today marks the culmination of 10 years of pioneering research documenting the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students with the release of *The 2009 National School Climate Survey*.

The 2009 survey of 7,261 middle and high school students found that at school nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students experienced harassment at school in the past year and nearly two-thirds felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation. Nearly a third of LGBT students skipped at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns.

An analysis of National School Climate Survey data over 10 years showed that since 1999 there has been a decreasing trend in the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks; however, LGBT students' experiences with more severe forms of bullying and harassment have remained relatively constant.



"In 1999, GLSEN began data collection on the school experiences of LGBT students in order to fill a critical void in our knowledge and understanding of the ways LGBT issues play out in schools. It could not be clearer that there is an urgent need for action to create safe and affirming schools for LGBT students," GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard said. "As our nation seems to finally be taking bullying more seriously, it is crucial that LGBT students are no longer left out of efforts to address this public health crisis."

### Key Findings of the 2009 National School Climate

Survey Include:

Student Experiences, a Hostile School Climate and the Effects on Educational Outcomes and Psychological Well-Being:

- 84.6% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 40.1% reported being physically harassed and 18.8% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation.
- 63.7% of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed, 27.2% reported being physically harassed and 12.5% reported being physically assaulted at school in the past year because of their gender expression.
- 72.4% heard homophobic remarks, such as "faggot" or "dyke," frequently or often at school.
- Nearly two-thirds (61.1%) of students reported that they felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, and more than a third (39.9%) felt unsafe because of their gender expression.
- 29.1% of LGBT students missed a class at least once and 30.0% missed at least one day of school in the past month because of safety concerns, compared to only 8.0% and 6.7%, respectively, of a national sample of secondary school students.
- The reported grade point average of students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression was almost half a grade lower than for students who were less often harassed (2.7 vs. 3.1).
- Increased levels of victimization were related to increased levels of depression and anxiety and decreased levels of self-esteem.
- Being out in school had positive and negative repercussions for LGBT students – outness was related to higher levels of victimization, but also higher levels of psychological well-being.

### RELATED DOCUMENTS

2009 National School Climate Survey:  
Download - Executive summary, 20 pages (1.28MB)

2009 National School Climate Survey:  
Download - Full Report, 164 pages (1.46MB)

GLSEN Research Learning Series: Fall 2010 Webinars (Free)

--Select State--

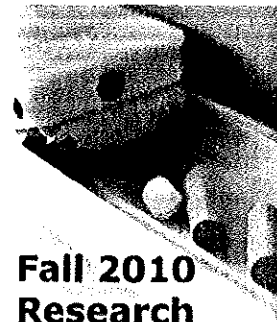
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**Positive Interventions and Support:**

- Having a Gay-Straight Alliance in school was related to more positive experiences for LGBT students, including: hearing fewer homophobic remarks, less victimization because of sexual orientation and gender expression, less absenteeism because of safety concerns and a greater sense of belonging to the school community.
- The presence of supportive staff contributed to a range of positive indicators including fewer reports of missing school, fewer reports of feeling unsafe, greater academic achievement, higher educational aspirations and a greater sense of school belonging.
- Students attending schools with an anti-bullying policy that included protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression heard fewer homophobic remarks, experienced lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation, were more likely to report that staff intervened when hearing homophobic remarks and were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school staff than students at schools with a general policy or no policy.
- Despite the positive benefits of these interventions, less than a half of LGBT students (44.6%) reported having a Gay-Straight Alliance at school, slightly more than half (53.4%) could identify six or more supportive educators and less than a fifth (18.2%) attended a school that had a comprehensive anti-bullying policy.

**School Climate Over Time: 1999-2009**

- There was a steady decline in the frequency of hearing homophobic remarks from 1999 to 2003. In recent years, between 2005 and 2009, students' reports of hearing these types of remarks have not decreased significantly.
- LGBT students' experiences of harassment and assault have remained relatively constant over time. However, there were small but significant decreases in frequencies of verbal harassment, physical harassment and physical assault from 2007 to 2009.
- There has been an increase over time in the presence of several LGBT-related resources and supports in school, specifically: Gay-Straight Alliances or other student clubs that address LGBT issues in education; school staff who were supportive of LGBT students; and LGBT-related materials in school libraries.

"A look at 10 years of National School Climate Survey data reveals some gains in the availability of resources and supportive educators, thanks in part to GLSEN's work and that of educators and advocates across the country committed to safe and affirming environments for all students," said Dr. Joseph Kosciw, GLSEN Senior Director of Research and Strategic Initiatives. "Nevertheless, it is still the minority of LGBT students who report having sufficient support in school, which may explain why we have not seen greater improvements regarding in-school victimization. Without greater leadership and commitment to addressing anti-LGBT bias and behavior, we likely have a long way to go before we see significant change."

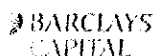
GLSEN's biennial National School Climate Survey is the only national survey to document the experiences of students who identify as LGBT in America's secondary schools. The 2009 survey includes responses from 7,261 LGBT students between the ages of 13 and 21 from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data collection was conducted through community-based groups, online outreach, and targeted advertising on the social networking sites Facebook and MySpace.

See also the GLSEN Research Learning Series: Fall 2010 Webinars here.

**About GLSEN**

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For information on GLSEN's research, educational resources, public policy advocacy, student organizing programs and educator training initiatives, visit [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

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## Middle School LGBT Students Face Extreme Levels of Harassment, Higher than Their High School Peers, Research Brief Finds

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dpresgraves@glsen.org

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Download GLSEN's research brief [HERE](#).

NEWYORK, Sept. 24, 2009 - Middle school LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) students are significantly more likely to face hostile school climates than high school LGBT students, yet have less access to school resources and support, according to a new research brief from GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, released as the New York Times Magazine publishes a cover story on students coming out in middle school.

The research brief, the first national research report to look specifically at the experiences of LGBT students in middle school, is based on data from 626 LGBT middle school students who participated in GLSEN's 2007 National School Climate Survey of 6,209 secondary school students.

"The findings should be a wake-up call to school officials and policymakers across the country that we can no longer ignore one of the biggest school climate issues facing middle school students, regardless of sexual orientation," GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard said. "GLSEN has worked for many years to provide educators/schools with evidence-based solutions that they can implement to address anti-LGBT bullying and harassment. For the sake of all of our students, schools must take action to address these issues in the critical middle grades."

More than 9 out of 10 LGBT middle school students (91%) said they experienced harassment at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation, 59% experienced physical harassment and a startling 39% said they had been physically assaulted, nearly twice as many as in high school (20%).

More than 8 out of 10 LGBT middle school students (82%) reported hearing homophobic epithets (e.g., "faggot" or "dyke") frequently or often from other students in school – a higher percentage than high school students (73%). Perhaps most shocking, 63% of LGBT middle school students had heard school staff make homophobic remarks.

The negative and hostile climate had a profound effect on student academic success. Half of LGBT middle school students (50%) had skipped at least one day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe. Further, their grade point average was half a grade point lower than students who had not missed school due to safety concerns.

The full research brief can be found at [HERE](#).

### Major Findings

*Finding: Homophobic remarks and negative comments about someone's gender expression were pervasive in middle schools*

- 91% of LGBT middle school students said that they heard the word "gay" used in a negative or derogatory way often or frequently in school, such as the expression "that's so gay."
- 82% of LGBT middle school students reported hearing homophobic epithets (e.g., "faggot" or "dyke") frequently or often from other students in school – a higher percentage than high school students (73%). In addition, 63% heard school staff make homophobic remarks.
- 66% of LGBT middle school students heard negative remarks about gender expression frequently or often from their peers – also a higher frequency than was reported by high school students (60%). Further, nearly two-thirds of LGBT middle school students also heard such remarks from school staff (62%).

*Finding: The majority of LGBT middle school students experienced verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation or gender expression, and sizable percentages were physically harassed or assaulted based on these characteristics.*

- 91% of LGBT middle school students were verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened) in school because of their sexual orientation (compared to 86% of high school students), with 81% being regularly harassed (frequently, often or sometimes). Also, 72% reported having been verbally harassed in school because of their gender expression (compared to 66% of high school students).
- 59% of LGBT middle school students experienced physical harassment (e.g., pushed or shoved) in school because of their sexual orientation (compared to 43% of high school students), 41% were physically harassed because of how they expressed their gender (compared to 29% in high school).
- 39% of LGBT middle school students had been assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon) in school because of their sexual orientation (compared to 20% of high school students) and 24% because of their gender expression (compared to 13% of high school students).

*Finding: Harassment and absenteeism as a result of an unsafe school environment negatively affected LGBT middle school students' academic performance and ability to attend school.*

- 50% of LGBT middle school students reported missing at least one day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe.
- LGBT middle school students who missed days of school because they felt unsafe had grade point averages (GPAs) about half a grade lower than students who did not miss school because of safety concerns - 2.4 vs. 2.9 (out of 4.0).
- LGBT middle school students who experienced high levels of harassment or assault because of their sexual orientation reported significantly lower GPAs than students who were never or rarely victimized in school for this reason. For example, the GPAs of students who experienced high levels of physical harassment because of their sexual orientation were almost half a grade lower than other students - 2.4 vs. 2.8

*Finding: Many LGBT students in middle school did not have access to important resources and interventions that can improve school climate.*

- Very few LGBT middle school students (4%) reported that their school had a Gay-Straight Alliance or similar student club, and they were much less likely to have a GSA than students in high school (43%).
- 64% of LGBT middle school students reported having at least one teacher or other school staff person in school who they felt was supportive of LGBT students, but they were less likely than high school students (86%) to report having supportive school staff.
- When asked about the presence of school policies addressing harassment, 52% of LGBT middle school students reported that their school had some type of anti-harassment policy. However, only 17% of middle school students reported that the policy explicitly mentioned protections from harassment based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.

#### About the National School Climate Survey

The National School Climate Survey is a biennial report examining the experiences of LGBT middle and high school students in U.S. schools. The report, which was first released in 1999 and is the only national survey of its kind, documents the anti-LGBT bias and behaviors that make schools unsafe for many of these youth. The full 2007 sample consisted of 6,209 LGBT secondary school students, from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, between the ages of 13 and 21.

#### About GLSEN:

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For information on GLSEN's research, educational resources, public policy advocacy, student organizing programs and educator training initiatives, visit [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

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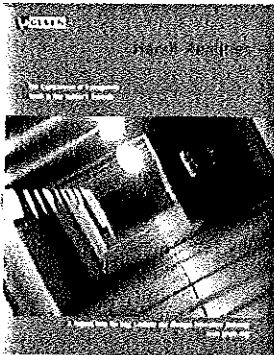
## Harsh Realities Finds Transgender Youth Face Extreme Harassment in School

Mar 17, 2009

SHARE

NEW YORK, March 17, 2009 - Transgender youth face extremely high levels of victimization in school, even more so than their non-transgender lesbian, gay and bisexual peers. But they are also more likely to speak out about LGBT issues in the classroom, according to *Harsh Realities: The Experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools*, the first comprehensive study on transgender students, released today by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

Nearly nine out of 10 transgender students experienced verbal harassment at school in the past year because of their sexual orientation and gender expression, more than half experienced physical harassment because of their sexual orientation and gender expression and more than a quarter experienced physical assault because of their sexual orientation and gender expression.



These levels of victimization were higher than those faced by the non-transgender lesbian, gay and bisexual students who participated in the 2007 National School Climate Survey, GLSEN's biennial survey of LGBT students.

In addition to looking at comparisons between transgender and non-transgender students, *Harsh Realities* specifically examines the experiences of the 295 transgender students who took the National School Climate Survey.

"*Harsh Realities* demonstrates the urgent need for educators, policymakers and all who care about safe schools to address the disproportionate victimization of transgender students and to improve the knowledge and understanding of all members of the school community about issues related to gender and gender expression," said GLSEN Executive Director Eliza Byard. "It is important to note, however, that in the face of extreme harassment, transgender students are resilient and taking the lead to bring up LGBT issues in school."

transgender students are resilient and taking the lead to bring up LGBT issues in school."

The high rate of victimization had a direct impact on school attendance and academic performance. Transgender students who experienced high levels of harassment were more likely to miss school because they felt unsafe and had lower grade point averages than those who experienced lower levels of harassment.

Key findings of *Harsh Realities* include:

*Biased language:*

- 90% of transgender students heard derogatory remarks, such as "dyke" or "faggot," sometimes, often or frequently in school in the past year.
- 90% of transgender students heard negative remarks about someone's gender expression sometimes, often or frequently in school in the past year.
- Less than a fifth of transgender students said that school staff intervened most of the time or always when hearing homophobic remarks (16%) or negative remarks about someone's gender expression (11%).
- School staff also contributed to the harassment. A third of transgender students heard school staff make homophobic remarks (32%), sexist remarks (39%) and negative comments about someone's gender expression (39%) sometimes, often or frequently in the past year.

*School Safety and Experiences of Harassment and Assault*

- Two-thirds of transgender students felt unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation (69%) and how they expressed their gender (65%).
- Almost all transgender students had been verbally harassed (e.g., called names or threatened) in the past year at school because of their sexual orientation (89%) and

### RELATED DOCUMENTS

Harsh Realities: 67 pages, PDF (2.2MB)

Select State

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gender expression (87%).

- More than half of all transgender students had been physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved) in school in the past year because of their sexual orientation (55%) and gender expression (53%).
- More than a quarter of transgender students had been physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked or injured with a weapon) in school in the past year because of their sexual orientation (28%) and gender expression (26%).
- Most transgender students (54%) who were victimized in school did not report the events to school authorities. Among those who did report incidents to school personnel, few students (33%) believed that staff addressed the situation effectively.

#### *Impact of Victimization on Educational Outcomes*

- Almost half of all transgender students reported skipping a class at least once in the past month (47%) and missing at least one day of school in the past month (46%) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Transgender students experiencing high levels of harassment were more likely than other transgender students to miss school for safety reasons (verbal harassment based on sexual orientation: 64% vs. 25%, gender expression: 56% vs. 32%, gender: 68% vs. 38%).
- Transgender students who experienced high levels of harassment had significantly lower GPAs than those who experienced lower levels of harassment (verbal harassment based on sexual orientation: 2.2 vs. 3.0, gender expression: 2.3 vs. 2.8, gender: 2.2 vs. 2.7).

#### *Engagement with the School Community*

- Transgender students who were out to most or all other students and school staff reported a greater sense of belonging to their school community than those who were not out or only out to a few other students or staff.
- The majority (66%) of transgender students were out to most or all of their peers, yet less than half (45%) were out to most or all of the school staff.
- Most transgender students had talked with a teacher (66%) or a school-based mental health professional (51%) at least once in the past year about LGBT-related issues. Transgender students were also more likely than non-transgender lesbian, gay and bisexual students to talk with school staff about these issues.

#### *In-School Resources and Supports*

- Although transgender students were not more likely to report having a GSA in their school, they did report attending GSA meetings more frequently than non-transgender LGB students.
- Although most transgender students (83%) could identify at least one supportive educator, only a third (36%) could identify many (six or more) supportive staff.
- Only half (54%) of transgender students reported that their school had an anti-harassment policy, and only 24% said that the school policy included specific protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

#### **About GLSEN**

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established nationally in 1995, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For information on GLSEN's research, educational resources, public policy advocacy, student organizing programs and educator training initiatives, visit [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

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# **Stresses on LGBT Youth**

\*\*\*\*\*

**A Sense of Difference**

**Social Isolation/Loneliness**

**Invisibility**

**Myths**

**Misunderstanding**

**Lack of Information**

**Lack of Role Models**

**Stigmatization**

**Harassment and Violence**

**Rejection by Family**

## MIDDLE LEVEL CONNECTION

1979 - Jay & Young - retrospective with adults

majority by 18, 30% by 13

1989 - Boxer, Herdt, & Cook - Chicago (urban) - youth

	<u>males</u>	<u>females</u>
attraction	9.6	10.1
fantasy	11.2	11.9
coming out	13.1	15.2

1992 - Remafedi, Resnick, Blum, & Harris (1995 report)  
Minnesota - 35,000 JHS and HS students

“unsure” about their sexual orientation

12 years old	25.9%
13 years old	17.4%
14 years old	12.2%
15 years old	7.0 %
⋮	⋮
18 years old	5 %

# Myth/Fact Sheet

## on Heterosexism and Homosexuality

**Myth:** I don't know any gay men, lesbians or bisexuals.

**Fact:** Yes, you do! Alfred Kinsey in his study published in 1947, estimated that 13% of the male population and 7% of the female population were exclusively gay and lesbian. Kinsey also found that over half of the adult population had at least one homosexual experience. Many people now view sexuality on a continuum, not opposing "camps", in which many or perhaps most people are not exclusively gay, lesbian or heterosexual during their whole lives. Judd Marmor, Professor of Psychiatry at USG Medical School, has calculated that one in every four families has a member (parent or child) who is lesbian or gay.

**Myth:** It's "unnatural" to be lesbian or gay. Homosexuals are "sick".

**Fact:** It is not "unnatural" to have sexual relations with members of one's own sex; the behavior is found in practically every culture throughout history. The reality is that in all human and most animal societies, regardless of social attitudes, 10-30% of the population are predominately or exclusively gay or lesbian. Same sex bonding is normal, natural and frequent historical, biological and social occurrence. Same-sex relations were in fact accepted and "natural" in many European societies until the 13th century, after which same-sex relations were increasingly proscribed by church and state. In today's world, 64% of world cultures consider homosexuality normal. In many Native American Indian tribes, gays were elevated to very high leadership positions. The label of "deviance" has gradually been lifted by prestigious medical and educational associations during the last 20 years. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association and American Psychological Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders.

**Myth:** Lesbian and gay men are protected by civil rights laws.

**Fact:** In most places in the U.S. gay men, lesbians and bisexuals can be legally fired from their jobs regardless of job performance or seniority. They can also be denied to right to housing without any legal recourse. Lesbian and gay parents can, and often do, lose custody of their children without any discussion of their parenting skills. In short, it is legal to discriminate, except in those few but growing number of states and cities which sexual orientation is a specific protected class. Livings under oppression and pretending to not be a homosexual, however, can exact a high emotional toll in terms of feelings of self-worth, and that can cause serious psychological damage. Not because of one's homosexuality but because of how a particular society considers homosexuality.

**Myth:** Bad parenting and/or family problems cause homosexuality. People "choose" to be gay or straight.

**Fact:** There is no conclusive evidence of what "causes" homosexuality or heterosexuality. Homosexual and heterosexual people come from every type of family background. As always, a *good* parent will teach love, self-respect, and respect for others. Many scientist believe that sexual orientation is set at birth, certainly by a age five. Recent research, on twins and the DNA of gay men, has shown that genetics plays an important role in establishing one's sexual orientation. Most gay men and lesbians have no desire to be "cured" (heterosexual); those who do are responding to the negative societal attitudes toward them. The "cure" needed is not for gay people but for society's negative attitudes or "homophobia".



**Myth:** Homosexuals are out for one thing - sex - and nobody's safe.

**Fact:** Gay/lesbian relationships are based on emotional and friendship bonds as well as sexual intimacy. In other words, the same relationship ingredients as any heterosexual relationship. About 50% of gay people report never having had a "one-night stand". This figure is probably equivalent to the percentage of heterosexuals. Gay relationships are long and short while some last a lifetime. Gay relationships may be harder to maintain, however, because their homosexual relationship is not sanctioned or supported by this society, at this time. Over ninety percent of child molestations is committed by heterosexual males against minor females.

**Myth:** Gay people do not make good parents. All lesbians are man haters. All gay men hate women.

**Fact:** Homosexuality is not a negative relation to the opposite sex but a stronger, more powerful desire for emotional and physical intimacy with same-sex individuals. Many gay men and lesbians have been married and "came out" while married. About 1/3 of lesbians are mothers. Most of these mothers had their children while married. Many lesbians and gay men want children. Some people fear that gay or lesbian parents are not as loving, responsible or dependable as heterosexual parents. Homosexual parents can not *impose* their sexual orientation on their children.

**Myth:** There are no gay, lesbian, bisexual youth. Children are not affected by homophobia.

**Fact:** Using 10% of a population as homosexual, there is approximately 2.9 million gay or lesbian adolescents in the U.S. It is important to know that one in four families has a lesbian or gay man in the immediate family. The presence of open lesbians and gay men in a family may make it easier for younger lesbians or gay men in a family to have a positive self-image, and easier "coming out" process, than in families in which there are no open gay or lesbian members. Because of "closeting", due to oppression, it is not always apparent. Most traditional support groups (families, places of worship, schools, peers, and society in general) often reject, ostracize or deny the existence of gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. Statistics indicate the incidence of substance abuse, suicide, school/peer/home problems is disproportionately high among gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. Suicide is the leading cause of death among gay and lesbian adolescents.

**Myth:** Homosexuals contribute nothing to society. It's the lack of decency and morality in the 20th century that causes homosexuality.

**Fact:** Historically, gay, lesbian and bisexual people have made innumerable contributions to society: Plato, Leonardo da Vinci, Julius Caesar, Gertrude Stein, Michelangelo, Peter Tchaikovsky, Alexander the Great, T.E. Lawrence, Truman Capote, Bessie Smith, Alice B. Toklas, James Baldwin, Horatio Alger, Hans Christian Andersen, Peter the Great, Richard the Lionhearted, James I... Today, many popular and influential people are lesbian, gay or bisexual but most hide their private lives (Rock Hudson, Roy Cohn). They live in fear of the intolerance and hatred they might be subjected to if someone associated "gay" or "lesbian" with their name.

**Myth:** Gay, lesbian and bisexual work in specific fields.

**Fact:** Gays are found in every occupation and profession. For example: National Lawyers Guild Gay and Lesbian Caucus, National Education Association Gay and Lesbian Caucus, Gay Nurses Association, Gay and Lesbian Association of Scientist and Engineers, Gay Prize Fighters of American Association...just to name a few.




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## WHAT DOES HOMOSEXUALITY HAVE TO DO WITH EDUCATION? AN ANSWER

*A discussion of why schools should devote time to fighting homophobia, even when they often barely have the resources to teach the basics.*



The Radical Right is increasingly targeting gays in general, and gay issues in education in particular, as part of an overall strategy to impose their vision of America on the rest of the country. They have been able to play on the fears of many well-meaning people to advance this agenda. The basic worry of every parent is, "Is my kid safe?" By playing on the myth that homosexuals recruit children, reactionary attacks on inclusive education direct a positive impulse -- the desire to have the best for one's children -- toward a destructive end -- intolerance for others.

This became poignantly clear to me when I traveled to Merrimack, New Hampshire in August. Townspeople in Merrimack were fighting an anti-gay policy being put forth by some reactionary board members, a policy that would ban any representation of gay issues in a positive or even a neutral light. At the request of local organizers, I came to Merrimack to speak at a rally being held the night the school board was set to vote on the policy.

I arrived early so I could observe the school board debate. Perhaps because I was wearing a tie, a mother in her mid-thirties standing near me decided I must be on her side of an argument that had divided the large audience in attendance, the bulk of whom seemed to be against the policy's passage. She sidled over to me and began to unload her frustration with what she saw as a foreign issue that had no place in her town's schools. Saying all she wanted was "pure education" for her children, she finally exploded. "What does homosexuality have to do with education?" she demanded.

The setting didn't allow me to fully answer her provocative and important question, so it has stayed with me. What does homosexuality have to do with education, after all?

To answer her question, we have to first answer another: What is a good education? For me, education is about learning to think. A good teacher is one that takes a subject that matters to his or her students and helps them to think about it in a thoughtful, critical manner. In America, we have also traditionally seen the opportunity to get an education as the first step on the road to success, and created the world's first free public school system to make sure that all people got an equal chance to develop the critical faculties that are the product of a good education. Good public education is an essential part of a democracy where the citizens rule and are free to advance themselves as far as their abilities, ambitions and hard work will take them.

Homosexuality itself has nothing to do with education, any more than biology, chemistry, algebra or any other subject does. What is important is what one can learn from the study of a given subject. A discussion of how we understand homosexuality in our culture and how this reflects our values, beliefs and world view has tremendous educational value. It is clearly a subject that matters to kids: they talk about it, they ask about it, they use phrases like "That's so gay" routinely, so few can argue that it isn't a subject that needs addressing (although some will, believe me!). The question is, can we use it to help students think and learn? The answer is manifestly yes.

But this is not the agenda of folks who put forth policies like that passed in Merrimack on August 14. They see education serving a different purpose. For them, schools are there to inculcate values: developing independent thought is not the overriding goal. And they call upon a strong historic tradition in this belief. The vast growth of public education in late

nineteenth century America was fueled, at least in part, by the fears of native whites who saw the influx of southern and eastern European immigrants as a threat to their way of life. They saw the public schools as means to "Americanize" these foreign elements and to indoctrinate them with "American values."

Today, many families feel bewildered by the rapid cultural change sweeping our nation, and some have been led to believe that a "gay agenda" is, at least in part, responsible for what they see a breakdown of our society and a seemingly-bleak future for their children. They feel that if they can regain some sense of control over what goes on in their community's schools, maybe the whole society will become a little more coherent. They often just want to feel as if things are not completely out of control. So they come out to public meetings and demand to know what homosexuality has to do with education, and demand that it be banished so that the schools can return to the basics of reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic.

Sadly these people are pawns in a game, a game wherein unscrupulous politicians manipulate their very real and legitimate concerns for short-term political gain. Those doing the manipulating cleverly fly the banner of "parental control." They protest that they have nothing against gays -- Merrimack school board members who voted for the policy in question repeatedly said they were not prejudiced and would not tolerate verbal gay-bashing in their schools -- but that they only wish to make sure that parents have the final say over what their children learn. Who could be against that?

It will do no good to point out the illogic of this position. Parents have little say over the day-to-day teachings of a school, and any school where they did would quickly become an unmanageable bureaucratic nightmare. Imagine if every lesson plan had to be approved by parents before implemented -- nothing would get taught at all while we attended interminable board hearings. Parental control is only invoked when a particular subset of parents wants to impose their own values on a school.

Pointing this out, however, would have had little effect on the mother with whom I spoke in Merrimack. She had real fears about her children, and wanted them addressed. Knowing this, we must start thinking now about how to speak to her fears. We must help her understand that an education that teaches her children to think for themselves, rather than one that turns them into automatons, is her best hope for securing their future in the global marketplace. We must help her understand that bigotry and name-calling represent a greater threat to her child's welfare than an open discussion of touchy issues. We must help her understand that silencing people will never make an issue go away, but will simply cause it to fester.

In short, we must help her understand that homosexuality is not a threat to her children: homophobia is.

That is what homosexuality has do to with education. It's about freedom of thought, it's about the ability to use one's mind, it's about the right to be educated rather than trained. And we have to help people who don't understand that to get it.

-- Kevin Jennings, *GLSEN Executive Director*

**TOP**

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part of the

**Data Lounge Network**

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### **Part 3: Addressing the Issue of Anti-Gay Harassment**

#### Why focus on this specific kind of harassment?

Each form of intolerance and harassment has its own character and causes, and is best dealt with through interventions that address its distinctive characteristics. This is why there are specific curricula, materials, and trainings on sexual harassment, racism/ethnocentrism, sensitivity to the issues of people with disabilities, etc. Anti-gay harassment is distinguished by the following characteristics:

1. Negative messages around being gay, lesbian, or bisexual are pervasive, not merely as targeted attacks against specific students, but as a general form of teasing. Words like "queer" and "fag" are commonly used to tease and insult, even when there is no intention to suggest that the target is gay; the word "gay" is used as a synonym for other negative words such as "stupid." Whether part of the environment or in the form of a targeted attack, anti-gay insults are among the least likely forms of harassment to bring a reprimand from teachers and other school staff. Frequently, they are not even included in anti-discrimination and anti-slur policies.
2. While it is critical that policies be in place to protect young people against diverse kinds of harassment, the existence of such policies is not sufficient to stop the harassment. It is the presence of accessible resources and advocates in a school district that make those policies effective. There is an absence of accessible resources and advocacy for students subjected to anti-gay harassment compared to accessible resources and advocacy available for students who are harassed based on their race/ethnicity, gender, or disability status.
  - Young people are frequently afraid to tell their parents about anti-gay harassment because they are afraid of being thought or discovered to be gay. They are often afraid to tell teachers, counselors, and administrators for the same reason.
  - Students are less likely to find an openly gay teacher, counselor, or administrator to talk to than they would be to find a teacher, counselor, or administrator of their own racial/ethnic group, of their own gender, or who shares their disability. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual teachers are not only invisible to students, but often afraid to advocate around sexual orientation and gender identity issues because of concern about the potential consequences for their careers.

- There is less likely to be a district-level advisory committee, office, or program that advocates for students and families affected by sexual orientation differences than one that advocates for students on the basis of race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, etc.
  - It is unlikely that a diversity coordinator would include diverse sexual orientations in their charge as they would diverse races/ethnicities, genders, and disability statuses.
  - The resources that exist to address sexual harassment may not be used to advocate for youth subjected to anti-gay harassment. Even when sexual harassment policies do apply, there may be requirements (such as involvement of parents at certain stages of the process) that make this route inaccessible to most students.
3. Unlike the consensus that exists around the importance of addressing other forms of harassment, including sexual harassment in schools, addressing anti-gay harassment is controversial. This has been equated by some individuals with providing sexuality education without parental permission. Some people go so far as to suggest that no student should, as a result of staff actions, see or hear the words *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, *transgendered*, or *homosexual* in a school setting. Developing an effective program to protect all children and youth against anti-gay harassment requires tackling this difficult issue.

Why do we need to address this problem now?

1. Schools are increasingly aware of the importance of a safe school environment for learning, achievement, and retention of students.
2. Young people are acknowledging privately and publicly their gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientation at earlier ages. Some of these young people are now "coming out" in middle school. Youth in general are more aware of sexual orientation differences and are scrutinizing their peers for stereotyped signs of difference in this area. As a result, anti-gay harassment begins as early as elementary school, before many children have even begun to recognize their sexual orientation.
3. Laws are increasingly being interpreted to protect the rights of GLBT youth in school settings. According to new guidelines for educators on Title IX, the federal statute that bars sex discrimination in public schools that receive federal funding, "...harassing conduct of a sexual nature directed towards gay or lesbian students may create a sexually hostile environment and, therefore, may be prohibited by Title IX." (Sexual Harassment Guidance 62 Fed. Reg. 12039.) Violation of this federal statute can be the basis for legal liability for schools (and payment of monetary damages) either through complaints to the Office of Civil Rights or in court. This interpretation of Title IX is particularly significant since it appears that GLB students are more likely to be the target of general sexual harassment than non-GLB students.

For anti-gay harassment that is not of a sexual nature, these guidelines state that "under certain circumstances, courts may permit redress for harassment on the basis of sexual orientation under other Federal legal authority." As an example of alternative protections under federal law, the guidelines cite *Nabozny v. Podlesny*, 92 F. 3d 446 (7th Cir. 1996), which used federal equal protection law to challenge public school officials' failure to take action against anti-gay abuse in a school, resulting in a near-million dollar recovery from the officials. Schools, school districts, and school administrators can suffer negative financial consequences if they do not protect students from anti-gay harassment.

*Education for young people should include a safe environment with supportive adults. For organizations and individuals who are concerned with creating educational equity for children and youth of all sexual orientations, now is the time to make this principle a reality.*

## Why Address Gay Issues with Children/Adolescents?

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### **Q: Why is this kind of education necessary?**

Negative language about gay and lesbian people is common on the playground, in school hallways and classrooms, and even in teachers' lounges. Many children and school employees are adversely affected. For example, an estimated 6 to 11 percent of school children have gay or lesbian parents or siblings, and another 5 to 9 percent will at some point figure out that they themselves are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. These children are now being taught that either they or the people they love most are sick and perverted.

Other children are affected as well – children who are taunted for being different from other boys or girls, who have been sexually abused or are confused about sexuality, who are being teased about close friendships with children of the same sex, who have friends who may be gay, or who fear being called gay by classmates. All of these children will be helped by open discussion about gay and lesbian people.

Otherwise, they are left with the demeaning portrayals of gay people in the media or the slurs they hear from others, and have no other source of information. In the long run, open discussion will also help prevent children from becoming heterosexually active at a young age to prove that they are not gay – from hurling epithets like “faggot”, “lezzie”, or “queer” at anyone who annoys them, and from using violence against someone they perceive to be different.

### **Q: Aren't elementary and middle school children too young to be introduced to this topic? Shouldn't we wait until they're older?**

Very young children have already been introduced to gay and lesbian matters. Negative name-calling begins as early as first grade. And long before they grasp the meaning of the words, they've heard or witnessed many negative images about being gay and gay people. So it's not possible for a school to introduce these topics. What a school can do is create a safe environment for children to ask questions, consider what they're hearing and seeing, and be given some accurate information.

### **Q: What about parents who don't want their children to learn about gay sex?**

It is inappropriate for schools to teach young children about gay sex. But think about all the stories children read about mommies and daddies. Just as those stories aren't about heterosexual sex, lessons about gay people aren't about gay sex. What we're talking about is incorporating ways – in the context of lessons about families, current events, literature, or civil rights – to simply acknowledge that gay and lesbian people are among us and to prevent harmful stereotypes and prejudices.

**Q: What if a person's religion teaches that homosexuality is wrong? How can the school teach that it's a normal lifestyle? Isn't that going against the parents?**

It is the goal is to provide a safe, respectful learning environment for all children. Religion is a good example: Even if you don't agree with someone else's religion, you would expect their religion – as well as your own – to be acknowledged and respected at school. Similarly, not everyone will agree about homosexuality, but a school is obliged to make sure that gay people and their family members are validated and shown respect.

**Q: Wouldn't this take away from teaching the basics like reading and writing?**

It doesn't need to. Teaching about gay and lesbian families, people, and issues can be integrated into existing lessons on families, history, literature, current events, health, social studies, and many other subjects.

**Q: Won't teaching children about this encourage them to become gay or lesbian themselves?**

Providing children with information and a forum for discussion doesn't "make" anyone gay. If that were true, then most children who grow up with gay or lesbian parents would turn out gay, but they don't. Most turn out heterosexual, in about the same proportion as the general public. However, having a chance to learn about gay people might make a child less likely to insult someone he or she thinks is gay, or to allow a friend to be ostracized for having a lesbian mom or gay dad.

**Q: I'm not anti-gay, but why should we single out this one subject?**

We all pay a high price for gay and lesbian invisibility and schools' silence. For example, by the time gay and lesbian youth reach adolescence, they are much more likely than heterosexual youth to turn to drugs and alcohol, to drop out of school, to run away from home, or to attempt to kill themselves. And unchecked hatred and ignorance of gay people are fueling an avalanche of violence. Anti-gay attacks are the fastest growing hate crime in the United States. To prevent these tragedies, it's critical for children's role models – educators and parents – not be silent in the face of words like "faggot" and "dyke" or other harassment and violence. If they remain silent, they appear to agree that a certain group of people doesn't deserve respect. Rather, our schools need to model acceptance and respect for all members of the community.

## Famous Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People

Roberta Achtenberg (President Clinton appointee)  
Edward Albee (playwright)  
Alexander the Great (Macedonian emperor)  
Horatio Alger, Jr. (US author)  
Hans Christian Anderson (Danish author)  
W. H. Auden (English writer)  
Sir Francis Bacon (English statesman, writer)  
Joan Baez (US musician)  
James Baldwin (US writer)  
Leonard Bernstein (US composer, conductor)  
Benjamin Britten (English composer)  
Glenn Burke (pro baseball player, Brooklyn Dodgers, 1972-77)  
Lord Byron (English poet)  
Julius Caesar (Roman emperor)  
Margarethe Cammermeyer (former National Guard Colonel)  
Rachel Carson (US biologist and author)  
Willa Cather (US writer)  
John Cheever (writer)  
Jean Cocteau (French author, filmmaker)  
Aaron Copland (US composer)  
Noel Coward (English author, composer)  
James Dean (US actor)  
Marlene Deitrich (US actress)  
Brian Epstein (manager of the Beatles)  
Desiderius Erasmus (Dutch monk, philosopher)  
Melissa Etheridge (musician)  
Harvey Fierstein (US playwright)  
Errol Flynn (actor)  
Malcolm Forbes (US publisher)  
E. M. Forster (English writer)  
Congressman Barney Frank (Massachusetts)  
Frederick the Great (king of Prussia)  
Margaret Fuller (US writer, educator)  
David Geffen (music producer)  
Allen Ginsberg (poet)  
Hadrian (Roman emperor)  
Bruce Hayes (Olympic swimmer)  
Rock Hudson (US actor)  
Bob Jackson-Paris (pro bodybuilder)  
Henry James (US writer)  
Elton John (musician)  
John Maynard Keynes (English economist)  
David Kopay (pro football player)  
Tony Kushner (US playwright)  
k. d. lang (musician)  
Charles Laughton (English actor)



T. E. Lawrence (English soldier, author)  
Leonardo da Vinci (Italian artist, inventor)  
Frederico Garcia Lorca (Spanish poet, dramatist)  
Greg Louganis (Olympic diver)  
Amy Lowell (US poet)  
Christopher Marlowe (English writer)  
W. Somerset Maugham (English writer)  
Margaret Mead (anthropologist)  
Herman Melville (US author)  
Michelangelo (Italian artist)  
Edna St. Vincent Millay (US poet)  
Yukio Mishima (Japanese writer)  
Martina Navratilova (tennis champion)  
Rosie O'Donnell (US entertainer)  
Georgia O'Keefe (US artist)  
Peter the Great (Russian czar)  
Plato (Greek philosopher)  
Marcel Proust (French writer)  
Gene Robinson (Episcopal bishop)  
Eleanor Roosevelt (former first lady)  
Sappho (Greek philosopher, poet)  
May Sarton (US writer)  
Randy Shilts (US journalist)  
Bessie Smith (US singer)  
Socrates (Greek philosopher)  
Gertrude Stein (US writer)  
Congressman Gerry Studds (Massachusetts)  
Peter Tchaikovsky (Russian composer)  
Dorothy Thompson (journalist)  
Alice B. Toklas (US writer)  
Lily Tomlin (US comic, actress)  
Rudolf Valentino (actor)  
Gore Vidal (writer)  
Alice Walker (US author)  
Andy Warhol (US artist)  
Walt Whitman (US author, poet)  
Oscar Wilde (Irish writer)  
Tennessee Williams (US playwright)  
Virginia Woolf (English writer)  
Wu (Chinese emperor)  
Babe Didrikson Zaharias (US pro golfer)

**Strategies and Resources for Meeting  
the Needs of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual  
and Transgender Youth in Middle  
Level Schools – Part II**

**NMSA Annual Conference  
November 10-12, 2011  
Louisville, Kentucky**

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# Let Us Not Forget to Support LGBT Youth in the Middle School Years

By Norma J. Bailey

**O**n January 2, 1997, 14-year-old Robbie Kirkland committed suicide after a four-year struggle to accept and find peace with his homosexuality. Robbie knew he was gay at age 10, told his family, and his family loved, accepted, and supported him. But that was not enough, because every day Robbie had to go to school and face the many acts of rejection and anti-gay harassment which occur in our schools daily—name calling, taunting, pushing and tripping, and exclusion—which, over time, leave children like Robbie feeling ashamed, insecure, unworthy, and alone—and ultimately vulnerable to self-destructive behaviors.

The message from Robbie's story is clear. Middle level educators have a responsibility to play a role in the safety and welfare of all young adolescents, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (L,G,B,T,Q).<sup>1</sup> The Human Rights Watch (2001) reported that there are more than two million LGBT youth of school age living in the United States, of every race, creed, social class, ability, and disability, found in urban, suburban, and rural schools. Yet, "with few exceptions, most school districts fail to acknowledge or serve the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual students, parents, and staff" (Goodman, 1996, 10). While there are a growing number of educators, schools, and professional organizations willing to address the needs of these youth, far too many schools and educators do not acknowledge students who are gay or lesbian, nor address their needs. All educators need to know why it is necessary, even urgent, to support these students and must know the specific steps they can take in their schools to make them safe and more equitable places for gay and lesbian students.

## Middle School Connection

As young adolescents enter puberty, they begin to develop many new feelings based on their sexual

awakening and the physiological development they are experiencing. Feelings of affection become more intense, and these feelings, combined with sexual feelings, often result in young adolescents feeling that they are in love—feelings that can also make them feel very uncomfortable and confused, not knowing how to act or react (Caissy, 1994). While for most students these feelings are toward members of the opposite sex, for gay and lesbian students, these same feelings are simply toward members of the same sex. At the same time these students are experiencing same-sex attractions, they are also clearly given multiple societal messages that they are expected to be heterosexual (Manning, 2002).

While a number of studies have tried to ascertain the "average age of coming out," it is a bit elusive, depending upon the definition of "coming out" (to self or to others) and the population studied. In studies done with youth and young adults, the average age of coming out would be younger than if done with a general cross-section of the LGBT community because people continue to come out in their 30s, 40s, and beyond. Many young adolescents



*As part of the curriculum, discussing human diversity and respecting these differences can benefit all learners, including LGBT students.*

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know that they are somehow "different" than their peers while in middle school; often many have begun to question whether they are gay or lesbian, but have not yet self-identified as gay or lesbian. Nonetheless, a number of studies clearly indicate that homosexuality is a young adolescent issue in terms of awareness, questioning, and "coming out" (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN), 2001; Herdt & Boxer, 1993; Jay & Young, 1979; Remafedi, Resnick, Blum, & Harris, 1992; Rosario, et al., 1996; Savin-Williams, 1997).

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*In addition to normal stresses of early adolescence, gay and lesbian young adolescents have to figure out who they are and where they fit in, most without the benefit of adequate support.*

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Thus, in addition to the normal stresses of early adolescence, gay and lesbian young adolescents have to figure out who they are and where they fit in, most often without the benefit of accurate information (library resources, curriculum), role models (historical figures or personnel in their schools), counselors, or support groups that are comfortable with these issues, and teachers with whom they can talk about their thoughts and feelings. However, the most important and immediate issue—the one that schools can and must address—is the one of safety.

As reported by the Human Rights Watch (2001), the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) (2001, 2003), and the California Safe Schools Coalition and the 4-H Center for Youth Development (2004), harassment, threats, and violence against gay and lesbian youth (and those perceived to be gay or lesbian) continue to be significant in high schools and middle level schools across our nation. In the most recent GLSEN National School Climate Survey (2003), 84% of LGBT youth reported being verbally harassed (e.g., name calling, threats) because of their sexual orientation; 91.5% reported hearing homophobic remarks, such as "faggot," "dyke," or the expression "that's so gay" frequently or often; and 39.1% reported being physically harassed (e.g., being pushed, shoved) because of their sexual orientation. Overall, 64.3% of LGBT students reported feeling unsafe at their school because of their sexual orientation. As Kevin Jennings, GLSEN

executive director, summarized, "This year's findings clearly demonstrate that despite modest measurable gains, violence, bias, and harassment of LGBT students continues to be the rule, not the exception, in America's schools" (Sims, 2003).

The shame of ridicule and the fear of a verbal or physical attack make school a fearful place, resulting in frequent absences and, too often, academic failure. These youth spend an inordinate amount of energy determining how to get safely to and from school, how to avoid the hallways when other students are present so they can avoid verbal and physical harassment, figuring out where they might be safe in the lunchroom or the locker room, and which restroom they can use and when. There is often little energy left to learn. For example, some students in your schools may struggle like these students:

During junior high and in my freshman year of high school, I was very depressed. Feeling alone and isolated from the rest of the world, I managed to fail three of my five majors that year. (The Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993, p. 17)

When I was in the middle school from sixth to eighth grade, I did not know I was gay. I did have a feeling I was different from everyone else. These three years were my worst years in school. I was constantly called a faggot. I did not have many friends. I was very lonely and insecure. The worst part was that I could not talk to teachers about my feelings. (Whitlock, 1989, p. 3)

Sometimes there didn't need to be much said at all. It could be looks, whisperings, horrible rumors. In junior high, the rumors can start in sixth grade and haunt you through the rest of junior high. (Human Rights Watch, 2001, p. 34)

Other fifth grade students said that figure skating is "for girls" and "stupid" and called me a "mama's boy." Then they called me "gay."... When I got to middle school ... the cool guys and their friends started hitting me and ganging up on me. ... They threatened to kill me if I told my parents. ... [The]teachers said, "Our hands are tied; we can't do anything."... I was transferred to a different school. (Lipkin, 2004, p. xxi)

While some teachers and administrators harass, ridicule, and unfairly punish gay students, or those "suspected" or "accused" of being gay, the predominant feature of the discriminatory school environment for gay youth is the failure of school personnel to provide protection from peer harassment and violence

(California Safe Schools Coalition and the 4-H Center for Youth Development, 2004; Dennis & Harlow, 1986; GLSEN, 2001, 2003; Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth, 1993; Human Rights Watch, 2001). By far the most common form of this failure at the middle level is when teachers, who would often confront instances of racist, ethnic, or sexist name-calling or jokes, make no effort to intervene when they hear anti-gay name-calling or jokes (including "That's so gay"). In the 2003 GLSEN National School Climate Survey, 82.9% of GLBT students reported that faculty or staff never intervened or intervened only some of the time when present as homophobic remarks were made.

When teachers do not intervene, they give tacit assent to the perpetrators that it is OK to do what they are doing; and they give tacit messages to the gay, lesbian, or "different" youth that they are not worth very much. Thus begins the erosion of self-worth that so often leads young gay and lesbian youth to engage in self-destructive behaviors, including alcohol and other substance abuse, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, and skipping school (Bailey & Phariss, 1996; California Safe Schools Coalition and 4-H Center for Youth Development, 2004; GLSEN, 2001, 2003). In addition, when this verbal harassment is not addressed at the middle school level, it most often escalates at the high school level to physical violence (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

While some teachers and administrators may feel uncomfortable addressing these issues because of their own beliefs or fears about homosexuality and feel that by saying something they compromise their own values, it is the professional goal and responsibility of all educators, regardless of their personal feelings, to provide a safe learning environment for all students. In addition, the National Middle School Association has taken a strong stance to confirm that in a successful school for young adolescents, everyone works proactively to eliminate harassment, verbal abuse, bullying, and name-calling, and that differences are to be respected and celebrated (National Middle School Association, 2003).

### **What Middle Level Schools and Educators Can Do**

The middle school philosophy is based on the principle that middle schools accept the responsibility to try to meet the needs of *all* the young adolescents in their care (National Middle School Association, 1995, 2003). When school personnel fail to protect gay and lesbian students from verbal or physical harassment, for whatever reason, they fail in their

duty to provide a safe educational environment for *all* students. When schools fail to provide accurate information (curriculum and resources) and social structure (support groups) inclusive and representative of gays and lesbians, they fail in their duty to provide an equitable educational environment for *all* students.

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*When teachers do not intervene, they give tacit assent to the perpetrators that it is ok to do what they are doing, and they give tacit messages to the gay, lesbian, or "different" youth that they are not worth very much.*

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So what is an appropriate response to meeting the needs of gay and lesbian youth at the middle level? What can middle level schools and educators do to improve the environment so that all students can receive a safe and equitable education? How do we give clear signals to all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, that they are valuable and valued members of our school community? Here are some specific suggestions. (Resources for implementing these suggestions are listed in the "Resources" at the end of the article.)

- Provide training to all school faculty and staff to learn about and understand the needs of gay and lesbian youth and to develop the skills to meet those needs. Although there may be some faculty and staff who do not wish to learn about gay and lesbian youth and their needs because of their personal beliefs about homosexuality, it is part of their professional responsibility as educators to participate fully in this training. There are several excellent staff training videos and programs available, some designed specifically for school personnel, and others that can be used to educate students as well as other community members.
- Ensure that school policies regarding name-calling and other forms of harassment are explicitly inclusive of students of all sexual orientations and genders, including gender identity, appearance, and behavior. In addition, ensure that these policies are publicized to all school personnel.
- Intervene whenever name-calling or harassment of any kind occurs, be it "faggot" or "fatso" or

"spic" or "retard" or "That's so gay." However, we cannot just say, "Don't say that," or "That's not nice," at the middle school level. Young adolescents are at a crucial time in their cognitive and moral development when they are questioning, testing, and building their beliefs, attitudes, and values for their lifetimes. Consequently, we must take the time to help them become the kind of young people we want them to be by talking about our differences and our uniquenesses and how they *all* are part of our caring community. Teachers need to know how to create the kind of school community whereby a response to name-calling such as, "We don't hurt each other this way in our caring community," has credibility and effect.

- Ensure that there is a well-trained "safe person" designated to whom students can turn to get accurate information about sexual orientation or gender identity. This could be a counselor, a faculty member, or someone from outside the school. He or she should have appropriate resources available—print materials, phone numbers, and a network of other gay and lesbian students.
- Support a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), a group of both gay and straight students who meet as a club to discuss ways to counter homophobia in their school and community. There are more than 1,900 GSAs in the nation's schools today, with several dozen of those in middle level schools. At the middle school level, this could also be a diversity club inclusive of all diversities (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical size).
- Examine the school curriculum to find ways to appropriately incorporate gay and lesbian history, literature, and role models, just as we have done with African Americans, Hispanic Americans, people with disabilities, and women. Seeing themselves in the curriculum gives a message of hope to gay and lesbian young adolescents that they too can live productive, successful lives.
- Examine school and classroom libraries and expand their holdings to include more gay and lesbian fiction and nonfiction. Often the school or classroom library is the first place young adolescents turn to for information, yet, too often, there are few or no works on gay and lesbian issues to be found there. There is a solid body of excellent and age-appropriate literature now available for young adolescents, both fiction

and nonfiction, dealing with gay and lesbian issues. Middle level educators must have the courage to make this literature available to our young people, both gay and straight.

### Are These Steps Effective?

There is clear evidence to show that when these kinds of steps are taken, gay and lesbian students feel safer and, thus, are more able to learn. The California Safe Schools Coalition and the 4-H Center for Youth Development Report (2004) delineated these key findings:

- Students who knew of a school policy specifically prohibiting harassment based on sexual orientation were 19% less likely to be harassed based on sexual orientation and 25% more likely to feel safe at school.
- Students who said their teachers step in when they hear name-calling based on sexual orientation were 35% less likely to be harassed because of sexual orientation and 9% more likely to feel safe at school.
- Students whose schools had a Gay-Straight Alliance club were 16% less likely to be harassed because of sexual orientation and 23% more likely to feel safe at school.

The 2003 GLSEN National School Climate Survey report confirmed that school climate is definitely linked to the academic performance and college aspirations of LGBT youth and that these kinds of steps do, in fact, make a positive difference. The report delineates these key findings:

- Unchecked harassment correlates with diminished academic achievement and diminished future educational aspirations. The average GPA for LGBT students who reported frequent verbal harassment, compared to those who reported only rare or less frequent verbal harassment, was 2.9 versus 3.3. LGBT youth who reported frequent verbal harassment were twice as likely to report they did not intend to go to college (13.4%) as did those who reported only rare or less frequent verbal harassment (6.7%).
- Supportive teachers and staff can make a difference. LGBT students unable to identify supportive teachers or staff were more than twice as likely not to plan to continue their education after secondary school: 24.1% of LGBT students who were unable to identify supportive faculty or staff reported that

they had no intention of going to college. That figure dropped to just 10.1% when LGBT students could identify supportive teachers and staff at their school. As well, LGBT students who were able to identify supportive faculty or staff did better in school than those who were unable to, with grade point averages more than 10% higher than their unsupported peers. The average GPA for LGBT students who were unable to identify any supportive faculty or staff was 2.8, while the average GPA for LGBT students who could identify one or more supportive faculty or staff was 3.1.

- Having policies that are well publicized can make a significant difference. LGBT students who did not have (or did not know of) a policy protecting them from violence and harassment were nearly 40% more likely to skip school because they were simply too afraid to go.

## Conclusion and Challenge

Gay and lesbian students are no more special than any other students in a school, but they are no less special either. In a middle level school that is truly student-centered, school personnel will work to ensure that their needs are addressed and that there is a safe and equitable school environment for youth of every sexual orientation or gender identity. When we do this, we will be working to ensure that there are no more Robbies, and we will have responded proactively to his last words: "I may be gone, but I hope I'm not forgotten. Remember me" (from his suicide note January 2, 1997).

## Note

<sup>1</sup>Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ): In an effort not to be too cumbersome, this article will use the phrase "gay and lesbian" or "gay" to describe all youth who are homosexual or bisexual (LGB); transgendered (T) youth—those whose dress or behavior does not conform to societal gender expectations; questioning (Q) youth—those who are struggling with their sexual identity; and non-gay youth—those who are often "perceived" by others to be gay and suffer the same rejection, struggles, and stress as LGBT youth.

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Sims, M. (2003, December 8). Release of 2003 National School Climate Survey sheds new light on the experiences of LGBT students in America's schools. Retrieved July 17, 2004, from <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/1413.html>

Whitlock, K. (1989). *Bridges of respect: Creating support for lesbian and gay youth* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee.

## Resources

### ORGANIZATIONS

**The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).** GLSEN is a national organization of more than 90 chapters that brings together everyone who wishes to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. For information, contact GLSEN, 121 W. 27th St., Suite 804, New York, NY 10001; (212) 727-0135; e-mail [glsen@glsen.org](mailto:glsen@glsen.org); Web address <http://www.glsen.org>.

**Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).** PFLAG is a national organization of more than 450 chapters that offers support and information to family and friends of gays and lesbians. They have a national safe schools campaign program that provides many resources to educators at all levels. For information, contact PFLAG, 1726 M St., NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 467-8180; e-mail [pflag@pflag.org](mailto:pflag@pflag.org); Web address <http://www.pflag.org>.

**Lambda Legal.** Lambda Legal is a national organization that works to achieve full recognition of the civil rights of LGBT people through litigation, education, and public policy work. They work to educate public policy makers at federal, state, and local levels, heightening awareness about lesbian and gay students and how to stop anti-gay student violence, and provide resources to students, parents, communities, and schools. For information, contact Lambda Legal, 120 Wall St., Suite 1500, New York, NY 10005; (212) 809-8585; e-mail [legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org](mailto:legalhelpdesk@lambdalegal.org); or Web address <http://www.lambdalegal.org>.

### STAFF TRAINING VIDEOS

(to sensitize and educate about GLBTQ youth issues)

"I Just Want to Say: Parents, Students & Teachers Talk About Anti-Gay Bias in Our Schools." (1998). Hosted by Martina Navratilova. 13 minutes. GLSEN, 212-727-0135 or [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

"It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School." Debra Chasnoff & Helen Cohen. 78 minutes (full version-1995) or 37 minutes (training version-1996). Women's Educational Media, 415-641-4616 or [www.womedia.org](http://www.womedia.org) or New Day Films, 888-367-9154 or [www.newday.com](http://www.newday.com).

"Teaching Respect for All." (1998). Led by Kevin Jennings. 52 minutes. GLSEN, 212-727-0135 or [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

"That's a Family!" Debra Chasnoff & Helen Cohen. 30 minutes. (2000). Women's Educational Media, 415-641-4616 or [www.womedia.org](http://www.womedia.org) or New Day Films, 888-367-9154 or [www.newday.com](http://www.newday.com).

### STAFF TRAINING PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

(to provide staff with background knowledge, skills, and tools to work with students regarding GLBT issues)

Casper, V., & Schultz, S. B. (1999). *Gay parents/straight schools: Building communication and trust*. New York, NY: Teachers College.

*Challenging homophobia in schools: A K-12 resource.* Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia. (2000). Available from GLSEN, 212-727-0135 or [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

*The GLSEN lunchbox: A comprehensive training program for ending anti-gay bias in schools.* GLSEN. (2000). Available from GLSEN, 212-727-0135 or [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

Lipkin, A. (2004). *Beyond diversity day: A Q&A on gay and lesbian issues in schools*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

*Tackling gay issues in schools: A resource module.* GLSEN Connecticut & Planned Parenthood of CT. Leif Mitchell (Ed.). (1999). Available in English and Spanish from GLSEN, 212-727-0135 or [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

### RESOURCES FOR NAME-CALLING, INCLUSIVE OF LGBT ISSUES (grades 5-8)

"Let's Get Real" (name-calling and bullying at the middle level). Debra Chasnoff and Helen Cohen. Two versions in one (35 minutes and eight 4-minute segments). (2004). Women's Educational Media, 415-641-4616 or [www.womedia.org](http://www.womedia.org) or New Day Films, 888-367-9154 or [www.newday.com](http://www.newday.com).

The No Name-Calling Week Kit (resources for countering name-calling at the middle level). GLSEN and Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, with more than 40 other national organizations: [www.nonamecallingweek.org](http://www.nonamecallingweek.org).

### POLICIES, LEGAL ISSUES, ETC.

Macgillivray, I. K. (2003). *Sexual orientation and school policy: A practical guide for teachers, administrators, and community activists*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

*Making schools safe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students: A resource guide.* [www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/iowa/documents/record?record=1123](http://www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/iowa/documents/record?record=1123).

*Stopping the anti-gay abuse of students in public schools: A legal perspective.* [www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/iowa/documents/record?record=124](http://www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/iowa/documents/record?record=124).

### LITERATURE

Day, F. A. (2000). *Lesbian and gay voices: An annotated bibliography and guide to literature for children and young adults*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.



## 10 STRATEGIES FOR COMBATING HOMOPHOBIA AND HETEROSEXISM IN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

### ■ *Do Not Assume Heterosexuality*

The constant assumption of heterosexuality renders gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people invisible. Such invisibility is devastating to the individual's sense of self. Both the school as an institution and its professionals must be inclusive in their language and attitudes. By reminding themselves that LGBT people are found on every staff, in every classroom, and on every team, faculty can "unlearn" heterosexism.

### ■ *Guarantee Equality*

LGBT members of the school community need to know that their schools value equality and that they are protected against discrimination. Schools should add sexual orientation and gender identity to their non-discrimination and harassment policies. In addition, sexual orientation and gender identity should be included in multicultural and diversity statements as a way to communicate a commitment to equal treatment for all.

### ■ *Create a Safe Environment*

It is the school's obligation to take proactive measures to ensure that every member of its community has a right to play his or her role without fear of harassment. Schools must make it clear that neither physical violence nor harassing language like "faggot" and "dyke" will be tolerated. Creating a "Safe Zone" program—displaying posters, stickers, and other literature encouraging acceptance—is a great way to communicate that your school is a safe environment for all.

### ■ *Diversify Library and Media Holdings*

The library is frequently the first place to which students turn for accurate sexuality and gender information. Too often, few or no works on LGBT issues are found there. Librarians and media specialists need to be sure their holdings are up to date and reflect the diversity of our world. Materials that reflect LGBT themes and authors should be prominently displayed and easily accessible to students seeking them. The library and media center should reflect LGBT holidays and events in their programming, and should strive to make sure that individual classroom libraries are similarly inclusive. The GLSEN Bookstore is a great resource for "one-stop shopping" for LGBT materials.

### ■ *Provide Training for Faculty and Staff*

School staff need to be equipped to serve all the students with whom they work, including LGBT students and children from LGBT headed families. Understanding the needs of LGBT youth/families and developing the skills to meet those needs should be expected of all educators regardless of personal or religious beliefs.

### ■ *Provide Appropriate Health Care and Education*

While being LGBT is not a "health issue," health education on sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases should sensitively address the issues of LGBT people. Counselors and health staff should be particularly careful to make their sensitivity to LGBT issues clear. By educating themselves about related support services and agencies, and making pamphlets and other literature available, health profession-

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO

als can provide for the needs of the LGBT students and families with whom they work.

### ■ *Be a Role Model*

Actions speak louder than words. The most effective way to reduce homophobic bigotry and prejudice of any kind is to consistently behave in ways that appreciate all human beings and that convey zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind. Though both straight and LGBT students will benefit from having openly LGBT teachers, coaches and administrators, staff members need not be "out" or LGBT themselves in order to be good role models. By demonstrating respectful language, intervening during instances of homophobic harassment, and bringing diverse images into the classroom in safe and affirming ways, all staff members can be model human beings for the students with whom they work.

### ■ *Provide Support for Students*

Peer support and acceptance is the key to any student's feeling that he or she "belongs" in the school. "gay-straight alliances" offer students this sense of belonging as well as the chance to effect positive change in their schools. GSAs welcome membership from any student interested in understanding issues of homophobia and gender/sexual identities, regardless of sexual orientation. There are currently over 700 GSAs registered with GLSEN and countless more across the nation. Consider being a GSA adviser and helping students in your community to form a club that provides support and understanding.

### ■ *Reassess the Curriculum*

Teachers need to integrate LGBT issues throughout the curriculum—not just in classes such as health education, but in traditional disciplines such as English, History, and Science. Pre-existing curricula should be broadened to include LGBT images where appropriate (such as in studies of the Holocaust and Civil Rights Movement). Current events, popular music and film, and other media that reflect LGBT content should be regularly discussed in class. Classroom libraries, story times, and assigned reading should be thoughtfully structured to include the full range of human diversity. Finally, educators should take advantage of "teachable moments," viewing questions, comments and instances of name calling as opportunities to educate students about LGBT people and issues. Children spend the majority of their time in class. As long as LGBT issues are seen as "special" and outside the classroom, students will continue to see LGBT people as marginal.

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO (CONTINUED)

**■ Broaden Entertainment and Extracurricular Programs**

Extracurricular activities often set the tone for the community. Programs such as assemblies, film nights, and school fairs should regularly include content that reflects the diversity of our world. Special LGBT events and holidays such as LGBT History Month (October) and Pride Month (June) should be incorporated into school-wide celebrations. Guest speakers and lectures that can inform the school community about the unique needs and accomplishments of LGBT people should be a regular part of school programming.

# WHAT ONE TEACHER CAN DO

## 1. Inform yourself about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and about homophobia.

### LOW RISK

- Learn about LGBT history, culture, and current concerns by reading books, journals and periodicals.

### SOME RISK

- Attend LGBT film series or lectures.
- Attend a meeting of an LGBT organization.
- Attend an "allies" meeting (for example, P-FLAG).
- Have conversations with openly LGBT people.

### GREATER RISK

- Engage heterosexual people, including your family and friends, in discussions of homosexuality/homophobia.

## 2. Create a safe and equitable classroom.

### LOW RISK

- Change your assumption that everyone is heterosexual unless they tell you otherwise.
- Use inclusive language that implicitly allows for LGBT possibilities (for example, "parent" rather than "mother" or "father"; "spouse" rather than "wife" or "husband"; "date" rather than "boyfriend" or "girlfriend").

### SOME RISK

- Challenge homophobic language and name-calling.
- Put up LGBT friendly posters, pictures, or signs.
- If you are heterosexual, don't be quick to inform others of your heterosexuality. Ask what they might think if you told them you were LGBT.

### GREATER RISK

- Be clear about your willingness to support LGBT students.
- Use language that explicitly allows for LGBT possibilities (for example, "Emily Dickinson and her boy- or girlfriend").
- Invite LGBT speakers to your classroom.
- Use LGBT curriculum.
- If you are LGBT, come out to your students.

## 3. Create a safe and equitable school.

### LOW RISK

- Be a role model of acceptance.

### SOME RISK

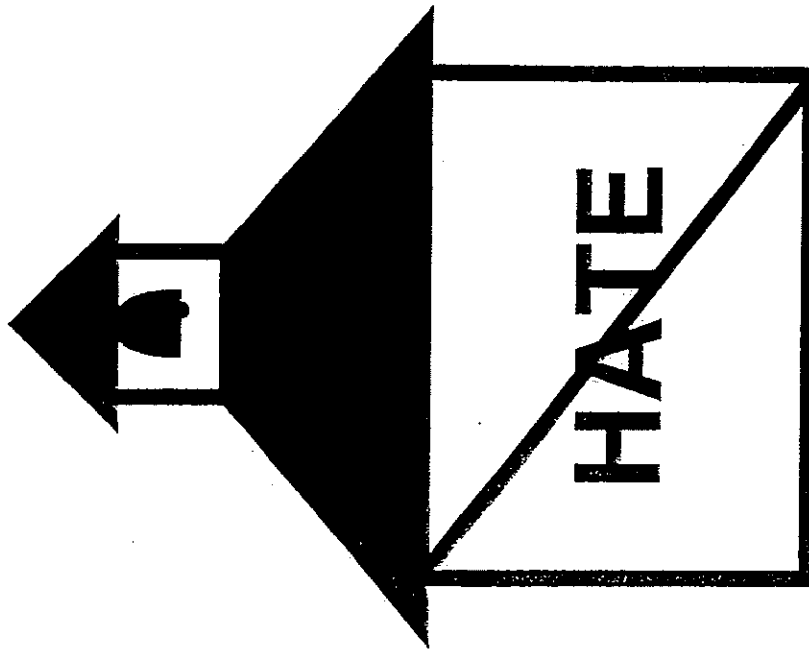
- Challenge name-calling and harassment.
- Work to establish policies protecting LGBT students from harassment, violence, and discrimination.
- Call for the inclusion of LGBT people in diversity presentations.
- Work to form a gay/straight alliance and/or support group for LGBT students.
- Call for faculty and staff training in LGBT youth issues (including crisis intervention and violence prevention).
- Call for counseling services for LGBT youth and their parents.

### GREATER RISK

- Invite LGBT speakers to your school.
- Join a gay/straight alliance.
- Call for and develop an LGBT awareness day.
- Work with the PTA and other community-based support groups regarding the education and health needs of LGBT students.
- Solicit the cooperation of LGBT alumni/ae in motivating the school to meet the needs of students who succeed them.
- Call for faculty training in LGBT studies.
- Encourage colleagues to develop and use LGBT curriculum.
- If you are LGBT, come out to the school community.

• people of all races • people of all sexual orientations • people of all gender identities • people of all health statuses •  
• people of all spiritualities • people of all sizes, shapes, and heights • people of all ethnicities •

• people of all races • people of all sexual orientations • people of all gender identities • people of all health statuses •



**In this classroom,  
all people  
are treated with respect.**

**Hate Free  
School**

• people of all national origins • people of all ages • people of all mental and physical abilities •

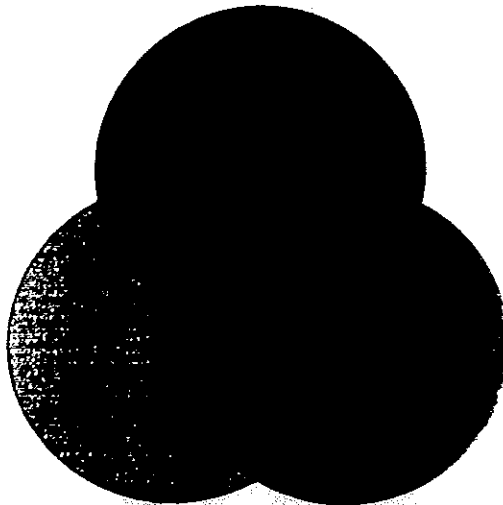
# Guidelines For Teachers

- Address negative school-based incidents on the spot—targeted harassment, put-downs (whether or not targeted to individuals), anti-gay jokes and graffiti, and labeling.
- Change language that assumes everyone is or should be heterosexual (use “partner” rather than girl/boyfriend, “permanent relationship” rather than marriage).
- Change human relations and personnel policies to protect students and staff from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; train personnel to follow up violations.
- Identify GLBT contributions throughout the curriculum (history, literature, art, science, religion, etc.).
- Provide history of oppression (such as Holocaust, origin of word “faggot”)



## **Guidelines For Teachers**

- **Submit requests to improve library holdings (both fiction and non-fiction) related to sexual diversity.**
- **Develop and/or advertise resources (local support groups, web sites, gay/straight alliances) for GLBTQ students and their families.**
- **Include issues for GLBTQ students and staff in coverage in school newspaper.**
- **Bring in openly GLBTQ adults as resources in classes and assemblies.**
- **Include GLBTQ concerns in all prevention programs (suicide, dropout, pregnancy, etc.); and in training of peer counselors, student government, etc.**



STAFF:

# How To Handle Harassment in the Hallways in 3 Minutes!

## 1. *Stop the harassment.*

- Interrupt the comment / Halt the physical harassment.
- Do not pull students aside for confidentiality unless absolutely necessary.
- Make sure all the students in the area hear your comments.

## 2. *Identify the harassment.*

- Label the form of harassment: "That was a harassing comment/put-down based upon race" (*religion, ethnicity, abilities, gender, age, sexual orientation, economic status, size, etc.*).
- Do not imply that the victim is a member of that identifiable group.

## 3. *Broaden the response.*

- Do not personalize your response at this stage: "We at this school do not harass people." "Our community does not appreciate hateful/thoughtless behavior."
- Re-identify the offensive behavior: "This name calling can also be hurtful to others who overhear it."

## 4. *Ask for change in future behavior.*

- Personalize the response: "Chris, please pause and think before you act."
- Check in with the victim at this time: "If this continues, please tell me, and I will take further action. We want everyone to be safe at this school."

It is important that all students, whether onlookers, potential victims, or potential harassers, get the message that students are safe and protected in this school.

A major goal is to take the "spotlight" off the victim and the harasser and turn the focus to the behavior. Students should realize what was said, regardless of what was meant (e.g., kidding).

"We don't do put-downs at this school" specifically includes those listening, as well as the school community in general.

Even if they were "only kidding," harassers must realize the possible ramifications of their actions.

Now turn the "spotlight" on the harasser specifically, asking for accountability.

Again, be sure not to treat the victim like a helpless victim or a member of any target group. Rather, plainly give him/her this responsibility on behalf of others.

STUDENTS:

## What To Do If You See a Student Being Harassed

**1. If it is likely to turn physical/violent, call an adult immediately.**

**2. If it is verbal, stop the harassment.**

- Interrupt the comment.
- Make sure all the students in the area hear your comments.

**3. Identify the harassment.**

- Label the form of harassment: "That was a put-down based on race" (*religion, ethnicity, abilities, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, size, age, etc.*).
- Do not imply that the victim is a member of that group. Don't even mention the victim.

**4. Broaden the response.**

- Speak on behalf of the whole school: "We do not harass people here." "Our school treats everyone with respect." "We don't appreciate put-downs."
- Re-identify the offensive behavior: "This name calling can also be hurtful to others who overhear it."

**5. Physically lead the victim away from the situation without further talk.**

- Put your arm around his/her shoulder, perhaps.
- Say, "Come on, let's go," and walk away to a safe place. Avoid any debate or arguing back.

Do not risk getting involved in a fight or challenging harassers so that they escalate their behavior!

It is important that all students, whether onlookers, potential victims, or potential harassers, get the message that students care about the safety of others in this school.

A major goal is to take the "spotlight" off the victim and turn the focus to the behavior. Students should realize what was said, regardless of what was meant (e.g., kidding).

"We don't do put-downs at this school" specifically includes those listening, as well as the school community in general.

Even if they were "only kidding," harassers must realize the possible results of their actions.

Whether you know the victim or not, remove him/her and yourself from the situation, showing that you will stick up for anyone who is being treated badly, and preventing any more confrontation.



*A discussion of differences can sensitize students to a variety of oppressive attitudes and name-calling*

## Countering Homophobia: A Lesson Plan

The lesson plan below was adapted from a plan developed by Polly Kellogg.

### Objectives:

- To sensitize students to the feelings of others who are called names because they are "different" from other people.
- To develop an understanding of how and why we react to people who are unlike us.
- To provide students with the verbal tools to protect themselves and to discourage name-calling.

**Time Needed:** Two class periods

### Grade Level:

For grades 4–8. The procedures for all grades are the same, but students in grades 7 and 8 may fill out columns two and three of their worksheets independently.

### Materials Needed:

The name-calling worksheets and the list of feelings that appear on the next page.

### Background Reading:

Read the articles in this issue of the *Bulletin* on homophobia, particularly "What Do We Say When We Hear 'Faggot?'" by Leonore Gordon (p. 25), noting the myths that are generally brought up in classroom discussions.

### Teacher Preparation:

Do the background reading suggested above. Review teaching procedures outlined below. Duplicate sufficient copies of name-calling worksheets for each student. Prepare feelings list by writing list of adjectives on newsprint or on chalkboard.

### Procedure:

*Note:* It is important that teachers feel confident of their ability to provide students with accurate information. Each opportunity must be utilized during class discussion to correct myths and misconceptions about the particular group under discussion.

Place feelings list on easel or chalkboard for use as needed; students can add to this list during discussion. Distribute worksheets.

Call students' attention to first type of person listed on the work sheet, i.e., short. Ask students to suggest different labels or "put-downs" generally used for people who are short.

List each put-down or label suggested by students on chalkboard. Have students list these labels in column two on their worksheets.

Help students discover how it feels to be the object of name-calling and put-downs. Ask students to close their eyes and imagine that they are a short person. Have them imagine themselves in various situations—walking down the street, trying out for a school team, etc.

Call out the put-downs and labels suggested by students (all name-calling is to be done by teacher). Ask students how they felt when they heard the put-downs; discuss students' feelings about this experience.

Draw on students' own experiences by asking whether they or any one they know have been called any of these names, cautioning them that a person's name must not be given if they are talking about the experiences of others.

Have students select the words from the feelings list that best describes how they felt during the name-calling; enter adjectives in column three of name-call-

ing sheet. (Add other words if necessary.)

*Note:* This discussion can be quite extended as children become involved in sharing their feelings. Discussion of some types of put-downs will naturally take longer than others.

After this part of discussion has been concluded, ask the students to imagine that they are now the name-callers. Have them select words from the feelings list to describe their reactions.

Allow the students two minutes to answer the question "If you've ever . . ." at the bottom of the worksheet.

Discuss students' reactions to the imaginary experience of being name-callers.

Follow the same procedure for each word in column one of the name-calling list until the phrase "gay man" is reached.

Elicit put-downs and labels as before. Then elicit students' definitions of term.

Provide explanation of terms gay and lesbian. (You might say something like, "You know how most men grow up to marry because they want the close company of a woman. Some men prefer the close company of another man instead. Likewise, some women prefer a life partner who is a woman and their deepest feelings of love and closeness go toward other women. These people are called lesbians and gay men." Definitions that have been used in a classroom include "Someone who loves someone of the same sex" and "Someone who romantically loves someone of the same sex.")

Follow previous procedures after explanation of terms has been provided.

Continue through the worksheet. After this procedure has been followed for each word on list, discuss people's negative responses to those who are per-

## NAME-CALLING WORKSHEET

DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE	LABELS OR PUT-DOWNS	HOW YOU WOULD FEEL IF YOU WERE THESE PEOPLE AND WERE PUT-DOWN	COMEBACKS YOU COULD USE
short			
tall			
developmentally disabled			
Black			
woman			
overweight			
gay man			
physically disabled			
student who is popular with teacher			
Puerto Rican			
smart student			
lesbian			
teenager			
Vietnamese refugee			
five-year-old			

If you've ever used one of these names when talking to or about somebody, how did it make you feel? (ashamed? cool?)

ceived as being "different" using questions similar to the ones below.

- Why do we usually use put-downs and labels and other forms of unkind treatment for people who are not like ourselves? (During the discussion, *develop* the understanding that people use labels and put-downs to make themselves feel better.)

- How does the way we feel about ourselves at a particular time affect the way we feel about other people and act toward them?

*Brainstorm* comebacks and retorts

that students may use in response to put-downs and name-calling. *Develop* the understanding that these comebacks should be "educated" retorts which provide the name-callers with valid information—*e.g.*, "I'm just as different as you are" or "I'm not ashamed."

*Have* students record the most effective comebacks in column four of the name-calling worksheet.

### Follow-Up Activity:

Students may role-play situations involving name-calling and retorts.

### FEELINGS LIST

afraid lonely mad happy embarrassed bored loved I'm the only one like this cool ashamed sad	crazy scared alone weird part of the group nobody likes me on top of the world
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# CURRICULAR INCLUSION OF LGBT CONTENT (*Handout*)

ATTACHMENT  
No

13B

*Invisibility and silence are perhaps the greatest perpetrators of ignorance about and fear of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. For educators, the school and classroom curriculum offer unique opportunities to combat this invisibility and increase understanding on the part of our students. In addition to making use of the growing number of commercial materials available, we must look for ways to meet the specific curricular and student needs that present themselves in our individual settings. In doing so, consider the following four broad areas as vehicles for LGBT inclusion in your school or classroom curriculum.*

## 1. THE PRESET OR STANDARD CURRICULUM

Look for ways to broaden or expand the standard curriculum to include images of LGBT people and to include the full range of human diversity. Some examples include:

- Expanding a study of Civil Rights Movement to include important gay figures, such as Bayard Rustin, and to include the Women's Movement and The Stonewall Rebellion/gay civil rights movement.
- Expanding a study of Native Americans to include their positive attitude toward gays, referred to as "two-spirited."
- Highlighting the contributions of famous LGBT people (Rachel Carson, Harvey Milk, etc.) along with other prominent Americans throughout history.
- Rewording math problems to include images of same-sex as well as heterosexual couples.

## 2. THE INTERPERSONAL CURRICULUM

Don't overlook the hidden or values curriculum. What children say, their behaviors, interactions with others and unspoken attitudes offer perhaps the most opportunities to combat homophobia and increase understanding of a variety of people and issues. Pay special attention to the following:

- **Name-calling:** Make sure your school/classroom is safe for everyone by demonstrating zero tolerance for name-calling. Don't simply stop children from hurling insults, though. Take it a step further by asking why they used certain words, what these words mean to them, and what messages are behind the words. Have both individual and class discussions about the power of words and introduce appropriate vocabulary and definitions.
- **Language:** Be aware of the language that children use to describe others and their world. Are words like gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender properly understood and used appropriately? Do children use "he" as the prominent pronoun when speaking/writing? Are words like policeman and congressman still regularly used instead of police officer and member of congress? Language is a subtle, but powerful influencer of the way we think and define the world.
- **Behavior:** How do children act alone or interact with others? Do boys only play sports in your school? Do girls only play in the dress-up area? Are boys who choose to play with dolls isolated or ostracized? Are children laughed at for mannerisms that are "too masculine" or "too feminine"? Be aware of children's behavior, and where appropriate, challenge it and bring it to the large group for discussion and consideration.
- **Intrapersonal factors:** While interpersonal behavior occurs between two or more people, intrapersonal factors are concerned with the way in which an individual behaves or what she/he believes or thinks internally. Be aware of signs that indicate a child is struggling with issues or ideas. Where appropriate, challenge personally held stereotypes and help children to develop healthy attitudes toward themselves and others. Involve the family and/or outside support services where necessary. Don't ignore your students' inner health or underestimate its power to influence his/her academic and social life.

ATTACHMENT  
NO

13B

## CURRICULAR INCLUSION OF LGBT CONTENT (CONTINUED)

**3. MEDIA**

Incorporate visual, print, and electronic media, the news, sports and popular film and television programming into your curriculum. Students are regularly impacted by a wide variety of media images, some of which are confusing, misleading or just plain inaccurate. Just as you would bring other important news stories or media events into your classroom, discuss relevant LGBT news/programming to help students understand LGBT issues/people, to challenge stereotypes and misinformation, and to help them think more deeply and develop informed opinions. Some examples include:

- Bringing relevant current events issues into the classroom for discussion. Gays in the military, Gay-Straight alliances, and marriage of same-sex couples are all issues that students from elementary school on up should be discussing.
- Using popular movies/programs to examine stereotypes and images of diverse people. From *Will and Grace* to *20/20*, *In and Out* to *Boys Don't Cry*, there are dozens of age appropriate clips that can be watched, analyzed, and discussed in class.
- Bringing in images of out actors, musicians and sports figures. Highlight the work of Melissa Ethridge and Elton John, Dan Butler and Amanda Bearse, Rudy Galindo and Muffin Devlin Spencer. Make sure that the sexual identity of these popular figures is not omitted in our appreciation of them as celebrities, artists and human beings.

**4. LITERATURE**

Make sure that your school and classroom libraries are inclusive of a wide range of people and images. Make sure that read alouds, book reports, research assignments, etc. represent LGBT and all people in equitable ways. Consider trying some of the following suggestions:

- From *My Two Uncles* and *Asha's Mum's* to *Jack and Annie on My Mind*, there are a variety of books that depict LGBT people/issues for all ages. Make sure that books such as these are present in your libraries, prominently displayed, and read aloud on a regular basis.
- Highlight the work of popular authors who include LGBT images in their writing. How many students, for example, are aware that Louis Lowry – popular author of *The Giver* and *Anastasia* books – also wrote  *Holding*, a story about a teenage boy who returns from school to comfort his father after the death of his father's lover? Bringing in stories such as this will demonstrate that LGBT issues are valid topics for writing or discussion among all audiences.
- When using classic literature, don't ignore gay references or sub-plots that might lead to enlightening discussions. For example, in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden is continually concerned about this or that friend's "flitty" or "pervery" nature, and the possibility that one of his favorite teachers might be gay.
- Choose author, genre and theme studies that include opportunities for depictions of LGBT people. Reading about different kinds of families in the early grades is a perfect example. Looking at prejudice through literature or doing a study of Walt Whitman's poetry with older children are other examples.

# ASSESSING HOMOPHOBIA & HETEROSEXISM IN SCHOOL

ATTACHMENT  
NO

15

For each of the following items, check the appropriate response (LGBT denotes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered).

1. Sexual orientation/gender identity is included in our anti-discrimination policy for faculty and staff hiring.

Yes       No       Unsure

2. Sexual orientation/gender identity is included in our anti-discrimination policy for admissions.

Yes       No       Unsure

3. The personnel policy includes paid emergency leave for death or illness of significant others.

Yes       No       Unsure

4. LGBT issues and policy are covered in new faculty orientation.

Yes       No       Unsure

5. We advertise job openings in the LGBT media.

Yes       No       Unsure

6. We advertise our school in the LGBT media.

Yes       No       Unsure

7. Our forms do not ask staff or parents for their 'marital status' or 'sex.'

Yes       No       Unsure

8. Forms for student/parent completion take into account diversity of households, including partners of the same gender.

Yes       No       Unsure

9. Administrators and staff use the terms 'partner' or 'significant other,' rather than 'spouse, husband, wife.'

Yes       No       Unsure

10. LGBT students are listed in our brochure or statement of who we serve.

Yes       No       Unsure

11. Our school has held workshops for teachers on LGBT issues.

Yes       No       Unsure

12. Our school has held workshops for administrators and trustees on LGBT issues.

Yes       No       Unsure

13. Our school has held workshops for parents on LGBT issues.

Yes       No       Unsure

14. Our school has held assemblies for students on LGBT issues.

Yes       No       Unsure

15. Articles about LGBT issues have appeared in our student newspaper.

Yes       No       Unsure

16. Articles about LGBT issues have appeared in our parent/community newsletters.

Yes       No       Unsure

ATTACHMENT  
No

15

## ASSESSING HOMOPHOBIA &amp; HETEROSEXISM (CONTINUED)

17. We have an anti-harassment policy that specifically forbids homophobic or heterosexist comments or harassment.

Yes       No       Unsure

18. We have an extensive collection of books in our library dealing with LGBT issues.

Yes       No       Unsure

19. Our community service or outreach programs include LGBT causes or organizations.

Yes       No       Unsure

20. Administrators and teachers regularly use the words LGBT where appropriate in public forums and situations.

Yes       No       Unsure

21. Contributions of famous LGBT people are mentioned in our classrooms.

Yes       No       Unsure

22. Our curriculum incorporates LGBT issues in:

a) history and/or current events classes;

Yes       No       Unsure

b) English literature classes;

Yes       No       Unsure

c) biology classes;

Yes       No       Unsure

d) health/human development/sexuality education classes;

Yes       No       Unsure

e) and other areas.

Yes       No       Unsure

23. If I were an LGBT student, I would feel safe and supported enough to be open about my Sexual orientation/gender identity at this school.

Yes       No       Unsure

24. There have been openly LGBT students at my school.

Yes       No       Unsure

25. If I were an LGBT teacher, administrator or staff member, I would feel safe and supported enough to be open about my sexual orientation/gender identity.

Yes       No       Unsure

26. There are or have been openly LGBT people on our staff.

Yes       No       Unsure

27. There are or have been openly LGBT people in our parent association.

Yes       No       Unsure

## RESOURCES – BOOKS

Bass, Ellen, and Kate Kaufman. Free your mind: The book for gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth - and their allies. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996.

Bauer, Marion Dane, ed. Am I blue: Coming out from the silence. NY: Harper Collins, 1994.

Bell, Ruth. Changing bodies, changing lives: Expanded third edition: A book for teens on sex and relationships. NY: Random House, 1998.

Bernstein, Robert. Straight parents gay children: Keeping families together. NY: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1995.

Bowles, N. Cootie Shots: Theatrical Inoculations Against Bigotry for Kids, Parents and Teachers. New York, NY: Theater Communications Group, 2001.

Brett, Catherine. S.P. likes A.D. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1989.

Cammermeyer, Margarethe. Serving in silence. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1994.

Casper, Virginia, & Schulz, Steven B. Gay parents/straight schools: Building communication and trust. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1999.

Cohen, Susan and Daniel. When someone you know is gay. NY: Dell Publishing, 1992.

Cowan, Thomas. Gay men and women who enriched the world. New Canaan, CT: Mulvey, 2000.

Day, Frances Ann. Lesbian and gay voices: An annotated bibliography and guide to literature for children and young adults. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Duberman, Martin, ed. Issues in lesbian and gay life series. NY: Chelsea House Publishers, 1994. (A number have been published - *Lesbians and Gays and Sports; Psychiatry, Psychology, and Homosexuality; Gay Men, Lesbians, and the Law; Beyond Gay or Straight: Understanding Sexual Orientation*)

Duberman, Martin, ed. Lives of notable gay men and lesbians series. NY: Chelsea House Publishers, 1994. (A number have been published - *James Baldwin, Willa Cather, Martina Navratilova, John Maynard Keynes, k.d. lang, Liberace, Marlene Dietrich, Oscar Wilde, Sappho, T. E. Lawrence*)

Fairchild, Betty and Nancy Hayward. Now that you know: What every parent should know about homosexuality. NY: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1989. Updated edition.

Garden, Nancy. Annie on my mind. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981.

Garden, Nancy. Holly's Secret. 2000. Available from GLSEN.

Garden, Nancy. The year they burned the books. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999.

Griffin, Carolyn W. and Marian J. Wirth. Beyond acceptance: Parents of lesbians and gays talk about their experiences. NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997.

Heger, Heinz. The men with the pink triangle. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1994.

Heron, Ann, ed. Two teenagers in twenty. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1994.

Howe, James. The Misfits. 2001. Available from GLSEN.

Howe, James. Totally Joe. 2005. Available from GLSEN.

Huegel, Kelly. GLBTO: The survival guide for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and & questioning teens. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing. 2011.

Human Rights Watch. Hatred in the hallways: Violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students in U. S. schools. New York, NY: Author, 2001.

Jenness, Aylette. Families: A celebration of diversity, commitment, and love. NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Jennings, Kevin, ed. Becoming visible: A reader in gay and lesbian history for high school and college students. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1994.

Kerr, M. E. Deliver us from Evie. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.

Kopay, David and Perry Deane Young. The David Kopay Story. NY: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1988 (second edition).

Langer de Ramirez, Lori. Voices of diversity: Stories, activities, and resources for the multicultural classroom. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2006.

Lipkin, Arthur. Understanding homosexuality, changing schools: A text for teachers, counselors, and administrators. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.

Lipkin, Arthur. Beyond diversity day: A Q&A on gay and lesbian issues in schools. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2004.

MacGillivray, Ian K. Sexual orientation & school policy: A practical guide for teachers, administrators, and community activists. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.

Marcus, Eric. Is it a choice?: Answers to the most frequently asked questions about gay and lesbian people. (Third edition). San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2005.

Marcus, Eric. What if someone I know is gay?: Answers to questions about what it means to be gay and lesbian. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2007.

McClain, Ellen Jaffe. No big deal. New York, NY: Puffin Books, 1994.

Nelson, Richard E. and Judith C. Galas. The power to prevent suicide: A guide for teens helping teens. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1994.

Peters, Julie Anne. Luna. NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2004.



- Remafedi, Gary. (Ed.). Death by denial: Studies of suicide in gay and lesbian teenagers. Boston, MA: Alyson Publications, 1994.
- Rench, Janice E. Understanding sexual identity: A book for gay and lesbian teens and their friends. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1992.
- Ryan, Caitlin & Donna Futterman. Lesbian & gay youth: Care & counseling. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- Salat, Christina. Living in secret. NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing, 1993.
- Sanchez, Alex. The God box. NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2009.
- Sanchez, Alex. So hard to say. NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006.
- Schniedewind, Nancy, & Davidson, Ellen. Open minds to equality: A sourcebook of learning activities to affirm diversity and promote equality (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2006.
- Velásquez, Gloria. Tommy stands alone. Houston, TX: Piñata Books, 1995.
- Webber, Carlisle K. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning teen literature: A guide to reading interests. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010.
- Woodson, Jacqueline. From the notebooks of Melanin Sun. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1995.

## RESOURCES - VIDEOS

"I Just Want to Say: Parents, Students & Teachers Talk About Anti-Gay Bias in Our Schools." Hosted by Martina Navratilova. 13 minutes. GLSEN. 212-727-0135 or [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

"It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School." Debra Chasnoff & Helen Cohen. 78 minutes (full version-1995) or 37 minutes (training version-1996). Groundspark. 415-641-4616 or 1-800-405-3322 or [www.groundspark.org](http://www.groundspark.org)

"It's Still Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School." 2008. ." Debra Chasnoff & Helen Cohen. Groundspark. 415-641-4616 or 1-800-405-3322 or [www.groundspark.org](http://www.groundspark.org)

"Out of the Past: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Rights in America." 70 minutes. GLSEN. 212-727-0135 or [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

"That's a Family!" Debra Chasnoff & Helen Cohen. 30 minutes. 2000. Groundspark. 415-641-4616 or 1-800-405-3322 or [www.groundspark.org](http://www.groundspark.org)

"Let's Get Real" (name-calling and bullying at the middle level). Debra Chasnoff and Helen Cohen. Two versions in one (35 minutes and eight 4-minute segments). 2004. Groundspark. 415-641-4616 or 1-800-405-3322 or [www.groundspark.org](http://www.groundspark.org)

"Straightlaced – How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up." Debra Chasnoff. 67 minutes. 2009. Groundspark. 415-641-4616 or 1-800-405-3322 or [www.groundspark.org](http://www.groundspark.org)

"Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case that Made History." Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. 40 minutes. 2010. (334) 956-8200 or [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

## RESOURCE - JOURNAL ARTICLES

Bailey, Norma J. "Break the silence and make schools safe for all kids. Part 1: Awareness and strategies for teachers." Middle Ground, October, 2011.

Bailey, Norma J. "Let us not forget to support LGBT youth in the middle school years." Middle School Journal, November, 2005.

Bailey, Norma J. "No more Robbies! How to support LGBT youth in the middle school years." NAESP Principal, January/February 2003.

Bleazard, Rob. "We don't use that language anymore." Teaching Tolerance Magazine, Spring, 2003.

Kilman, Carrie. "THIS is why we need a GSA." Teaching Tolerance Magazine, Spring, 2007.

Wessler, Stephen L. "Sticks and stones." Educational Leadership, December 2000/January 2001.

**Resources for Educators**  
**Publications, Organizations, Addresses, Telephone Numbers, etc.**

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), 1726 M Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 467-8180, [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

Harvard Gay and Lesbian School Issues Project, Arthur Lipkin, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 210 Longfellow Hall, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 491-5301, e-mail: [lipkinar@hugsel.harvard.edu](mailto:lipkinar@hugsel.harvard.edu)

Human Rights Campaign, 1640 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036, (800) 777-4723, [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Headquarters, 120 Wall Street, Suite 1500, New York, NY 10005, (212) 809-8585, [www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org)

Teaching Tolerance, Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104, (334) 956-8200, [www.splcenter.org/center/tt/teach.jsp](http://www.splcenter.org/center/tt/teach.jsp)

Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), Dr. Eliza Byard, Executive Director, 121 W. 27th St., Suite 804, New York, NY 10001, (212) 727-0135, e-mail: [glsen@glsen.org](mailto:glsen@glsen.org), [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

National Education Association Gay and Lesbian Caucus,  
[www.nea.org/schoolsafety/glb.html](http://www.nea.org/schoolsafety/glb.html)

National Youth Advocacy Coalition, 1638 R Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 319-7596, (800) 541-6922, [www.nyacyouth.org](http://www.nyacyouth.org)

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE), 1550 Bryant Street, Suite 830, San Francisco, CA 94103, 415-861-5437, [www.colage.org](http://www.colage.org)

The Trevor Project (crisis and suicide prevention helpline for LGBTQ youth). 9056 Santa Monica Blvd., Ste. 208, West Hollywood, CA 90069. Ph: 310-271-8845, e-mail: [info@thetrevorproject.org](mailto:info@thetrevorproject.org). Trevor Helpline: 866.4.U.Trevor. [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

<http://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up> (Mix-It-Up Day at Lunch -November each year)

<http://www.nonamecallingweek.org> (January each year)