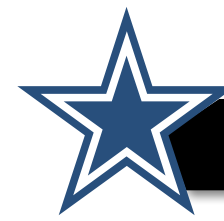




New Brunswick LGBTQ Inclusive Education Resource

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR ADMINISTRATORS

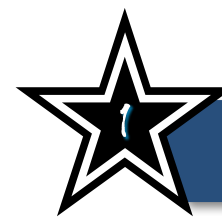


INFORMATION FOR ADMINISTRATORS



diversity = possibility

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WHY IS LGBTQ INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

Every student, staff and family member in the school community has the right to a learning environment where they are acknowledged, valued, respected and safe. LGBTQ inclusive education helps to accomplish this by creating an environment where LGBTQ identities are seen and valued, just like the myriad of other identities individuals carry.



Heteronormativity: A cultural/societal bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are straight and so privileges heterosexuality and ignores or underrepresents same-gender relationships.

Cisnormativity: A cultural/societal bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are cisgender and so privileges cisgender identities and ignores or underrepresents gender creativity.

Cisgender (adj): Refers to someone whose gender identity corresponds with their birth-assigned sex (e.g., a cisgender male is someone whose gender identity is man and was assigned male sex at birth).

Research has shown how unsafe schools can be for LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ families (Egale, 2011, GLSEN 2012). While physical and verbal harassment undermine safety, a culture of silence contributes as well. Students learn what has value both by commission as well as omission. Seeing LGBTQ realities as part of the school environment affirms the existence, presence and acceptance of LGBTQ people. This is crucial for students and staff who identify as LGBTQ and who have LGBTQ families. LGBTQ inclusive education also creates safer spaces in schools by addressing and reducing homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heteronormativity and cisnormativity. All of this contributes to a positive learning and working environment where all students, staff and families can feel safe, and where everyone learns about respect and acceptance.

Leadership in LGBTQ inclusive education requires the acknowledgment of the presence of LGBTQ individuals, and of the barriers they face due to discrimination, harassment, silence, and systemic discrimination in New Brunswick schools. LGBTQ inclusive education is this the right thing

to do within the context of creating safe and respectful schools, but it upholds the New Brunswick Human Rights Act, the New Brunswick Education Act, Policy 322, Policy 703, the NBTA's Policy 598-3 as well as recommendations from *Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools*.

Details about each of these documents is provided in part 3 of this section.

- 11. Responses to Egale Canada's First National School Climate Survey 71
- 12. Safe Schools Quiz 73
- 13. Executive Summary of *Every Class in Every School: Egale's Final Report on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* 77



DID YOU KNOW... ?

Egale is Canada’s only national charity promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans human rights through research, education and community engagement. Through our *Safer and Accepting Schools* program, we are committed to supporting LGBTQ youth, those perceived as LGBTQ, as well as students with LGBTQ families and friends. Additionally, this program seeks to assist educators as they work to make Canadian schools safer, more inclusive learning and working environments for all members of the learning community. *Safer and Accepting Schools* resources include the national LGBTQ safer schools and inclusive education website, *MyGSA.ca*; Provincial LGBTQ Inclusive Education Resource kits; and workshops. The statistics below clearly demonstrate that these resources are essential.

According to Egale’s *Every Class in Every School : Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* (2011):

- Three-quarters of LGBTQ students and 95% of trans students feel unsafe at school.
- Over a quarter of LGBTQ students and almost half of trans students have skipped school because of feeling unsafe.
- Many LGBTQ students would not be comfortable talking to their teachers (four in ten), their principal (six in ten), or their coach (seven in ten) about LGBTQ matters.
- Only one in five LGBTQ students can talk to a parent very comfortably about LGBTQ matters.
- Over half of LGBTQ students do not feel accepted at school, and almost half feel they cannot be themselves at school.

School attachment—the feeling that one belongs in the school community—is a crucial issue because of its connection to lower suicidality rates (suicide attempts and suicidal thinking) in the general school population and among LGBTQ students.



The *Executive Summary* of Egale’s report can be found at the end of the *Information and Resources for Administrators* section. To read the full report, go to: www.MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp

According to GLSEN’s *Playgrounds and Prejudice* (2012) report:

Biased Remarks at School

- About half of students (45%) report that they hear comments like “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” from other kids at school sometimes, often or all the time.
- Half of teachers (49%) say they hear students in their school use the word “gay” in a negative way sometimes, often or very often.
- Four in ten students (39%) say they hear other kids at their school say there are things that boys should not do or should not wear because they are boys at least sometimes.
- One third of students (33%) say they hear other kids at their school say there are things that girls should not do or should not wear because they are girls at least sometimes.
- Half of teachers (48%) report that they hear students make sexist remarks at least sometimes at their school.
- One quarter of students (26%) and teachers (26%) report hearing other students make comments like “fag” or “lesbo” at least sometimes.

Bullying and School Safety

- Three quarters (75%) of elementary school students report that students at their school are called names, made fun of or bullied with at least some regularity (i.e., all the time, often or sometimes).
- Slightly more than half (59%) of elementary school students say they feel very safe at school.
- Over one third (36%) of elementary school students say they have been called names, made fun of or bullied at least sometimes this year at school.

The most common reason for being bullied or called names, as well as feeling unsafe at school, is physical appearance.

- 23% of students attribute the bullying and name-calling that they witness at school to being a boy who acts or looks “too much like a girl” or a girl who acts or looks “too much like a boy”.
- Seven in ten teachers say that students in their school are very often, often or sometimes bullied, called names or harassed because they are a boy who acts or looks “too much like a girl” (37%)

Gender Norms

Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are more likely than other students to experience incidents of bullying or name-calling school and to feel less safe at school.

- Almost one in ten of elementary school students (8%) report that they do not conform to traditional gender norms – i.e., boys who others sometimes think act or look like a girl, or they are girls who others sometimes think act or look like a boy.
- Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are more likely than others to say they are called names, made fun of or bullied at least sometimes at school (56% vs. 33%).
- Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are twice as likely as other students to say that other kids at school have spread mean rumors or lies about them (43% vs. 20%) and three times as likely to report that another kid at school has used the internet to call them names, make fun of them or post mean things about them (7% vs. 2%).

- Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are less likely than other students to feel very safe at school (42% vs. 61%) and are more likely than others to agree that they sometimes do not want to go to school because they feel unsafe or afraid there (35% vs. 15%).



Excerpts from: *Playgrounds & Prejudice*, GLSEN <http://glsen.org/learn/research/national/playgrounds-and-prejudice>

NEW BRUNSWICK HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The New Brunswick *Human Rights Act* provides for equal rights and opportunities and recognizes “the fundamental principle that all persons are equal in dignity and human rights without regard to...sexual orientation” (among other grounds).

Since 1992, sexual orientation has been listed as a prohibited ground for discrimination. Gender identity and intersex have been implicitly covered under the prohibited ground of sex since 2010. (Gender identity, gender expression and intersex will be considered when the *Human Rights Act* is next reviewed.) As such, it is against the law to discriminate against or harass someone on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. This right applies to the school environment. Making a harmful comment or action that is known or ought to be known to be unwelcome constitutes harassment. For example, homophobic jokes, or comments about a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity are prohibited under this Act.

Discriminatory behavior and/or comments can poison the environment for everyone. The New Brunswick *Human Rights Act* ensures that LGBTQ students, staff and families are protected in the province of New Brunswick, and should expect safe and respectful school environments. To read the complete *Human Rights Act*: <http://laws.gnb.ca/en/ShowPdf/cs/2011-c.171.pdf>

STRENGTHENING INCLUSION, STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS

According to *Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools – the Review of Inclusive Education Programs and Practices in New Brunswick Schools*:

6.1.3 The department, through the work of the provincial curriculum advisory committee, should strengthen and promote diversity as an asset in all schools. This should be expressed in curriculum as well as by providing resources including books and other materials in the library and classrooms that portray a wide array of cultures, family/sexual orientations and people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Strengthening partnerships with families, cultural associations and community organizations should be a priority.

And:

6.2 Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students represent a segment of the student population that has traditionally been impacted by equity issues, including harassment, bullying, mental intimidation and on occasion, physical assault. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, districts and schools should ensure policies and practices are in place that enhance understanding and acceptance of these students and should provide these students with equitable proactive support and fair treatment in schools.

To access the complete report: <https://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/comm/Inclusion.pdf>

POLICY 322 - INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Policy 322 – *Inclusive Education* states that:

5.1 Inclusive public education:

- Is respectful of student and staff diversity in regards to their race, colour, religion, national origin, ancestry, place of origin, age, disability, marital status, real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, sex, social condition or political belief or activity.

For the complete policy: <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/322A.pdf>

POLICY 703 - POSITIVE LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT

In December 2013, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development updated Policy 703 – *Positive Learning and Working Environment*. This policy provides a framework for the department, school districts and schools to create such environments by “establishing a process for fostering positive learning and working environments that are inclusive, safe, respect human rights, support diversity and address discrimination regardless of real or perceived race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, place of origin, language group, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, social condition or political belief or activity.”

The inclusion of *real or perceived* is important because heterosexual and cisgender people who are perceived to be LGBTQ can also be targets of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Policy 703 - *Positive Learning and Working Environment* – includes the following goals:

5.1 Good citizenship and civility are modeled and reinforced throughout the school community. Every person is valued and treated with respect.

5.2 School personnel and students in the public school system have the right to work and to learn in a safe, orderly, productive, respectful and harassment-free environment.

5.4 Students have a sense of belonging and connection, feel they are supported by school personnel, and have a positive relationship with at least one adult in the school system.

5.5 ... Each partner in education through instruction and continued education supports the formation of school-based groups that promote diversity when interest is expressed by a student or staff member (examples include First Nations groups, multicultural groups, religious groups, and sexual minority groups).

5.6 All members of the school community learn and work together in an atmosphere of respect and safety, free from homophobia, racism and all other forms of discrimination that could lead to bullying and harassment. Appropriate procedures and strategies are in place to ensure respect for human rights, support diversity, and foster a learning environment that is safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming for all individuals.



5.5 ... Each partner in education through instruction and continued education supports the formation of school-based groups that promote diversity when interest is expressed by a student or staff member (examples include First Nations groups, multicultural groups, religious groups, and sexual minority groups).

Part II of Policy 703 outlines what constitutes Inappropriate Behaviours and Misconduct. Serious misconduct includes bullying, cyberbullying, violence, hate propaganda, harassment and uttering threats (among many other things). Behaviours not tolerated include (among others):

1. discrimination on the basis of real or perceived race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, place of origin, language group, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, social condition or political belief or activity;
2. using disrespectful or inappropriate language or gestures;

Based on Policy 703 and the New Brunswick Education Act, principals have a responsibility to set an example, facilitate and encourage professional development for staff, and ensure that “reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe and positive and effective learning environment. This will contain creating a Positive Learning and Working Environment Plan that includes (among other things):

- “a school statement on respecting human rights and supporting diversity
- expectations, roles and responsibilities for staff, students, parents and volunteers”

To read the complete Act: <http://laws.gnb.ca/en/showfulldoc/>

[cs/E-1.12//20140410](http://laws.gnb.ca/en/showfulldoc/cs/E-1.12//20140410)

For the complete policy: <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pole/703A.pdf>

THE NEW BRUNSWICK EDUCATION ACT

The New Brunswick *Education Act*, states:

14(1)

Duty of a pupil to:

[...]

(e) contribute to a safe and positive learning environment,

[...]

(g) respect the rights of others, and

(h) comply with all school policies.

27 (1)

Duty of a teacher:

(a) Implementing the prescribed curriculum

[...]

(d) Exemplifying and encouraging in each pupil the values of truth, justice compassion and respect for all persons

(e) Attending to the health and wellbeing of each pupil

28(2)

Duties of a principal:

[...]

(c) Ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe, positive and effective learning environment

[...]

(e) Encouraging and facilitating the professional development of teachers and other school personnel employed at the school

To read the complete Act: <http://laws.gnb.ca/en/showfulldoc/cs/E-1.12//20140410>

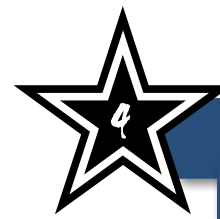
The New Brunswick Teachers Association (NBTA) policy 598-3 (*Anti-Homophobia, Anti-Transphobia and Anti-Heterosexism*) states that the “NBTA advocates for educational systems that are safe, welcoming, inclusive, and affirming for all sexual orientations and gender identities/expressions.”

The NBTA policy states:

- (3a) that the role of educators is critical in creating positive societal change to address the realities of LGBTQ issues for students, parents and teachers;
- (3b) that an assumption of heterosexuality as being the only sexual orientation throughout the school system denies LGBTQ students and same-gender parented families affirmation and accommodation;
- (3c) that LGBTQ students, staff and same-gender parented families have the right to:
 - 1. be free from harassment, discrimination and violence;
 - 2. be treated fairly, equitably and with dignity;
 - 3. self identification and freedom of expression;
 - 4. be included and to be represented and affirmed in a positive and respectful manner;
 - 5. have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, discrimination and violence;
 - 6. have their cultures and communities valued and affirmed;
 - 7. have flexible, gender-neutral school dress codes.
- (3d) that efforts must be made to ensure that education prepares young people to develop open, pluralistic and democratic societies, free of discrimination or aggression based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/ expression.

- (6a) educators must accept their responsibility to educate themselves and to reflect upon their own attitudes and behaviours in modeling respect, understanding and affirmation of diversity;
- (6b) educators have a responsibility for the elimination of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism in the working and learning environment;
- (6c) curriculum must contain positive images and accurate information about history and culture, which reflects the accomplishments and contributions of LGBTQ people
- (6d) educators must take actions to make schools safe for LGBTQ staff, students and parents, and those who are perceived to be so, by:
 - 1. treating everyone with respect and acceptance;
 - 2. using language that affirms all sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression and not using disparaging remarks or language that implies one sexual orientation is superior to another;
 - 3. challenging staff, students and parents who continue to display prejudice on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression;
 - 4. developing an action plan to use in the event of an incident of discrimination or harassment and/or violence;
 - 5. never making assumptions in the matter of sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression;
 - 6. making a commitment to confidentiality in the event of a disclosure of sexual orientation and/or gender identity/ expression;
 - 7. not assuming the superiority of heterosexuality.

Policy 598-3 can be found in the *New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources* section in this resource. You can also find it online: <http://www.nbta.ca/resources/documents/policy-598.3.pdf>



MAKING NEW BRUNSWICK'S SCHOOLS SAFER, MORE INCLUSIVE SPACES

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INDICATORS

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's School Improvement Indicators include *Sexual Minority Look-Fors* that cover 3 areas:

10. Learning Environment

The learning environment is welcoming and affirming for sexual minority youth, families, and staff. The learning environment is purposefully created to foster openness to diversity welcoming and affirming for sexual minority youth, families and staff.

11. Proactive Education

The school is proactive in helping staff, students and stakeholders to challenge stereotypes, sexist views, and other biases.

12. Advocacy

School personnel recognize their legal and ethical duty to advocate on behalf of their students to assist them to overcome barriers to their learning and development.

This document defines an inclusive school culture as “a pairing of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allow each student to feel respected, confident and safe so he or she can learn and develop to his or her full potential. It is based on a system of values and beliefs centered on the best interests of the student, which promotes social cohesion, belonging, active participation in learning, a complete school experience, and positive interactions with peers and others in the school community.”



LGBTQ INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

The New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development recognizes the need for curriculum to reflect the diversity of all of New Brunswick's peoples and challenge prejudice and discrimination. This is reflected in the amendments to Policy 703, as well as the School Improvement Indicators.



“The Supreme Court of Canada has said that learning about tolerance is always age-appropriate, and it requires exposure to views that differ from those taught at home.” (Human Rights Commission presentation: Human Rights Act and LGBTQI students, April 29, 2014).



For older students, the opportunity to examine and think critically about diversity and inequality, and the way they manifest in society, the media, and in the curriculum provides students with valuable tools for recognizing and addressing discrimination. For younger students, seeing all types of families and challenging gender norms brings reality into the classroom, and provides them with the opportunity to learn and talk about the diversity of the human experience and how we can support each other. Teachers have the opportunity to further integrate LGBTQ issues into their classrooms by examining their own bias, and the choices of examples, resources, literature, projects (including special days), and discussion (among others). Since we learn by omission and commission, it is important to consider what appears in the curriculum, as well as what is left out.

According to *Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* "...it is generally understood that students enjoy a healthier, more respectful learning environment when they are included in the curriculum, most Canadian schools have taken measures to diversify many of their courses to include the ethnic and religious diversity of the students in their classrooms. Making the curriculum reflect the existence of LGBTQ students has been a much more contentious effort, and in the absence of mandate or even permission from principals and school districts to do so, most teachers hesitate to integrate LGBTQ content into their classes. Sadly, the message to many LGBTQ students, explicit or implicit, is that other forms of diversity are respectable, but they and their issues are not fit for classroom discussion". See <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>

The New Brunswick Teachers Association's (NBTA) Policy 598-3 (*Anti-Homophobia, Anti-Transphobia and Anti-Heterosexism*) states (in part) that the:

- (3) NBTA believes:
- (a) that the role of educators is critical in creating positive societal change to address the realities of LGBTQ issues for students, parents and teachers;
 - (d) that efforts must be made to ensure that education prepares young people to develop open, pluralistic and democratic societies, free of discrimination or aggression based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.

- (4) Anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia and antiheterosexism education seeks to promote equity through practicing the principles of inclusion, affirming the identity of individuals and groups, seeking the elimination of homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism in all its forms, and initiating comprehensive school programs supporting equity.

All students regardless of real or perceived, sexual orientation, gender identity/gender expression, culture, socio-economic status, residence, strengths and challenges have the right to an appropriate education.

- (5) Anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia and antiheterosexism education is an integral goal of education permeating curriculum, materials, pedagogy, policies, practices and programs.

Curriculum is more than textbooks and classroom material; it forms the culture of our schools. LGBTQ inclusive education will help to create a culture of safety and respect for all members of the school community.



"Lessons, projects, and related resources should allow students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum..."

Even before Kindergarten children are exposed to the rigid rules of gender norms and what happens when we live outside of them. We know that harassment and bullying start in elementary school, and that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic remarks are part of the elementary students' vocabulary. Whether or not they know what the words mean, they know that it is a put down to be called gay, lesbian, a sissy, queer or a fag, or for a boy to be called a girl. They also feel the impact of such derogatory comments toward their family members.

Namecalling and bullying in elementary schools reinforce gender stereotypes and negative attitudes towards people based on their gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or family composition. Elementary school students and teachers report frequent use of disparaging remarks like "retard" and "that's so gay," and half of the teachers surveyed report bullying as a "serious problem" among their students. Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are at higher risk for bullying, and are less likely than their peers to feel safe at school. Our research also shows the connection between elementary school experiences of bullying and a lower quality of life.

(GLSEN Playgrounds & Prejudice: <http://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Playgrounds%20%26%20Prejudice.pdf>).

Although students may not identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual in early grades, studies suggest the age of awareness is younger than in previous generations. Among contemporary youth, researchers from the Family Acceptance Project found that adolescents self-identified as LGB, on average, at age 13.4. And increasingly, parents/guardians and families report children identifying as gay at earlier ages – between ages 7 and 12. Similarly, gender creative students are visible as early as preschool (Ryan, 2009).

LGBTQ inclusive education in elementary school helps to create safe spaces for LGBTQ students, students with LGBTQ families, and gender creative students by creating environments that challenge gender norms and actively respect the diversity of families. An LGBTQ inclusive elementary school is a safe place for LGBTQ parents/guardians to come and talk about their children's

progress without fear of discrimination or harassment from staff or other parents/guardians (or with the assurance that it will be dealt with if it occurs); where gender creative students see themselves reflected in the books read in their classrooms and have a safe space to express who they are – and peers and teachers who will stand up for them if someone calls them names; where language on forms and letters home acknowledge family diversity; and where policies are clear and overt about homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heteronormativity and cisnormativity being unacceptable.



Gender Creative (adj): Someone who identifies and expresses their gender in ways that differ from what others may expect. Gender creative individuals are also sometimes referred to as gender nonconforming, gender variant, gender independent, transgender, and in the case of Aboriginal Peoples, Two Spirit.

Consider using the salutation 'Dear Families' in correspondence with parents/guardians in order to be inclusive of all family configurations.



References

Ryan, C. (2009). Helping Families Support Their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Children. Washington, DC: National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development.

In December 2013, Policy 703 – *Positive Learning and Working Environment* - was amended to make specific reference to sexual orientation and gender identity in the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination. Policy goals support the creation of GSAs and mention homophobia (underlining added):

- 5.5 Parents, school personnel, district staff and the school community understand that social skills, self-discipline, respect, empathy, compassion and ethics are learned throughout life. Each partner in education through instruction and continued education supports the formation of school-based groups that promote diversity when interest is expressed by a student or staff member (examples include First Nations groups, multicultural groups, religious groups, and sexual minority groups).
- 5.6 All members of the school community learn and work together in an atmosphere of respect and safety, free from homophobia, racism and all other forms of discrimination that could lead to bullying and harassment. Appropriate procedures and strategies are in place to ensure respect for human rights, support diversity, and foster a learning environment that is safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming for all individuals.

With this in mind, it is clear that LGBTQ inclusive education and GSAs should form part of the administrators' Positive Learning and Working Environment Plan.

In Every Class in Every School : Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools, GSAs are defined in the following way:

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) are official student clubs with LGBTQ and heterosexual student membership and typically two teachers who serve as faculty advisors. Students in a school with a GSA know that they have at least one or two adults they can talk to about LGBTQ issues. The purpose of GSAs is to provide a much-needed safe space in which LGBTQ students and allies can work together on making their schools more welcoming of sexual and gender minority students. Some GSAs go by other names such as Human Rights Clubs or Social Justice Clubs in order to signal an openness to non-LGBTQ membership (though of course, some of these are not GSAs and might not address homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia)... Very often it is LGBTQ students themselves who initiate the GSA, although sometimes a teacher will come forward. It is particularly important to note that such groups function as safe havens and supports for heterosexual students who have parents/guardians, family members and friends. The Final Report of Egale's School Climate Survey found that:

- 45% of youth with LGBTQ parents have been sexually harassed at school; over a quarter have been physically harassed or assaulted about the sexual orientation of their parents (27%) and their own perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (27%).
- Almost half (48%) of youth of colour, both LGBTQ and heterosexual, reported not knowing of any teachers or other school staff members who are supportive of LGBTQ students; only half (53%) would be very comfortable talking about LGBTQ matters even with a close friend.
- Over two thirds (70.4%) of all students heard homophobic expressions such as "that's so gay" every day in school.⁷

"We want to give students more power and the right tools they need to create a more caring and inclusive school for all students."



A significant finding in *Every Class in Every School : Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* is that “students from schools with GSAs were much more likely to agree that their school community was supportive of LGBTQ people, compared to participants from schools without GSAs (47.6% versus 19.8%)”

Both this Resource and *MyGSA.ca* have GSA Guides to assist with developing and maintaining inclusive student groups pertaining to LGBTQ matters. See <http://mygsa.ca/setting-gsa>.



SOMETHING TO CONSIDER



When I was walking by the principal's office the other day, I heard a parent of one of the other students saying something about not finding it appropriate to have a “dating club” at our school and that certain movies should not be shown in classrooms. I didn't hear the principal's response. What would be an appropriate response?



Your principal should have taken this comment as an opportunity to challenge common misconceptions about the role and nature of GSAs and clarified that a GSA is “not a dating club”. A GSA is any inclusive student group concerned with lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two Spirit, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) matters. These clubs support LGBTQ students, allies, and youth with LGBTQ parents/guardians or other family members. For more extensive definitions, see the *Terms & Concepts* section on Egale's national LGBTQ safer schools and inclusive education website, *MyGSA.ca*, or in this resource. See <http://MyGSA.ca/content/terms-concepts>



Your principal should have taken this opportunity to challenge misconceptions about Gay-Straight Alliances (or GSAs) and said “A GSA is not a dating club.”

Regarding the film, your principal could have told the parent that inclusive curriculum is integral to student success: “Students need to feel engaged in and empowered by what they are learning, supported by the teachers and staff from whom they are learning, and welcomed in the environment in which they are learning.” See: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT is supportive of New Brunswick's diverse school communities and that in New Brunswick schools—whether high school, middle school, or elementary school—diversity explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity.

For more extensive definitions, see the *Terms & Concepts* section of Egale's national LGBTQ safer schools and inclusive education website, MyGSA.ca.



1. Policy 322 – *Inclusive Education* states that:

5.1 Inclusive public education:

Is respectful of student and staff diversity in regards to their race, colour, religion, national origin, ancestry, place of origin, age, disability, marital status, real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, sex, social condition or political belief or activity.

Showing films that depict LGBTQ realities and supporting GSAs are part of a commitment to inclusive education that helps to create safe and respectful learning environments.

For the complete policy:
<http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/322A.pdf>

2. According to *Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools – the Review of Inclusive Education Programs and Practices in New Brunswick Schools*:

6.2 Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students represent a segment of the student population that has traditionally been impacted by

Any learning environment that neglects to integrate LGBTQ matters into the curriculum is unwelcoming to LGBTQ students, allies, and youth with LGBTQ parents/guardians or other family members. See <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/119.html> and <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf>



equity issues, including harassment, bullying, mental intimidation and on occasion, physical assault. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, districts and schools should ensure policies and practices are in place that enhance understanding and acceptance of these students and should provide these students with equitable proactive support and fair treatment in schools.

A GSA can assist with all of these.

To access the complete report: <https://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/comm/Inclusion.pdf>

3. According to *Strengthening Inclusion, Strengthening Schools – the Review of Inclusive Education Programs and Practices in New Brunswick Schools*:

6.1.3 The department, through the work provincial curriculum advisory committee, should strengthen and promote diversity as an asset in all schools. This should be expressed in curriculum as well as by providing resources including books and other materials in the library and classrooms that portray a wide array of cultures, family / sexual orientations and people with physical and intellectual disabilities. Strengthening partnerships with families, cultural associations and community organizations should be a priority.

Films are part of the curriculum and can be used to help promote awareness and understanding of diversity.

To access the complete report: <https://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/comm/Inclusion.pdf>

4. In December 2013, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development updated Policy 703 – *Positive Learning and Working Environment*. This policy provides a framework for the department, school districts and schools to create such environments by “establishing a process for fostering positive learning and working environments that are inclusive, safe, respect human rights, support diversity and address discrimination regardless of real or perceived race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, place of origin, language group, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, social condition or political belief or activity.”

GSAs can help to create safer and more respectful environment as well as more support for diversity.

For the complete policy: <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/703A.pdf>

5. According to Egale Canada’s report *Every Class in Every School* (2011):
“Students from schools with GSAs are much more likely to agree that their school communities are supportive of LGBTQ people, are much more likely to be open with some or all of their peers about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and are more likely to see their school climate as becoming less homophobic.”

Your principal could have explained any of these benefits of GSAs in addition to correcting the parent’s misconception that it is a dating club.

You can access the full report at: www.MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp

6. Policy 703 - *Positive Learning and Working Environment* – has 6 goals which include:

5.4 Students have a sense of belonging and connection, feel they are supported by school personnel, and have a positive relationship with at least one adult in the school system.

GSAs help to increase LGBTQ students’ sense of belonging.

5.5 ... Each partner in education through instruction and continued education supports the formation of school-based groups that promote diversity when interest is expressed by a student or staff member (examples include First Nations groups, multicultural groups, religious groups, and sexual minority groups).

Your principal could have explained to the parent that GSAs help promote support and are part of the mandate for their Positive Learning and Working Environment Plan under Policy 703.

For the complete policy: <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/pol/e/703A.pdf>

7. The New Brunswick *Education Act*, states:
28(2)

Duties of a principal:

[...]

- (c) Ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe, positive and effective learning environment

[...]

- (e) Encouraging and facilitating the professional development of teachers and other school personnel employed at the school

A GSA can help to create and maintain a positive and supportive learning environment.

To read the complete Act: <http://laws.gnb.ca/en/showfulldoc/cs/E-1.12/20140410>

8. The New Brunswick Teachers Association's (NBTA) Policy 598-3 (*Anti-Homophobia, Anti-Transphobia and Anti-Heterosexism*) states:

(6d)educators must take actions to make schools safe for LGBTQ staff, students and parents, and those who are perceived to be so, by:

- challenging staff, students and parents who continue to display prejudice on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression;

Policy 598-3 can be found in the *New Brunswick Policies and LGBTQ Resources* section of this resource, or can also find it online: <http://www.nbta.ca/resources/documents/policy-598.3.pdf>

To find more questions and answers as well as the Final Report on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools, check out Egale's national LGBTQ safer schools and inclusive education website: MyGSA.ca.



Leadership in LGBTQ inclusive education requires the acknowledgment of the presence of LGBTQ individuals, and of the barriers they face due to discrimination, harassment, silence, and systemic discrimination in New Brunswick schools. This recognition translates into policies and Positive Learning and Working Environment Plans which:

- position homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heteronormativity and cisnormativity as unacceptable
- implement LGBTQ inclusive education to proactively address homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heteronormativity and cisnormativity
- address homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heteronormativity and cisnormativity when they arise



Heteronormativity: A cultural/societal bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are straight and so privileges heterosexuality and ignores or underrepresents same-gender relationships.

Cisnormativity: A cultural/societal bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are cisgender and so privileges cisgender identities and ignores or underrepresents gender creativity.

Cisgender (adj): Refers to someone whose gender identity corresponds with their birth-assigned sex (e.g., a cisgender male is someone whose gender identity is man and was assigned male sex at birth).

According to *Egale's Every Class in Every School*:

Generic safe school policies that do not include specific measures on homophobia are not effective in improving the school climate for LGBTQ students. LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia (aka LGBTQ inclusive education) policies reported significantly fewer incidents of physical and verbal harassment due to their sexual orientation:

- 80% of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia (aka LGBTQ inclusive education) policies reported never having been physically harassed versus

only 67% of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies;

- 46% of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia (aka LGBTQ inclusive education) policies reported never having been verbally harassed due to their sexual orientation versus
- 40% of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia (aka LGBTQ inclusive education) policies.

LGBTQ students in schools with anti-homophobia policies did not report significantly higher levels of feeling safe at school with regard to gender identity and gender expression: this indicates a need to explicitly address gender identity, gender expression, and anti-transphobia in school and school board safer schools and equity and inclusive education policies.

LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia (aka LGBTQ inclusive education) policies were much more likely than other LGBTQ students...

- to feel their school community was supportive (over half compared to one quarter),
- to feel comfortable talking to a counsellor, or classmates (over 70% compared to 58%),
- to believe their school was becoming less homophobic,
- to hear fewer homophobic comments and to say staff intervene more often,
- to report homophobic incidents to staff and their parents, and
- to feel attached to their school.

LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia (aka LGBTQ inclusive education) policies were much less likely than other LGBTQ students...

- to have had lies and rumours spread about them at school or on the Internet,
- to have had property stolen or damaged,
- to feel unsafe at school, and
- to have been verbally or physically harassed.

The results were similar for students who believed that their school districts had such policies.

For more statistics, see the full report at <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>

As with any type of inclusion, participation and support at every level is crucial. Leadership around LGBTQ inclusive education will require commitment from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the school districts, schools, families and the community. This work will be proactive in nature, including policies and strategies for safer schools, professional learning for school personnel, and a commitment to respond quickly and meaningfully when incidents occur. Communication is also crucial so that there is an understanding of the importance of LGBTQ inclusive education and the positive outcomes that can result for *everyone*.



Even if no one is out at your school, don't assume that no one is LGBTQ.



The national safer schools and inclusive education website, MyGSA.ca, has a space for sharing and reviewing school and school board policies pertaining to LGBTQ matters and anti-heterosexism, anti-cissexism, anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia. If your school or school district has a policy that explicitly addresses sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, please submit it as a model for other schools and divisions across the country: <http://MyGSA.ca/setting-gsa/school-board-policies>.

School and district Positive Learning and Working Environment Plans should include professional learning opportunities.

Learning about LGBTQ issues is important for several reasons:

1. Not everyone is aware of (or comfortable with) LGBTQ issues. LGBTQ inclusive education requires both.
2. In order to create LGBTQ inclusive classrooms and schools, administrators, educators and all school staff need to be aware of their biases as well as heteronormativity and cisnormativity and the role these play in undermining LGBTQ inclusion.
3. The school community needs to increase their awareness and understanding of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heteronormativity and cisnormativity as well as teachers' and administrators' responsibilities.
4. Because homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and cissexism are common, they are often not easy to detect if one is not affected by them. Administrators, teachers and all school staff need to learn about these, how to recognize them, the impact they have as well as how to intervene in order to help create safe and inclusive schools by helping to maintain a positive learning and working environment.

The New Brunswick *Education Act*, states:

28(2)

Duties of a principal:

[...]

- (c) Ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe, positive and effective learning environment

[...]

- (e) Encouraging and facilitating the professional development of teachers and other school personnel employed at the school

To read the complete Act: <http://laws.gnb.ca/en/showfulldoc/cs/E-1.12/20140410>

Regular professional learning and ongoing discussion through the grade levels is important to ensure that LGBTQ inclusion becomes infused into the curriculum, so that schools can become safer for all students and staff.


The NBTA policy 598-3 on anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia and anti-heterosexism also supports professional learning:

- (6) For anti-homophobia, anti-transphobia and anti-heterosexism education to become effective:
 - (h) educators must have access to professional development programs, which provide assistance in addressing LGBTQ issues in classrooms and schools.

Because homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heteronormativity and cisnormativity are systemic in Canadian schools, they are often not easy to detect. Educators will need to learn how to recognize them when they occur, as well as how to intervene in order to help create and maintain a positive learning and working environment.

Contact Egale at mygsa@egale.ca or 1.888.204.7777 (toll-free) to arrange for a workshop for your school or school district!





Having policies is important and provides support for the creation of LGBTQ inclusive schools. Implementation, however, requires that the whole school community be aware of and understand the policy and their role(s) in helping to create and maintain an LGBTQ inclusive environment. Students, staff and families will all play a part in this process. Making the policy a living, breathing piece of the school culture is essential for creating positive change.

In *Every Class in Every School*, Egale recommends “[t]hat provincial Ministries of Education advocate the inclusion of anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia measures in safe schools policies and programs... along with steps for the implementation of these policies, in order to provide institutional support and motivation to divisional and school staff”.

For the complete report see <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>

It is important that all schools and partners in education recognize the challenge that is presented by LGBTQ bullying, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism/heteronormativity and cissexism/cisnormativity for the whole school community. Strong policies and action plans that delineate the steps districts and schools will take (including professional learning) to address these issues will further support positive learning and working environments and create safer and more inclusive schools.

In addition, while the Positive Learning and Working Environment Plans will be helpful, embedding anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia requirements and language into all policies and practices as part of a broader commitment to equity and inclusion will further people’s awareness and create even safer and more inclusive schools.

Some provincial Departments of Education have begun to recognize the importance of embedding equity and inclusion into all policies and practices, and to require this of their school districts and schools.

DURING THIS PROCESS, please do not hesitate to contact Egale with regard to the implementation of LGBTQ matters and intersectionality. We look forward to working with you!

E-mail: mygsa@egale.ca Telephone (toll-free): 1.888.204.7777



To find resources, materials, information, and supports for teachers and other school staff members, consult the Educators’ page of MyGSA.ca as well as [Information and Resources for Educators](#) section of this resource. To arrange for anti-heterosexism, anti-cissexism, anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, anti-transphobia, and intersectionality workshops to be delivered at your school or to your school district, contact mygsa@egale.ca or 1.888.204.7777 (toll-free).





DEBUNKING MYTHS

FACTS AND MYTHS ABOUT LGBTQ INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Adapted from Facts and Myths about Anti-Homophobia Education from PFLAG Canada (http://pflagcanada.ca/pdfs/homophobia-myths_english.pdf)

Inaccurate information can lead to misconceptions that hamper the school's efforts to create safe learning environments for all children and youth. The following facts will help to dispel common myths about LGBTQ people and anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education.

Many people mistakenly assume that anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education means “teaching about homosexuality”. This is not the case. Anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia and anti-transphobia education (also known as LGBTQ inclusive education) is education that seeks to create safer schools and societies. It does so by promoting respect for all people, and addressing homophobia, biphobia, transphobia as well as heteronormativity and cisnormativity. Including LGBTQ people, issues and realities into the curriculum helps schools to become safer and more inclusive spaces. Intervening in bullying, speaking out about safer space, and supporting students in their creation of these spaces are also important components.

Myth # 1: Anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia and anti-transphobia education is about teaching homosexuality in schools and condones the lifestyle.

Fact #1: Firstly, LGBTQ inclusion is not about teaching about homosexuality, it is about the meaningful and relevant inclusion of LGBTQ people, issues and realities into the curriculum. Teachers often teach about unfamiliar topics to help students develop respect for other people and to acknowledge their contributions to society. A teacher's job is to present accurate, age-appropriate information to students. Secondly, lesbian, gay, bisexual, Two-Spirit, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) persons have lives like everyone else. There is no distinct LGBTQ “lifestyle.”

Myth #2: Anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia and anti-transphobia education involves talking about gay sex.

Fact #2: Anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia and anti-transphobia education can be done in a variety of ways. Most involve no discussion of sex or sexual practices whatsoever. The only exception may be in the human sexuality learning outcomes *Physical Education/Health Education curriculum*. As with any discussions about sex in these contexts, it is important that it be done in age-appropriate ways. Otherwise, teachers may talk about LGBTQ role models in history, or read a story about same gender families. They may also discuss the oppression of LGBTQ people and focus on stopping homophobic name-calling in schools. These are just a few examples of age-appropriate anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education.

Myth #3: LGBTQ teachers have a “gay agenda” for public schools by introducing LGBTQ topics.

Fact #3: All teachers, principals and support staff have a legal obligation to respond to all forms of harassment and discrimination in schools. All students (and staff) have the right to attend school in a safe environment. They also expect to see their lives positively reflected in curriculum and classroom activities. Just as anti-racism and multicultural education have been embraced by educators, there is also a growing awareness that anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education needs to be integrated within the curriculum. You do not have to be a person of colour to care about racism. Similarly, you do not have to be LGBTQ to counter homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heteronormativity or cisnormativity. Including LGBTQ issues into the curriculum helps to create a safer and respectful environment for everyone – students, staff and parents/guardians.

Myth #4: Gay-Straight Alliance Clubs (GSAs) in high schools are a way to recruit students and encourage them to experiment with being gay, lesbian or transgender.

Fact #4: No one suddenly chooses to become LGBTQ simply because they heard about the topic in school, from friends, or via social circles. A person's sexual orientation or gender identity is part of their make-up, whether that person identifies as homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual or transgender. There is consensus in the medical and psychiatric world that sexual orientations and gender identities are not chosen (American Psychological Association, World Professional Association for Transgender Health). Sexual orientation and gender identity are complex traits, and have been understood differently by different cultures and at different times in history. GSAs help all students to come together in a safer space to talk about issues that are important to them. GSAs help students to learn from one another and empower them to create a positive learning environment for all. Anyone can be the target of hateful slurs, irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Myth #5: Students will become more sexually active and/or promiscuous if they hear about LGBTQ issues at school.

Fact #5: Hearing about LGBTQ issues does not increase sexual activity or promiscuity. The decision to be sexually active or not has little to do with LGBTQ issues or LGBTQ inclusive education. However, lack of information about safe sex can have dramatic and sometimes tragic consequences for youth. Promiscuity and unsafe sexual behaviours often occur when students do not have access to age-appropriate, accurate information or feel they need to prove their sexuality.

Myth #6: LGBTQ issues are not part of the curriculum. Some schools are just making this up.

Fact # 6: The New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development establishes the curriculum. Health Education Curricula includes references to sexual health, sexual stereotyping, sexual identity, and sexual orientation.

Public schools have an obligation to be inclusive of the diverse communities they serve including LGBTQ students and families. They have as much right as anyone else to see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA, ANTI-BIPHOBIA and ANTI-TRANSPHOBIA EDUCATION IS . . .

- inclusive of all members of our school communities
- respectful of differences and inclusive of diversity
- respectful of the New Brunswick *Human Rights Act* and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- mindful that harassment and discrimination may be present in any school
- mindful that silence around certain topics can encourage harassment and can be a form of discrimination
- optimistic that a better school environment is possible for everyone

ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA, ANTI-BIPHOBIA and ANTI TRANSPHOBIA EDUCATION LOOKS LIKE . . .

- schools where students and educators speak out against injustice and inequity
- schools that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for human diversity, including those with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities
- schools where all members of the school community can be accepted and open about their lives without fear or shame
- classrooms which acknowledge and respect diverse family models
- classrooms which acknowledge and positively represent the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people across the curriculum
- schools where youth can take the lead on concerns that are important to them, school districts where there is knowledge and expertise available to support schools in this work

ISSUES FACED BY GLBTTQ¹ FAMILIES

From Around the Rainbow's Toolkit for Educators and Service Providers

References to parents in the original document have been changed to parents/guardians.

GLBTTQ parents/guardians with young children face all the challenging questions and situations that every new family faces. There are a number of additional barriers and challenges that must be confronted, however. Some of these issues include:

- ▶ the lack of legal recognition as a family and therefore greater vulnerability in family life situations such as separation, child custody, illness or death of a spouse.
- ▶ the challenges finding GLBTTQ-friendly support and services for reproductive alternatives, prenatal and birthing needs, childrearing, playgroups, etc.
- ▶ the increased questioning and scrutiny of decision-making, parenting styles and practices based on homophobic and heterosexist views on what constitutes a family.
- ▶ the isolation from both the mainstream and the GLBTTQ community.

Unfortunately, most of the issues facing GLBTTQ families, parents/guardians and their children result from discrimination in the community because of widely held societal myths and stereotypes. Some myths that are commonly heard include:

Myth: GLBTTQ people do not value family.

Fact: GLBTTQ people value family. Within the GLBTTQ community there is recognition and nurturing of diverse family structures, from mono-nuclear families to other families of choice.

GLBTTQ people recognize friends, lovers and those involved in long-term relationships as family.

GLBTTQ people who are fortunate enough to have been accepted by their family of origin may have strong family ties. Those who have

¹ The GLBTTQ acronym is used here as it appears in Around the Rainbow's Toolkit for Educators and Service Providers which has been reproduced with permission from Family Services à la Famille Ottawa.

been rejected by their family of origin often work to try to re-establish these relationships, and to guard their right to raise their own children or adopt their partner's children. Rejection often causes deep pain from which many GLBTTQ people spend a good part of their life trying to understand and overcome.

Myth: GLBTTQ people do not make good parents/guardians

Fact: Research has shown that, except for the fact that the children of GLBTTQ parents/guardians are often concerned about being stigmatized by their peers, they show no higher incidence of emotional disturbance than do children of heterosexual couples, nor are they confused about their own gender identity or sexual orientation. GLBTTQ people come from all kinds of families, as do heterosexuals, and there is no correlation between the sexual orientation or gender identity of parents/guardians and that of their children. The chances of a child being GLBTTQ are the same whether they are raised by GLBTTQ parents/guardians or by heterosexual parents/guardians.

Myth: GLBTTQ people cannot or do not have children.

Fact: GLBTTQ people have children in many different ways, just like everyone else: through adoption, alternative insemination, sexual intercourse, co-parenting, step parenting, fostering, etc.

Myth: Trans, Two Spirit and queer parents/guardians must resolve all issues of gender identity before coming out to their children. Children cannot deal with gender transition or gender fluidity. They need to be a certain age before they are ready to learn about a trans parent or family member.

Fact: We know families that have successfully dealt with and continue to deal with the issues of gender transition and fluidity with children of every age. Each age has unique needs that must be met, and it is up to the parent/guardians to meet those needs. The information we give our children must be age appropriate, and parents must set limits and boundaries. Coming out to children can dispel feelings of secrecy and dishonesty. It can increase feelings of closeness. But the decision to come out or not is highly personal and must be respected.

Myth: GLBTTQ parents/guardians stigmatize their children.

Fact: Homophobia and transphobia stigmatize children. Being proud and honest about one's identity and orientation in a homophobic/transphobic society, while certainly not easy, makes children strong and more accepting of diversity. It is society's homophobia and transphobia that need to change; GLBTTQ people need not remain closeted about who they really are.

Myth: Any gender experimentation by children of GLBTTQ parents/guardians is a direct result of having GLBTTQ parents/guardians

Fact: Experimentation with gender is natural and children should be allowed to do so. We know children of GLBTTQ parents/guardians who are questioning gender and others who express no such feelings. Many children have grown up to be trans, Two Spirit or queer in spite of their heterosexual parents/guardians' strong discouragement of any gender experimentation, and despite the presence of more rigid gender role-models. Children with GLBTTQ parents/guardians can grow up with the freedom to explore, to question roles and to choose their own identities and to get support for whatever they choose.



From Around the Rainbow's Toolkit for Educators and Service Providers. Around the Rainbow is a programme of Family Services à la Famille Ottawa. This document, as well as a Toolkit for GLBTTQ Parents/Guardians, can be found online at <http://www.aroundtherainbow.org>.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY

From: *The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know*. (2011). Pride Education Network, BC. <http://pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf>

Myth: Children and teens are too young to know their gender identity.

Fact: Most people become aware of their gender identity between the ages of 18 months and 3 years. Many youth whose gender identities do not conform to the expectations of their families, peers, and schools are invisible out of fear for their safety.

Myth: Being transgender is just a phase.

Fact: Some children go through phases of gender non-conformity. The longer a child has identified as cross-gender, the easier it becomes to predict whether it is a phase. Regardless of the outcome, the self-esteem, mental well-being, and overall health of the child relies heavily on receiving love, support, and compassion from family and school.

Myth: Hormone blockers, used to delay puberty in transgender teens, are detrimental to one's health.

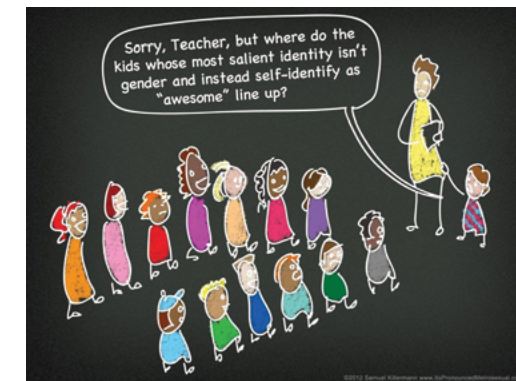
Fact: Hormone blockers are a safe way to "buy time" as the transgender teen decides whether to go on cross-hormones. This treatment prevents the (often traumatic) development of secondary sex characteristics that do not match the person's gender identity. It also prevents the need for painful and expensive surgeries to undo these changes later in life. This treatment is widely endorsed by family doctors, endocrinologists, psychologists, and other specialists involved in transgender health programs.

Myth: Being transgender is a sexual orientation.

Fact: Sexual orientation and gender identity are different. A person's sexual orientation is related to whether the person is romantically attracted to men, women, or both. Gender identity, on the other hand, is about the person's own internal identification as male, female, or a gender in between male and female. Just like non-transgender people, transgender people can be of any sexual orientation.

Myth: All transgender people will eventually take hormones and get sex reassignment surgery.

Fact: Some transgender people take hormones and/or have surgery. However, for a number of reasons, many transgender people do not take either of these steps. Some feel comfortable with their bodies the way they are. For others, hormones and surgery are inaccessible because they may be too expensive and/or require parental permission.



<http://www.pinterest.com/pin/40250990390700650/>



CREATING A GENDER INCLUSIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

Adapted from a piece by the same title in: The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know developed by Pride in Education. The complete document can be found at: <http://pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf>

** This document originally used the terms transgender and gender non-conforming. In keeping with our choice of language for this resource, we have replaced these words with trans or gender creative – with the exception of direct quotes.*

These strategies will help educational administrators successfully meet their ethical and legal responsibility to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students, regardless of gender identity and expression.

School Policies

- Ensure your school's equity statements, anti-violence policies, and code of conduct prohibit discrimination based on "one's real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression." Communicate these policies to students and staff and enforce them.
- Create a flexible or gender-neutral dress code to enable a student's right to dress in accordance with their gender identity. The same rules for clothing, hair, and make up should apply to all genders.
- Adopt a school policy that protects trans and gender creative students' rights. These include the right to be addressed by one's preferred name and pronoun, to participate in gender segregated activities and sports in accordance with one's gender identity, and to have access to safe restroom and locker room facilities that correspond to one's gender identity.



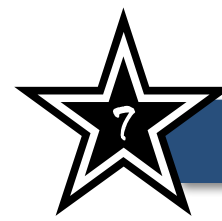
Don't wait until you "get" a trans or gender creative student to create supportive policies and a welcoming environment. You already have trans or gender creative students. They simply may not be "out" because they perceive the environment to be unsafe and unwelcoming or are questioning.

School Programs and Resources

- Create a preventative anti-bullying strategy that specifically strives to eliminate gender-based bullying.
- Observe and celebrate events that raise awareness about gender-related oppression (sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia). Examples include: the Day of Pink and the Trans Day of Remembrance.
- Support the creation of a Gay-Straight Alliance in your school that is inclusive of trans and gender creative students.
- Provide funding for fiction and non-fiction library resources that contain positive messages about gender diversity.
- Evaluate school curriculum for LGBTQ inclusive units and language. Integrate content about trans and gender creative people into the school curriculum, including family life and sexual health education programs.

School Staff

- Hire staff with diverse gender identities and expressions, as well as positive attitudes toward gender creativity.
- Allow staff to be open about their gender identity. This models a valuing of diversity and provides exposure to adult role models.
- Provide staff training about creating safety and support for all gender identities and expressions. This should include an explanation of pertinent vocabulary, an identification of the unique issues and challenges faced by trans and gender creative students, and strategies for supporting these students. It should also emphasize age appropriate ways to make the curriculum inclusive of gender diversity.
- Designate a staff person within the school, or school district, who can act in an extended advocacy role for all students who may be targeted or harassed due to their real or perceived gender identity or expression.



RESPONDING TO CONCERNS ABOUT GENDER INCLUSIVITY

School Grounds

- Challenge and counteract binary and stereotypical messages about gender (both implicit and explicit) found on school grounds, including murals, posters, bulletin board displays, trophy cases, the school website, etc.
- Ensure that harmful (i.e. sexist, biphobic, homophobic, transphobic) graffiti on walls, desks, and washroom stalls etc. are removed and dealt with seriously.
- Provide the option of a gender-neutral or gender-inclusive washroom and change room.

(Bear in mind that trans and gender creative people are, just like everyone else, entitled to use the facilities that match their gender identity.)

Adapted from a piece by the same title in: *The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know* developed by Pride in Education. The complete document can be found at: <http://pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf>

** This document originally used the terms transgender and gender non-conforming. In keeping with our choice of language for this resource, we have replaced these words with trans or gender creative – with the exception of direct quotes.*

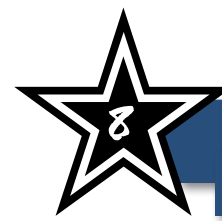
This section contains ideas about how to address questions or concerns about gender inclusivity that may arise from parents, guardians, administrators, or school districts.

Strategies:

- Communicate regularly with families of students to build trust between school and home. Let families know what is being discussed at school and how it is being discussed. Provide information about how parents and guardians can approach gender related topics with their children.
- Move the conversation away from myths, fears, and stereotypes about gender creative and trans people and focus on the purpose of this work – supporting all students.
- Listen carefully to the concerns that are expressed, as this will help you find points of agreement. For instance, most people share the value of respect.

Main Points:

- Emphasize that you are teaching respect. Respect is built by acknowledging the diversity in the community, promoting opportunities for community dialogue, and allowing the diversity of students and families to be visible within the school.
- Schools strive to increase understanding and connections across diversity or difference. With our communities becoming increasingly diverse, students benefit from developing the skills to live and work with many different people and populations.



WHAT CAN THE SCHOOL DO TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF TRANS AND GENDER CREATIVE YOUTH?

- Schools are a place for informed and open discussions. Information and discussion about gender diversity will not make anyone gender creative or trans. But learning about gender diversity may very well reduce bullying against gender creative or transgender children.^{xix}
- Messages that expand understandings of gender empower every child to be themselves and pursue the goals and interests that inspire them.
- All children are entitled to a safe and supportive school environment.
- When talking to administrators and school districts, discuss schools' legal responsibility to provide students with an educational environment that does not expose them to discriminatory harassment.

Resources

^{xix} Human Rights Campaign Foundation. (2010) Welcoming Schools. <http://welcomingschools.org>

Adapted from *What Can the School Do?* in the Canadian Teachers' Federation document: Supporting Transgender and Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools (2012).

** This document originally used gender independent and gender variant. In keeping with our choice of language for this resource, we have replaced this term with trans or gender creative – with the exception of direct quotes.*

All schools are required by law to provide non-discriminatory educational environments. For trans or gender creative youth, schools are too often considered to be dangerous and risky spaces for their identities to be revealed. Most of the harassment and violence directed towards trans or gender creative youth is premised on a rigid sex/gender binary, which presumes that there are only two sexes and only strictly male and female genders. Despite recent scientific evidence to the contrary, narrow identity constructions still operate overtly and covertly in schools to severely limit the creation of a truly inclusive and diverse school environment. Accordingly, schools should work to foster environments that challenge binary representations and, in turn, embrace the fluidity of sex, sexuality, and gender. Students learn more than just academic knowledge in their schools; they also learn governing norms, rules, and socially acceptable behaviours from observing the actions and non-actions of their peers and teachers (Wyss, 2004). What will students at your school learn? Will your school take the responsibility to develop an educational environment safe for *all* youth?

On the next two pages are a few suggestions describing how to help your school community become more inclusive of the needs of transgender and transsexual youth.

1. Provide Leadership

Take the lead by providing comprehensive and age-appropriate training on gender identity issues for all staff, students, and members of the parent advisory council. Use teachable moments to discuss diversity and gender issues in the office, staffroom, and classroom. Demonstrate your support for staff that initiate and adopt inclusive behaviour.

Remember, changes in attitude rarely occur overnight, and those who are exploring strategies and behaviours new to the school need to feel the administration's support, especially if others are to follow. The status quo may appear acceptable, but it also may be supporting a hurtful climate for an often silent and invisible gender minority.

2. Establish Basic Expectations in Your School Code of Conduct

Ensure that your school and district have clear non-discrimination policies and explicit codes of student conduct, which expressly prohibit harassment and discrimination on the basis of a student's actual or perceived gender identity or expression. Statements such as "tranny" should be clearly classed with derogatory racial and homophobic expressions. Demeaning racist, sexist, homophobic, and transphobic jokes and comments should always be challenged. Discuss how to challenge these remarks without being confrontational. For example, when someone uses these terms, follow up with a private conversation emphasizing the history and origins of the offending words and the damage putdowns can have on a student's self-esteem. Remember, students may also have gender creative family members and friends. Your silence signals your consent to the act of discrimination.

3. Be Inclusive

Consider finding role models for all minority groups in your school. Examples of role models could be female scientists and church leaders, Aboriginal authors and elders, trans or gender creative athletes and business people, poverty activists and disabled professionals, or community leaders and politicians. Use these as examples in your discussions and make clear your admiration for their accomplishments, rather than their differences. Clearly define specialized or new terminology (e.g., trans or gender creative), and wherever possible encourage the use of gender inclusive

language. For example, refer to parent, rather than mother or father. Be respectful and supportive of diversity by modelling the language and pronouns that students use to describe their identities. On school forms and databases ensure that a student's preferred or chosen name can be accurately recorded on class lists, timetables, student files, etc.

4. Create Inclusive and User-Friendly Libraries

Ensure that your school library has the best and most up-to-date collection of age-appropriate books on sexual orientation and gender identity issues and topics (See Schrader & Wells, 2007; Wells, Pratch, Bewick, 2011). Examine the materials on gender identity that are currently available in your library and ask to have those with transphobic content reviewed for possible removal. Include a variety of novels, short-story collections, movies, and magazines for youth that are affirming of gender variance. Check to ensure your library or school is not using internet software filters that block access to age-appropriate sites that contain information on sexual orientation and gender identity.

5. Be Prepared and Proactive

If your school suffers criticism from the local community because of a transitioning student, staff should be prepared to defend the rights of all students to a safe, welcoming, inclusive, and equitable educational environment. In your discussions, emphasize the health and safety concerns present and remember to protect a student and family's right to confidentiality at all times.

6. Provide Resources and Training for School Counsellors

Counsellors are often considered a critical lifeline for students who may be experiencing difficulty at home or in the school. Ensure that your counsellor or school social worker has access to supportive reference materials

and contacts for relevant trans-inclusive organizations. Encourage counsellors, social workers, and support personnel to attend sessions on sexual minority and gender identity issues at teachers' conventions or to organize a professional development in-service session for school and/or district staff. Ensure that all anti-bullying, mental health, and suicide prevention programs in your school are inclusive of the needs and realities of sexual and gender minority youth.

7. Maintain Confidentiality

With issues of discipline, learning difficulties, and child abuse, the first adult in the school who is aware of a problem generally calls on the support of other adults, be they administrators, counsellors, parents/guardians, or the police. In the case of trans or gender creative students, such a protocol may place the student at increased risk. Trans or gender creative youth who are not "out" may have special confidentiality concerns. Telling even one person, without the student's permission, can leave the student vulnerable to abuse within the school or at home. Some parents/guardians do not readily accept news that their child may be gender creative and might go so far as to force their child out of the home. Of course, if a student discloses that they may be suicidal, suffering parental abuse, or at risk of hurting themselves or others, you are legally required to report these incidents to the proper authorities. However, when reporting it is important to emphasize the student's need for confidentiality. Ensure that the student is referred to a supportive school counsellor or psychologist. The counsellor or psychologist will determine what further steps are necessary to protect and support the student.

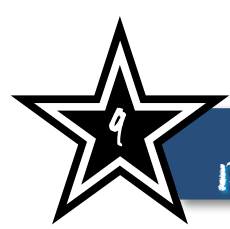
8. Update School Policies and Procedures

Revisit your school dress code and ensure that it is flexible enough to allow a student to dress appropriately and in accordance with their gender identity. Create a school policy to ensure that all trans or gender creative students can use the washroom that corresponds to their consistently asserted gender identity. If students do not feel safe using these washrooms, provide access to a private or staff washroom. Ensure locker room accessibility, which may include a separate or modified changing schedule or the use of a private changing area such as a washroom or staffroom or gym office (Y-Gap Project, 2009).

9. Continue to Educate Yourself

Find people around you who are comfortable with gender identity issues and talk to them. Challenge your own assumptions and interrogate your own biases. Be open to making mistakes and learning from them. Remember what hurts more than being called names by students are the teachers who do nothing to help.

During the last several years, elementary, junior, and senior high schools have increasingly witnessed trans or gender creative students who have decided, often with the full support of their parents/guardians and healthcare professionals, to transition from one gender to the other while attending school. This is a relatively new phenomenon for schools. Consequently, few schools have developed procedures and policies to support such in-school transitions. With a suitable team consisting of the transitioning student, their parent(s)/guardian(s), school administrators, qualified educational professionals, and others in the school system, a Transition Plan can be developed that will maximize the likelihood of a successful in-school transition for the student and his or her family.



MODEL SCHOOL POLICY REGARDING TRANS AND GENDER CREATIVE STUDENTS

Adapted from *Model School Policy Regarding Trans and Gender Creative Students* in: *The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know* developed by Pride in Education. The complete document can be found at: <http://pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf>

** This document originally used the term gender-nonconforming. These references have been changed to gender creative, to reflect the terminology used in this resource- with the exception of direct quotes.*

This policy is intended to advise school administration and staff regarding issues related to trans and gender creative students in order to provide equal educational opportunities to all students and ensure that schools maintain environments free from unlawful discrimination or discriminatory harassment.

Definitions for the purposes of this policy:

Trans Students refers to students whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Identity refers to one's understanding of oneself as a girl (or woman), boy (or man), or both, or neither, regardless of one's sex assigned at birth.

Gender Expression refers to the way a person expresses her or his gender, through dress, grooming habits, choice of name and pronoun, mannerisms, activities, etc.

Gender Creative Students refers to students who have a gender identity or expression that does not conform to stereotypical expectations, such as feminine boys, masculine girls and androgynous students. Examples of gender creative students include boys who come to school wearing what is commonly considered to be girls' clothing (such as a skirt or dress), or girls who play games on the playground that might be perceived as "boys' games" (like football).

Student Self-Identification

Students, including transgender and gender creative students, may use a variety of terms to describe their gender, gender expression and gender identity. Not all students who fall within

the broad definitions of "transgender" and "gender creative" set forth above will use these terms to self-identify. School personnel should not label students unnecessarily, and should respect the terms students adopt to identify themselves. Whenever possible, school forms to be filled out by students should allow students to fill in their gender (or to decline to answer) rather than require them to choose between male and female.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All persons, including students, have a right to privacy; this includes the right to keep one's transgender status private. Without consent from the student, school personnel should not disclose a student's transgender status to others, such as students, parents/guardians or other school personnel, unless there is a specific "need to know" (for example, a health emergency). A student's transgender status may also be disclosed to others to the limited extent necessary to investigate and/or resolve a claim of discrimination or harassment brought by that student.

Names and Pronouns

Students may request to be addressed by a name and pronoun that corresponds to their gender identity without changing the legal name designated in their official records and school-wide informational systems. All school staff need to honour such requests. If the student consents, such requests need to be noted in any materials that are shared with or accessible to staff, in order to inform staff of the name and pronoun to use when addressing the student.

Teachers should privately ask all students at the beginning of the school year how they prefer to be addressed at school and how they prefer to be addressed in correspondence to the home or at conferences with their parents/guardians.

In cases where students and parents/guardians disagree about the name and pronoun to be used at school, school officials may refer families to appropriate internal and/or external counseling or support services.

Official Records

A school can change the legal name designated in a student's official records upon receipt of a court order documenting a legal change in name. However, upon the request of the student, the student's official record can include a notation indicating the preferred name even in the absence of such documentation. Any school records indicating a student's gender should do so in accordance with the student's gender identity.

Dress Codes

Students have the right to dress in accordance with their gender identity. A student's clothing shall not be deemed to violate any applicable dress code on the ground that it does not conform in whole or in part to stereotypes or gender norms associated with the sex assigned to that student at birth.

Restroom Accessibility

Students shall have access to restroom facilities that correspond to their gender identity. Where available, a single-stall restroom or other alternate restroom, such as one in a health or nurse's office, shall be used by any student with a need for increased privacy (for example, because of his or her gender identity, a permanent or temporary disability, etc.) regardless of the underlying reason. The use of such a single-stall bathroom shall be a matter of the student's choice; no student should be compelled to use such a bathroom. If it is kept locked, it is appropriate to issue a key to the single-stall to a student who needs to use it. Forcing a student to ask for the key to the bathroom (particularly if they need to ask in a public setting such as an office, or ask someone who may question why this is necessary) can present a significant barrier.

Locker Room Accessibility

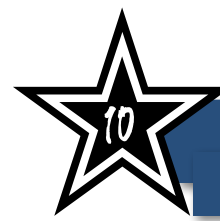
Students shall have access to locker room facilities that correspond to their gender identity. In locker rooms that require undressing in front of others, students who desire increased privacy for any reason (for example, because of their gender identity, a permanent or temporary disability, faith, etc.), shall be provided with accommodations that best meet their needs and privacy concerns. Based on availability and the nature of the privacy concerns, such accommodations could include, but are not limited to: Use of a private area in or near the locker room (e.g., an area separated by a curtain, the physical education instructor's office, a nearby restroom or medical room, etc.), or a separate changing schedule (using the locker room before or after other students).

Physical Education Classes and Sports

Transgender and gender creative students are to be provided the same opportunities to participate in physical education as all other students, shall not be forced to have physical education outside of the assigned class time, and shall be permitted to participate in any gender-segregated activities in accordance with their gender identity. Generally, students shall also be permitted to participate in any gender-segregated recreational and competitive athletic activities, including extracurricular activities, in accordance with their gender identity. If a dispute arises with regard to a transgender student's participation in competitive athletics or contact sports, such disputes shall be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

Other Instances of Gender Segregation

Generally, in any circumstance where students are separated by gender in the course of a school activity, students shall be permitted to participate in accordance with their gender identity. If such an activity raises privacy concerns for any transgender or gender creative student, for any reason, staff shall make a reasonable effort to provide an accommodation to address such concerns. If no such accommodation is available, concerns shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis.



DEVELOPING AN IN-SCHOOL TRANSITION PLAN: THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL

Access to Information

Schools should endeavor to include in their libraries or counselor offices (or other appropriate locations) books, pamphlets and/or other materials that provide accurate information about gender identity issues and related matters. Students should be permitted to access these materials confidentially and, if possible, anonymously.

Discrimination/Harassment

Schools must take effective steps to provide transgender and gender creative students with a safe school environment. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that any incident of discrimination, harassment or violence is promptly investigated and all appropriate corrective actions are taken. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on someone's actual or perceived sex, gender identity and/or gender expression are to be handled in the same manner as other discrimination or harassment complaints. School authorities may not discipline students or pressure them to alter their gender expression because other students react to that expression in a disruptive manner.

Safety Transfers

Generally, schools should endeavor to keep transgender and gender creative students at their school site. Incidents of harassment or discrimination against a transgender or gender creative student should not result in an automatic transfer to another school. However, transfers should be considered and/or granted when it would be in the student's best interest to be in a different social environment or when a transfer is necessary for the protection or personal welfare of the student. In such cases, the decision to transfer a student should be made in close consultation with the student and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) in order to determine whether a transfer is in the best interest of the student.^{xviii}

Adapted from the Canadian Teachers' Federation document: Supporting Transgender and Transsexual Students in K-12 Schools (2012).

* This document originally used the terms transgender, transsexual, and gender variant. These references have been changed to trans and gender creative, to reflect the terminology used in this resource. In addition, all references to parents in the original document have been changed to parents/guardians.

Most transsexual people transition when they have completed their public school education and are in an institute of higher learning or in the workforce. However, 80% of trans people report that they were aware of their gender variance before the age of 14, and 34% began to live in their felt gender before the age of 19.¹ These students are often at high risk for violence, depression, and suicide if unsupported during their transition. Usually, when supportive parents/guardians inform the school that their child is going to transition, many hours of consultation have taken place between the student, the parents/guardians, and a psychiatrist or other mental health professionals who specialize in gender variance of childhood and adolescence. The role of the school then becomes one of supporting the transitioning youth and parents/guardians under the guidance of qualified medical professionals. Additional supports may also be provided by educational professionals who specialize in sexual orientation and gender identity issues. These specialized professionals can serve as the "go-to" or resource persons and can help to coordinate the open communication that is critical to a successful school-based transition. Often principals and teachers do not have the time or specialized skills to play this important role. As a result, a supportive psychologist, social worker, school or community counsellor can serve in this role to ensure that accurate information is shared and a transition plan is in place.

School officials, once informed of a student's decision to transition, should respond in much the same way as they would accommodate any student with specialized needs. In collaboration with the student, parents/guardians, healthcare, and other specialized education professionals, school officials should devise and implement strategies that maximize the likelihood of a successful in-school transition for the student—in other words,

develop a Transition Plan. Because each transitioning student is unique, as are his or her parents/guardians, and each school has its own distinct community culture, the Transition Plan developed for a particular student in a particular school will also need to be unique.

Normally, everyone's medical history is considered highly confidential and others are informed only on a "need-to-know" basis. For a transitioning student choosing to remain in the same school, or transferring to another school within the same school district, the reality is that the "news" will likely disseminate quickly. This fact should be considered as the Transition Plan is developed. Attempts to maintain a student's right to confidentiality should be strictly maintained at all times.

Before developing a Transition Plan, the transitioning student, the student's parents/guardians, and school administrators may wish to consider who will become involved in developing the plan. For example, should the student's school counsellor, physical education instructor, and classroom teachers also participate in planning? Should representatives from the Students' Council and the Parents' Advisory Council also be asked to offer insights and advice from their perspectives?

During the planning process, it is natural for everyone's attention to focus on the transitioning student in an effort to determine how to best support them. No less important, and easily overlooked, is the effect of the student's transition on any other school-aged siblings. Do they attend the same school or a different one in the same district? How might they react to the imminent transition of their sibling? Are they at risk of bullying or harassment by other students? What should the parents/guardians and school officials do to support the siblings? Can siblings and allied students help support the transitioning student? Do these peers need specific training in how to best support a transitioning student? Are family members (including parents/guardians) experiencing a sense of grief because of the apparent "loss" of the child whom they love? How can the school

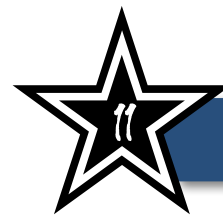
support family members when a child transitions? All of these questions are important to consider when helping to develop an effective and thoughtful transition plan.

As part of developing a school-based transition plan, consider the following guiding questions:

Prior to Transitioning

1. Which of the following actions is in the best interest of the transitioning student: As near total confidentiality as possible, or complete disclosure to the entire school community (including all parents/guardians), or something in-between? Should all, some, or none of the following groups be informed: teaching staff, support staff, students, and parents/guardians? If so, how and when will this occur? What are the potential risks of disclosure? What are the potential risks of secrecy?
2. When does the student wish to transition? Is the desired date realistic? Will the student, their parents/guardians, and the school system be prepared by this date? Work to develop a transition timeline of "what is happening when" so that everyone involved knows what their expectations are and how they should be prepared (Luecke, 2011, p.133).
3. Will suggestions on preparing for a successful transition be sought from:
 - Trans health programs or qualified health professionals?
 - Local LGBTQ youth or parental support groups of programs?
 - Provincial or territorial teachers' association or union?
 - Educational and mental health professionals who specialize in gender identity issues?
 - Other schools or districts that have had experience with a transitioning student?

- Other students who have transitioned or parents/guardians who have a child who has transitioned?
 - Knowledgeable transsexual individuals?
 - An “out” transsexual teacher working for the school board who is willing to help?
4. Is it necessary for the school or district to develop or expand school policies around homophobia, transphobia, gender identity, gender expression, and anti-bullying (including cyberbullying) to assist and protect a transitioning student?
 5. Are the school and the district well informed as to their legal responsibilities and statutory obligations? For example, does the school have a legal duty to accommodate transitioning students?
 6. What can school administrators, counsellors, classroom teachers, support staff, other students, and parents/guardians do to create a supportive environment for the transitioning student?
 7. Will counsellors be available for students and staff who may experience difficulty adjusting to their own personal issues raised by a transitioning student?
 8. Should all students be given trans-inclusive information by school counsellors and/or knowledgeable members of the medical and/or trans communities? If so, when? Will it occur during class time?
 9. If some parents/guardians or the media raise questions or issues, who in the school or district will be responsible for addressing them? How will they be addressed? What should other staff do if approached by parents/guardians or the media?
 10. Should professional development time be made available for in-service staff training?
 11. Which bathroom(s) will the transitioning student use? If there are separate bathrooms, how will access be granted? What are the safety and health implications?
 12. Which facilities will the student use to change for athletic activities?
 13. When will the school incorporate the student’s new name in its informal and formal records? For example, when will class lists, seating plans, and report cards display a student’s newly chosen name? Will existing records be changed? If so, when?
 14. What actions will be taken if there is inadvertent incorrect pronoun usage, deliberate incorrect pronoun usage, blatant transphobia, and/or bullying (including cyberbullying)? Has the safety of the transitioning student (and their siblings and peers) been adequately addressed? Does everyone know school, district, and human rights policies and legislation? Is everyone aware that ongoing bullying could result in police intervention and/or human rights complaints?
 15. Should parents/guardians and students receive a letter informing them of a student’s transition? If so, what will be the content of the letter? Who will be involved in writing the letter? How will the student and family’s confidentiality be protected? What happens if this letter is given to the media?
 16. Is everyone aware that transsexuality is a normal variation of human development and that transitioning is the recommended course of action by healthcare professionals for some gender creative people?
 17. Have the transitioning student, their parents/guardians, healthcare professionals, all school staff and students been informed of the school’s policy or specified procedures for transitioning students? Was the policy or procedure development open and transparent? Did the student, his or her parents/guardians, healthcare professionals, school staff, students, and parents/guardians have input into the development of these policies and procedures? Is there consensus regarding these policies, procedures, and protocols? What will happen if these policies, procedures, and protocols are deliberately violated?



RESPONSES TO EGALE CANADA'S FIRST NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY

18. Is everyone aware of the Transition Plan, corresponding timelines, and does everyone understand their role in implementing it? Is the plan flexible and adaptable?

Transition Day

1. Will this day be considered by everyone to be a “school-as-usual” day or will it be different in some way? If it will be different, in what ways will the day change? What will be the roles of the transitioning student, his or her parents/guardians, the administration, the student’s counsellor, and other school staff?
2. Has everyone prepared for the possibility that the media or concerned parents/guardians may be present on the day of transition?

Post-Transition Day

1. How often and when will meetings occur to review the effectiveness of the Transition Plan and possibly revise it?

When a student (or and adult within the school system) transitions there is natural curiosity about the individual’s transition. Usually, this curiosity quickly subsides and within a few days or weeks, the “novelty” of the situation wears off, and the school environment returns to “normal”. However, the transgender and transsexual youth are at greater risk of bullying and violence when compared with their heterosexual and sexual minority peers. Ideally, all school community members will be sensitive to this, and will monitor the safety of the transitioning student and become supportive allies. Any negative issues should be promptly acted upon by the school administration. All students must clearly see that there are swift consequences for any transphobic bullying or prejudicial behaviour.

¹ Coleman, Todd, et al. *Challenging the Binary: Gender Characteristics of Trans Ontarians*. Ontario: Trans PULSE, December 15, 2011.



“I know I type a lot, sorry, I just have never had anyone ask me before. There is the really obvious stuff and then there is less obvious stuff, that hurts just as much. Like when teachers walk in and say ‘I need 3 strong boys to help me move some tables.’ One time I put up my hand because I am perfectly able to move tables, probably even better than the boys. Ppl in my class started laughing, and the teacher took 4 boys anyways.”

“I was in drama class last year and people kept on making fun of gay men when they went up to perform for the class. It started to hurt me because at that time I wasn’t out. When I ask them to stop they would laugh or stop for a few days then start again. I told the teacher and they jokingly ask the kids to stop. It got so bad for me that I was sick before going into class, puke before or after class, the kids in the class would bring me to tears, or I got so mad I started to punch the walls to keep from hitting someone. Once the class started to make fun of lesbians I had to quit the class. My VP didn’t want me to go so I had to tell him how bad the class made me feel before he let me. I really didn’t want to quit drama because I love it so much but I couldn’t take the homophobic jokes they told.”





SAFE SCHOOLS QUIZ

Based on Egale's First National School Climate Survey Report "Every Class in Every School": <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>

"Kam got a binder kicked down the hall into her back by a guy shouting, 'Fucking dykes!' as the two of us passed. I have heard remarks from girls saying 'if I were a lesbian, I'd kill myself.' When watching a video on the holocaust where they mentioned the killings of LGBT people, boys cheered at the idea. I have been forced into my own section of our gymnasium locker rooms by my classmates because I like girls. I was sexually harassed (verbally and physically) by a male classmate who said that he'd make me like boys again. Kam and I both have been told 'Go die, dyke!' Myself and almost all of my GLBT friends have received emails, facebook and/or nexopia messages from other students with homophobic remarks."

"I went to a Catholic high school a few years ago and homosexuality was rarely discussed. It came up once in a health class more or less accompanied by the message that God wouldn't approve but that we have to love all sinners regardless. Another time an English teacher made us read a Walt Whitman poem and discuss how we felt about the poem, and then he asked us if our opinion of the author would change if he were gay, and some students said their opinions would change. The teacher wouldn't disclose whether the poet was gay or not. I also experienced some bullying, intimidation and physical violence in high school. I was whacked in the head with textbooks a few times, and I've had objects such as eggs and water bottles thrown out of car windows at me. I've also had all kinds of slurs shouted at me and rumours spread about me. Since starting college, I haven't experienced any violence. No one has been rude to me here, either. It's a real breath of fresh air and I'm finally starting to enjoy school. Now that I enjoy being here, my grades have gone up overall."



For more information, see <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>.



1. What percentage of trans students feel reasonably safe at school?

- a) 5%
- b) 20%
- c) 65%
- d) 80%

2. LGBTQ students reported feeling unsafe in...

- a) change rooms.
- b) washrooms.
- c) hallways.
- d) all of the above.

3. What percentage of all participating students (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ) reported hearing homophobic expressions every day in school?

- a) 10%
- b) 25%
- c) 50%
- d) 70%

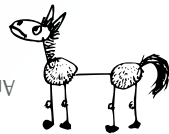
4. True or False? Current students are more likely than past students to hear homophobic comments from other students every day in school.

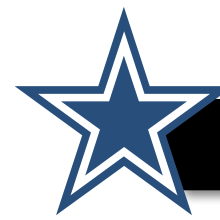
- a) True.
- b) False.

5. In schools without anti-homophobia policies, how many LGBTQ students would not be comfortable talking about LGBTQ matters to their principals?

- a) 10%
- b) 30%
- c) 60%
- d) 100%

Answers: 1. b 2. d 3. d 4. a 5. c





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OF EVERY CLASS IN EVERY SCHOOL: EGALE'S FINAL REPORT ON HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA, AND TRANSPHOBIA IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

Key Findings: School Climates in Canada Today

- Homophobic and Transphobic Comments
- Verbal Harassment
- Physical Harassment
- Sexual Harassment
- Unsafe Spaces
- Safer Schools Policies
- Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and Other LGBTQ-Inclusive Student Groups

Key Findings: Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia Affect Everyone

- Intersectionality
- Youth of Colour
- Aboriginal Youth
- Youth with LGBTQ Parents
- LGBTQ Youth
- Trans Youth
- Bisexual Youth
- Heterosexual Youth

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Policy Development
- Curriculum Development
- Teacher Preparation
- Gay-Straight Alliances
- Vulnerable Groups
- Appropriate Consultation

Taylor, C. & Peter, T., with McMinn, T.L., Elliott, T., Beldom, S., Ferry, A., Gross, Z., Paquin, S., & Schachter, K. (2011). *Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Final report.* Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.



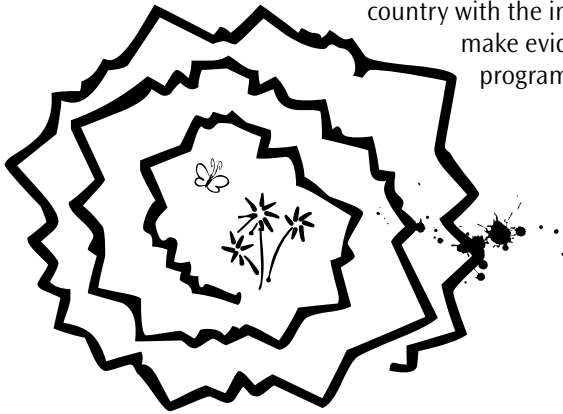
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report discusses the results of a national survey of Canadian high school students undertaken in order to investigate what life at school is like for students with sexual or gender minority status.¹ Our study sought to identify the forms and extent of students' experiences of homophobic and transphobic incidents at school, the impact of those experiences, and the efficacy of measures being taken by schools to combat these common forms of bullying. The study involved surveying over 3700 students from across Canada between December 2007 and June 2009 through two methods. The first method was designed to reach as many sexual and gender minority youth as possible: students who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two Spirit, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ). To this end, we implemented an open-access online survey and advertised it widely through news releases and website and Facebook notices and by systematically contacting every organization across the country that we identified as having LGBTQ youth membership. The second method was implemented in controlled conditions using a login system through in-school sessions conducted in twenty randomly selected school districts in all regions of the country (with the exception of Québec where a parallel survey was conducted by Québec researchers). Fifteen school districts participated in sufficient numbers to permit statistically significant analysis. In-school findings were used to validate open-access findings. This report analyzes the aggregate data from both individual online participation and in-school sessions. In addition, we have submitted confidential reports to all participating boards that held in-class sessions comparing their own results to the results from all in-school sessions.

The study was commissioned by the Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (ECHRT) and funded by the ECHRT with additional support from the University of Winnipeg Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Grant Competition, and Sexual and Gender Diversity: Vulnerability and Resilience (SVR), a research team funded by Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Fonds de Recherche sur la Société et la Culture (FRSC) du Province de Québec.

The survey itself was a fifty-four item questionnaire made available online and in print, which consisted mostly of multiple-choice questions of three kinds: demographic (e.g., age, province, gender identity, sexual orientation), experiences (e.g., hearing "gay" used as an insult, being assaulted, feeling very depressed about school), and institutional responses (e.g., staff intervention, inclusive safer schools policies). Quantitative data were tested for statistical significance through bivariate analyses that compared the responses of various groups of students, e.g., LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, sexual minority (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning) and gender minority (transgender, transsexual, Two Spirit), and current and past. Cross-tabulations with chi-square (χ^2) estimations, independent samples t-tests, and analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted, depending on the classification or "level of measurement" of the variables/questions (i.e., whether they are dichotomous, ordered, or continuous). Effect sizes were calculated for all chi-square (used Cramer's V), t-test (used Cohen's d), and ANOVA (used Cohen's d) significant tests. Future analysis will involve qualitative analysis of responses to open-ended questions in which students responded to questions about their perceptions and experiences.

The lack of a solid Canadian evidence base has been a major impediment faced by educators and administrators who need to understand the situation of LGBTQ students in order to respond appropriately and to assure their school communities that homophobic and transphobic bullying are neither rare nor harmless, but are major problems that schools need to address. We wish to express our deepest respect for the thousands of students, LGBTQ and heterosexual, who came forward to help with this important project. We thank you and hope that you will recognize your contributions and your voices in this report. While most of the information in this report will come as no surprise to members of the LGBTQ community, the study provides a systematically produced knowledge base that will provide educators and administrators across the country with the information they need to make evidence-based policy and programming decisions.



¹ For the purposes of this report, the term “sexual minority” refers to youth who did not identify as exclusively heterosexual and the term “gender minority” refers to youth who did not identify as either “female” or “male.”

➔ HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC COMMENTS

- 70% of all participating students, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, reported hearing expressions such as “that’s so gay” every day in school and almost half (48%) reported hearing remarks such as “faggot,” “lezbo,” and “dyke” every day in school.
- Almost 10% of LGBTQ students reported having heard homophobic comments from teachers daily or weekly (17% of trans students; 10% of female sexual minority students; and 8% of male sexual minority students). Even more LGBTQ students reported that they had heard teachers use negative gender-related or transphobic comments daily or weekly: 23% of trans students; 15% of male sexual minority students; and 12% of female sexual minority students.
- Hardly any LGBTQ students reported that they never heard homophobic comments from other students (1% of trans students; 2% of female sexual minority students; 4% of male sexual minority students). This suggests that if you are a sexual minority student in a Canadian school, it is highly likely that you will hear insulting things about your sexual orientation.

VERBAL HARASSMENT

- 74% of trans students, 55% of sexual minority students, and 26% of non-LGBTQ students reported having been verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- 37% of trans students, 32% of female sexual minority students, and 20% of male sexual minority students reported being verbally harassed daily or weekly about their sexual orientation.
- 68% of trans students, 55% of female sexual minority students, and 42% of male sexual minority students reported being verbally harassed about their perceived gender or sexual orientation. Trans youth may report experiencing particularly high levels of harassment on the basis of perceived sexual orientation because often trans individuals are perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual when they are not.
- More than a third (37%) of youth with LGBTQ parents reported being verbally harassed about the sexual orientation of their parents. They are also more likely to be verbally harassed about their own gender expression (58% versus 34% of other students), perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (46% versus 20%), gender (45% versus 22%), and sexual orientation (44% versus 20%).

PHYSICAL HARASSMENT

- More than one in five (21%) LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted due to their sexual orientation.
- 20% of LGBTQ students and almost 10% of non-LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

- 37% of trans students, 21% of sexual minority students, and 10% of non-LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression.
- Over a quarter (27%) of youth with LGBTQ parents reported being physically harassed about the sexual orientation of their parents. They are also more likely than their peers to be physically harassed or assaulted in connection with their own gender expression (30% versus 13% of other students), perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (27% versus 12%), gender (25% versus 10%), and sexual orientation (25% versus 11%).

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Levels of sexual harassment are high across the board for LGBTQ students. The following groups of students reported having experienced sexual harassment in school in the last year:

- 49% of trans students
- 45% of students with LGBTQ parents
- 43% of female bisexual students
- 42% of male bisexual students
- 40% of gay male students
- 33% of lesbian students

The higher levels of sexual harassment for gay male than for lesbian students may be attributable to greater exposure to sexual humiliation as a distinct form of unwanted sexual attention. Also, lesbian students may be less likely than gay male or trans students to perceive their experiences of harassment as sexual. Further analysis will explore the experiences included in this finding.

UNSAFE SPACES

- Almost two thirds (64%) of LGBTQ students and 61% of students with LGBTQ parents reported that they feel unsafe at school.
- The two school spaces most commonly experienced as unsafe by LGBTQ youth and youth with LGBTQ parents are places that are almost invariably gender-segregated: Phys. Ed. change rooms and washrooms. Almost half (49%) of LGBTQ youth and more than two fifths (42%) of youth with LGBTQ parents identified their Phys. Ed. change rooms as being unsafe; almost a third (30%) of non-LGBTQ youth agreed. More than two-fifths (43%) of LGBTQ students and almost two-fifths (41%) of youth with LGBTQ parents identified their school washrooms as being unsafe; more than a quarter (28%) of non-LGBTQ students agreed.
- Female sexual minority students were most likely to report feeling unsafe in their school change rooms (59%). High numbers (52%) of trans youth reported feeling unsafe in both change rooms and washrooms. It is notable that these places where female sexual minority and trans students often feel unsafe are gender-segregated areas. Not only does this contradict assumptions that most homophobic and transphobic incidents take place in males-only spaces, but it also points to a correlation between the policing of gender and youth not feeling safe.

SAFER SCHOOLS POLICIES

Generic safe school policies that do not include specific measures on homophobia are not effective in improving the school climate for LGBTQ students. LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported significantly fewer incidents of physical and verbal harassment due to their sexual orientation:

80% of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported never having been physically harassed versus only 67% of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies;

46% of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported never having been verbally harassed due to their sexual orientation versus 40% of LGBTQ students from schools without anti-homophobia policies.

LGBTQ students in schools with anti-homophobia policies did not report significantly higher levels of feeling safe at school with regard to gender identity and gender expression: this indicates a need to explicitly address gender identity, gender expression, and anti-transphobia in school and school board safer schools and equity and inclusive education policies.

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES (GSAs) AND OTHER LGBTQ INCLUSIVE STUDENT GROUPS

GSAs are official student clubs with LGBTQ and heterosexual student membership and typically one or two teachers who serve as faculty advisors. Students in a school with a GSA know that they have at least one or two adults they can talk to about LGBTQ matters. The purpose of GSAs is to provide a much-

KEY FINDINGS: HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA, AND TRANSPHOBIA AFFECT EVERYONE

needed safe space in which LGBTQ students and allies can work together on making their schools more welcoming for sexual and gender minority students. Some GSAs go by other names such as Rainbow Clubs, Human Rights Clubs, or Social Justice Clubs. This is sometimes done to signal openness to non-LGBTQ membership (though, of course, some of these are not GSAs and might not address homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia), and sometimes because “Gay-Straight Alliance” seems problematic in that “gay” does not necessarily refer to lesbians or bisexuals and trans identities are not explicitly encompassed by the expression. However, using the acronym “GSA” to represent any student group concerned with LGBTQ matters has become commonplace. Very often it is LGBTQ students themselves who initiate the GSA, although sometimes a teacher will come forward. Such groups also function as safe havens and supports for youth with LGBTQ parents. Currently, more than 100 LGBTQ-inclusive student groups across the country have registered on Egale Canada’s safer schools and inclusive education website, *MyGSA.ca*.

- Students from schools with GSAs are much more likely to agree that their school communities are supportive of LGBTQ people, are much more likely to be open with some or all of their peers about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and are more likely to see their school climate as becoming less homophobic.
- Students from schools with anti-homophobia policies are significantly more likely to agree that their school administration is supportive of the GSA.
- Students in BC and Ontario reported much more frequently than students in the Prairies, the Atlantic provinces, and the North that their schools have GSAs.



➔ INTERSECTIONALITY

“ I think there’s a lot of work to be done in recognizing that lgbttq people come from various cultures and communities and breaking those myths and beliefs to allow all people identifying within those communities to be free of prejudice and oppression. ”

Similarly to the point on a graph where lines cross being called a point of “intersection,” the fact that categories of identification—such as age, class, education, ethnic background, gender expression, gender identity, geographic origin, physical and mental ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other factors—are experienced simultaneously and cannot genuinely be separated from one another is referred to as “intersectionality.” Often, people are discriminated against with regard to multiple categories: for example, a racialized lesbian could be subjected to heterosexism, homophobia, lesbophobia, misogyny, racism, and transphobia or any other form of discrimination, such as ableism, ageism, and classism, depending on both how she identifies and how she is perceived to be. Further, each aspect of one’s identity can have an impact on other aspects. For example, a racialized lesbian may be exposed to different forms of sexism and homophobia from those experienced by a non-racialized lesbian.

The survey found that there was little regional or ethnic variation in levels of physical harassment for reasons related to gender or sexual orientation, but that Caucasian youth, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, were far less likely to report having been physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity: 8% compared to 13% of Aboriginal youth and 15% of youth of

colour. Consequently, it is important to note the aggregate effects or “double whammy” here for both Aboriginal youth and youth of colour; these youth are not only being physically harassed or assaulted because of reasons related to gender and/or sexual orientation, but they are also much more likely to be physically harassed or assaulted because of their ethnicity.

YOUTH OF COLOUR

“ *Not only is it difficult to be LGBT in high school, but especially as a LGBT youth who is also a visible minority. The positive images and information out there for such a youth is very hard to come by.* ”

- Youth of colour, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, are far less likely to know of any out LGBTQ students (67% compared to 81% of Caucasian and 87% of Aboriginal youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined) or to know of any teachers or staff members who are supportive of LGBTQ students (48% knew of none, compared to 38% of Aboriginal and 31% of Caucasian youth, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ combined).
- Almost one fifth (18%) of those students of colour who had experienced LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum reported that class discussions of LGBTQ people’s relationships had been negative (compared to 14% of Caucasian and 11% of Aboriginal youth). They were also less likely to see class representations of LGBTQ matters as having been very positive (17% compared to 26% of Caucasian and 31% of Aboriginal youth).

- Youth of colour, both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, reported the lowest rates of being comfortable discussing LGBTQ matters with anyone at all, including their coaches, their teachers, their classmates, their parents, and even with a close friend.

This high degree of isolation for youth of colour with regard to LGBTQ matters suggests that serious attention needs to be paid to finding means of reaching out to youth in ways that are appropriate and informed about cultural issues and taboos surrounding LGBTQ matters.

ABORIGINAL YOUTH

Very few statistically significant findings surfaced about the experiences of LGBTQ Aboriginal youth in Canadian schools in this report. In some instances, Aboriginal youth reported experiences similar to Caucasian youth, such as comfort levels in talking to school community members about LGBTQ matters. In other instances, Aboriginal youth reported experiences similar to youth of colour—for example, in reported rates of physical harassment based on race or ethnicity. Further work needs to be done in order to better understand and account for the needs of LGBTQ Aboriginal youth in Canada.

➔ YOUTH WITH LGBTQ PARENTS

Not only do youth not want to have to hear their loved ones spoken about in cruel ways, but youth with LGBTQ family members also avoid disclosure to protect themselves from harassment. As one student wrote, “I am not out about my family members because people are so stupid that they think that if you know someone who is LGBTQ then that means you are too.”

- Youth with LGBTQ parents are more than three times more likely than other students to have skipped school because of feeling unsafe either at school (40% versus 13%) or on the way to school (32% versus 10%). These results are extremely important not only because of what they reveal about the degree of fear being experienced by youth with LGBTQ parents, but also because of the potential impact of missing classes on the academic performance of these students.
- Youth with LGBTQ parents are more likely to be aware of teachers making homophobic and transphobic comments: one-fifth of youth with LGBTQ parents said teachers sometimes or frequently make homophobic comments, compared to only 7% of other students, and a quarter of youth with LGBTQ parents said teachers sometimes or frequently make transphobic comments, compared to one tenth of other students.
- Students with LGBTQ parents are more likely to find homophobic comments extremely upsetting (23% versus 11% of other students) or very upsetting (29% versus 19%).

➔ LGBTQ YOUTH

One in seven students who completed the survey during in-class sessions self-identified as LGBTQ (14%), which is consistent with the percentages of students identifying as not exclusively heterosexual in large-scale survey research of youth conducted in British Columbia (Saewyc & the McCreary Society, 2007). Further, youth who experience same-sex attraction often identify as heterosexual in research, even if they have had sexual contact with a same-sex partner, and research participants often under-report information such as being members of sexual minority groups out of concerns about confidentiality, even in anonymous surveys. This suggests that claims sometimes made that sexual minority individuals comprise only 2-3% of the population seriously underestimate the numbers. Our research would suggest that there are several sexual minority students in every class in every school in Canada, not to mention students with LGBTQ parents. Many of these students, of course, do not disclose their own or their family members’ sexual orientation and/or gender identity until they are safely out of school.



TRANS YOUTH

While youth who actually identify as trans are comparatively small in number, they are highly visible targets of harassment. Trans students may report experiencing particularly high levels of harassment on the basis of perceived sexual orientation because often trans individuals are perceived as lesbian, gay, or bisexual when they are not. The heightened sense of lack of safety at school experienced by trans youth is likely due to the rigid policing of gender conventions (male masculinity and female femininity), which can make trans youth highly visible targets for discrimination and harassment.

- 90% of trans youth hear transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students and almost a quarter (23%) of trans students reported hearing teachers use transphobic language daily or weekly. Almost three quarters (74%) of trans students reported being verbally harassed about their gender expression.
- One quarter of trans students reported having been physically harassed (25%) or having had property stolen or damaged (24%) because of being LGBTQ. Trans students were much more likely than sexual minority or non-LGBTQ students to have been physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression (37% compared with 21% for sexual minority students and 10% for non-LGBTQ students).
- When all identity-related grounds for feeling unsafe are taken into account, including ethnicity and religion, more than three quarters (78%) of trans students indicated feeling unsafe in some way at school. 44% of trans students reported being likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe and 15% reported having skipped more than 10 days because of feeling unsafe at school.

BISEXUAL YOUTH

A comparison of the responses of female and male bisexual youth with lesbian and gay male youth shows that often gender seems to be more of an influencing factor than sexual orientation in the experiences of female sexual minority youth; however, this is generally not the case for male sexual minority youth:

Physical Harassment about Being LGBTQ

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • 26% of female bisexual youth | 25% of lesbian youth |
| • 12% of male bisexual youth | 23% of gay male youth |

Mean Rumours or Lies about Being LGBTQ

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • 56% of female bisexual youth | 52% of lesbian youth |
| • 37% of male bisexual youth | 47% of gay male youth |

Skipping School Due To Feeling Unsafe

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • 29% of female bisexual youth | 25% of lesbian youth |
| • 19% of male bisexual youth | 28% of gay male youth |

At Least One Unsafe Location at School

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • 71% of female bisexual youth | 72% of lesbian youth |
| • 64% of male bisexual youth | 74% of gay male youth |

Feel Unsafe at School because of Actual or Perceived Sexual Orientation

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • 63% of female bisexual youth | 67% of lesbian youth |
| • 39% of male bisexual youth | 51% of gay male youth |

Feel Unsafe at School

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • 75% of female bisexual youth | 73% of lesbian youth |
| • 51% of male bisexual youth | 62% of gay male youth |

These findings are interesting in a few ways. First, popular understandings of bullying in school culture might lead one to expect that heterosexual males would be most likely to commit homophobic harassment and that their targets would be gay males, whom they would have the opportunity to bully in unsupervised gender-segregated spaces such as change rooms and washrooms. Second, it is sometimes said that lesbians have it easier than gay males, that society in general tolerates lesbians more than gay males, and that being a lesbian or a bisexual female is even trendy. These findings would refute both of these popular conceptions of life for sexual minority girls and women.

What male sexual minority youth, both bisexual and gay, seem to have in common, however, is a higher degree of social connectedness. Both of these groups are more likely to know of out LGBTQ youth and supportive staff members at their schools:

Don't Know Anyone Out as LGBTQ at School

- 21% of female bisexual youth 31% of lesbian youth
- 13% of male bisexual youth 15% of gay male youth

Don't Know of School Staff Members Supportive of LGBTQ Matters

- 36% of female bisexual youth 28% of lesbian youth
- 22% of male bisexual youth 26% of gay male youth



HETEROSEXUAL YOUTH

- One of the most striking findings of our study is that 58% of non-LGBTQ youth find homophobic comments upsetting. This finding suggests that there is a great deal of potential solidarity for LGBTQ-inclusive education among heterosexual students.
- One in twelve heterosexual students reported being verbally harassed about their perceived sexual orientation and one in four about their gender expression.
- Almost 10% of non-LGBTQ youth reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity and more than 10% reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression.
- Any given school is likely to have as many heterosexual students as LGBTQ students who are harassed about their sexual orientation or gender expression.

This survey has provided statistically-tested confirmation of what LGBTQ youth, youth perceived as LGBTQ, youth with LGBTQ parents, and their allies as well as teachers and administrators working on anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality education have known for some time about the realities of life at school in Canada. Consider the situation in many schools:

- LGBTQ students are exposed to language that insults their dignity as part of everyday school experience and youth with LGBTQ family members are constantly hearing their loved ones being denigrated.
- LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents experience much higher levels of verbal, physical, sexual, and other forms of discrimination, harassment, and abuse than other students.
- Most LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents do not feel safe at school.
- The situation is worse on all counts for female sexual minority students and youth with LGBTQ parents and even worse for trans students.
- Many students, especially youth of colour, do not have even one person they can talk to about LGBTQ matters.
- Many schools have a well-developed human rights curriculum that espouses respect and dignity for every identity group protected in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* except for LGBTQ people.
- Teachers often look the other way when they hear homophobic and transphobic comments and some of them even make these kinds of comments themselves.

Although the original title of our study named only homophobia, our findings demonstrate that school climates for bisexual and trans students are equally—and in some ways even more—hostile. The study has also demonstrated that the less directly students are affected by homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, the less aware they are of it. This finding has implications for the adult world as well: how many educators and administrators are underestimating the extent of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in their school cultures and the damage being done to the youth in their care? This study found that the more marginalized our participants were, the worse their experience of school climate was. Given the findings of this study, educators may need to work particularly hard at ensuring that lesbian youth, bisexual girls, trans students, students with sexual and/or gender minority parents, and sexual and gender minority youth of colour are included in these efforts. To this end, policy, programme, and curriculum development needs to reflect an understanding of how school climate for sexual and gender minority youth is affected by intersecting systems of social power such as racialization and poverty that are at work in all schools.

LGBTQ-inclusive safer schools policies and curriculum are not the entire solution; we did not find that 100% of students anywhere reported never hearing homophobic or transphobic comments or that they could all talk to all of their teachers, for example. However, the findings of this study indicate that while the problem of hostile school climates for sexual and gender minority students is very widespread, it is perhaps not as deep as we might think. In schools that have made efforts to introduce LGBTQ-inclusive policies, GSAs, and even some LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, the climate is significantly more positive for sexual and gender minority students.

Based on the analysis presented in this report, we strongly recommend the following:

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1. That provincial Ministries of Education require the inclusion of anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality measures in safer schools policies and programmes, along with steps for the effective implementation of these policies, in order to provide support and motivation to district and school staff as well as a requirement that school divisions provide auditable evidence of meaningful implementation.
2. That school divisions develop anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality policies to provide institutional authority and leadership for schools.
3. That schools implement anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia and intersectionality policies and make these well known to students, parents, administration, and all school staff members as a part of their commitment to making schools safer and more respectful and welcoming for all members of their school communities.
4. That efforts begin with professional development workshops for all school division employees on intersectionality and the impact of homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language and how to address it in classrooms, hallways, and all other parts of the school as well as at all other school-related events, such as during bus transportation.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

5. That Ministries of Education and school divisions require the inclusion of respectful representations of LGBTQ people in courses and provide curriculum guidelines and resources for mainstreaming LGBTQ-inclusive teaching, including intersectionality, across the curriculum and auditable evidence of meaningful implementation.
6. That school divisions provide professional development opportunities to assist schools in the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive and intersectionality curriculum.
7. That schools implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in designated courses such as Family Life and Social Studies and provide teachers with resources for mainstreaming LGBTQ and intersectionality education in their own subject areas.

TEACHER PREPARATION

8. That Faculties of Education integrate LGBTQ-inclusive teaching and intersectionality into compulsory courses in their Bachelor of Education programmes so that teachers have adequate opportunities to develop competence before entering the field.



➔ GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES


9. That schools strongly support the efforts of students to start GSAs, or similar LGBTQ inclusive student-led clubs, and that in schools where students have not come forward, administration should ask teachers to offer to work with students to start such clubs. It is not safe to assume that LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents would prefer to go through school isolated from their peers and teachers.

➔ VULNERABLE GROUPS


10. That particular attention be paid to supporting the safety and well-being of lesbian and bisexual female youth and trans youth in all of the above recommendations along with the needs of youth with LGBTQ parents and sexual and gender minority youth of colour.

➔ APPROPRIATE CONSULTATION

11. That individuals and organizations with established expertise in intersectionality and LGBTQ inclusive education be consulted in all of the above. Such expertise exists among educators in every region of Canada.



It is extremely unlikely that there is any class in any high school anywhere in Canada, public or private, religious or secular, that does not have students who are LGBTQ. Being harassed, insulted, and told that their identities belong in the EST-Guidance Counsellor's office, not in the classroom, will not succeed in making LGBTQ students heterosexual and gender-conforming; it will only make them unhappy. What students have told us in the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools is that speaking up works and that they want the adults in their lives to do their parts. Many participants in our survey, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, commented on their extreme disappointment with school staff who look the other way when disrespectful language is being used. The findings of our study provide ample reasons for educators and administrators across the country to take up the challenge of welcoming their LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ parents into inclusive twenty-first century schools that explicitly and meaningfully oppose discrimination on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation and genuinely embrace safer and more respectful school environments for all members of their school communities.



**New Brunswick LGBTQ Inclusive
Education Resource is part of
Egale's Safer and Accepting
Schools.**

