



Safe and Caring Schools – A Resource for Equity and  
Inclusion in Manitoba Schools

# INFORMATION FOR ADMINISTRATORS



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possibility



# INFORMATION FOR ADMINISTRATORS



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## MAKING MANITOBA'S SCHOOLS SAFER AND MORE INCLUSIVE SPACES

In 2004 Manitoba made it law that schools must ensure safe and caring environments for all students, that regulations be made about positive and safe school environments, codes of conduct and emergency plans, and that committees be created to advise principals in preparing these codes and plans. The Safe Schools Charter amended The Public Schools Act and The Education Administration Act. Both apply to all public and funded independent schools. See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/38-2/b030e.php>

In 2013, The Public Schools Act was again amended regarding bullying and respect for human diversity.

The Act defines bullying, recognizing that bullying can take a variety of forms, including... written, verbal, physical and electronic...(cyberbullying).

The Act also requires each school board to establish a respect for human diversity policy. The policy is to promote the acceptance of and respect for others in a safe, caring and inclusive school environment. The policy must accommodate student activity that promotes the school environment as being inclusive of all pupils, including student activities and organizations that use the name “gay-straight alliance”. See: <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/b018e.php>. Many of the Action Items for making Manitoba’s schools safer and more inclusive spaces are supported by statistics from Egale Canada’s *Every Class in Every School : Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*.

Egale Canada is Canada’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) human rights organization: advancing equality, diversity, education, and justice. Through our Safe Schools Campaign, we are committed to supporting LGBTQ youth, youth perceived as LGBTQ, youth with LGBTQ parents, other family members, and friends as well as educators, librarians, guidance counsellors, education support workers, parents, and administrators and to helping make Canadian schools safer and more inclusive, respectful,

and welcoming learning and working environments for all members of school communities. The Safe Schools Campaign features resources for facilitating change in Canadian learning environments: the national LGBTQ safer schools and inclusive education website, *MyGSA.ca*; Equity and Inclusive Education Resource Kits; and an anti-heterosexism, anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, anti-transphobia, and intersectionality workshop series.

The fact that these resources are vitally needed in schools is demonstrated by the survey results in *Every Class in Every School : Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*:

- 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 preamble to The Public Schools Act includes the following: “WHEREAS public schools should contribute to the development of a fair, compassionate, healthy and prosperous society; AND WHEREAS the public school system must take into account the diverse needs and interests of the people of Manitoba”. Within the Act, one of the sections speaks to safe and caring schools: “Every school board shall ensure that each pupil enrolled in a school within the jurisdiction of the school board is provided with a safe and caring school environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours”. See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>

These commitments along with the amendments made to The Public Schools Act in 2013 underscore the Department of Education and Advanced Learning’s commitment to upholding the values of genuine acceptance and respect in learning environments.

In addition to the amendments made to The Public Schools Act in 2013 concerning Safe and Inclusive Schools, the Department of Education and Advanced Learning has publications that support the commitment to safer schools.

*Towards Inclusion From Challenges to Possibilities – Planning for Behaviour* states that a positive schools climate is crucial:

“A positive school climate exists when all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted, and secure in an environment where they can interact with caring people they trust. A positive school climate affects everyone associated with the school: students, staff, parents, and the community. It is the belief system or culture that underlies the day-to-day operation of a school.



Collectively and individually, a positive school climate can have a major impact on the success of all students in the school. Research has consistently shown a link between positive school climate and other important measurements of school success, including:

- Academic achievement
- High morale
- Staff productivity
- Effective management”

See: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/beh/index.html>

*A Whole School Approach to Safety and Belonging: Preventing Violence and Bullying* states that “a school-wide approach to safety and belonging sends a strong message to all individuals in the school community. An ongoing collaborative process that encourages a safe and caring climate addresses concerns related to harmful behaviours, including bullying, violence, threat, intimidation, and harassment... A whole-school approach requires a conscious effort to meet the needs of all students in all educational environments. This is particularly important in terms of appropriate responses to negative or hurtful behaviours.”

See: [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole\\_school\\_approach.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole_school_approach.html)

Department of Education and Advanced Learning documents apply to all public and funded independent schools.

Amendments made to The Public Schools Act in 2013 concerning Safe and Inclusive Schools require school boards to have a respect for human diversity policy and to ensure that the policy is implemented in each school in the school division or school district.

The respect for human diversity policy must be prepared with “due regard for the principles of The Human Rights Code” and “must accommodate students who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that

- a) promote:
  - gender equity
  - antiracism
  - the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people who are disabled by barriers, or
  - the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities
- b) use the name “gay-straight alliance” or any other name that is consistent with the promotion of a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils.”

See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>

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



*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). 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 LGBTQ parents, other family members, and friends as well, given some of the findings in the Final Report on Egale’s School Climate Survey:

- 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.<sup>7</sup>

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 Equity and Inclusive Education Resource Kit 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>.





### Be sure *MyGSA.ca* isn't blocked at your school!

Some schools use filtering software to block access to websites that include keywords pertaining to certain matters, such as sex, and rely on the companies that develop the software to maintain the list of unacceptable sites. Although this might be done in the interests of blocking pornographic content, for example, an unfortunate consequence of such protocols is that many useful websites regarding important matters such as health and sexual orientation are also blocked. Be sure that *MyGSA.ca* isn't blocked at your school. If it is, check your settings by contacting your system administrator or software provider. If it is, ask your school administration to change the settings.

If *MyGSA.ca* continues to be blocked at your school, contact the Department of Education and Advanced Learning at [mbedu@merlin.mb.ca](mailto:mbedu@merlin.mb.ca), or Egale at 1.888.204.7777 (toll free) or [mygsa.ca@egale.ca](mailto:mygsa.ca@egale.ca) and let us know.



Inclusive curriculum is important so that students see themselves, their lives, and their experiences reflected in what they are learning, and so that they can learn about people, their lives and experiences that they are not familiar with.

Inclusive curriculum would include positive images and examples of LGBTQ lives and realities. When students, regardless of background or identity, see themselves reflected in the curriculum, it increases engagement and self esteem, and provides role models. Non-LGBTQ students are given the opportunity to expand their awareness and understanding, and to challenge stereotypes.

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning recognizes that curriculum should reflect the diversity of all of Manitoba's peoples and challenge prejudice and discrimination. This is reflected in the Department's curriculum development policies.

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

As well, 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 and discussion (among others).

It is important to consider what appears in the curriculum, as well as what is left out. 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. An inclusive curriculum that includes LGBTQ issues is necessary for the creation of safe and inclusive schools for all members of the school community.

According to the Department of Education and Advanced Learning document *Towards Inclusion From Challenges to Possibilities – Planning for Behaviour*, a positive school climate is crucial, and program curriculum, activities, and policies are contributing factors to its creation.

See <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/beh/index.html>

Schools are expected to give students and staff authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives. Lessons, projects, and related resources should allow students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum (e.g.,...using texts written by gay/lesbian authors). 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” for more information, see: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf>

According to *Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*

“Because 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>



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

## **BE PROACTIVE IN TAKING A LEADERSHIP ROLE**

**by making your entire school community a safer space and, consequently, a better learning and working environment.**



The Manitoba Teachers' Society policy on Equity Issues addresses inclusive curriculum as follows:

“That all curricula and programs produced by Manitoba Education be reviewed and monitored for any type of bias, stereotypes and/or generalizations that could promote or induce discriminatory behaviour and attitudes.”

In addition, the policy also requires “that the Society provide appropriate and/or necessary support for members who identify themselves as members of the GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) community and, further, that the Society support all members in providing safe and inclusive learning environments that respect human diversity and prevent the expression of negative judgments based on gender bias, sexual stereotyping, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.”

For more information, and the complete policy, go to:  
<http://www.mbteach.org/library2/constitution-bylaws-and-policies-governing-the-manitoba-teachers-society>

Even if LGBTQ students or staff members are not out at your school, or not out to you, please do not assume that they are not there. It is possible that they simply are not comfortable being out there, and it is also possible that LGBTQ matters are important and relevant to students and staff members at your school because they have LGBTQ parents or other family members or friends.

To find resources, materials, information, and supports for teachers and other school staff members, consult the Educators' Section of *MyGSA.ca* as well as this Resource Kit. To arrange for anti-heterosexism, anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, anti-transphobia, and intersectionality workshops to be delivered at your school or to your school board, contact [mygsa@egale.ca](mailto:mygsa@egale.ca) or 1.888.204.7777 (toll-free).



Fulfilling the vision of safe and caring schools where all members of the school community work together and respect each other requires shared and committed leadership. Some provincial Departments of Education have outlined this powerfully. Here is an example:

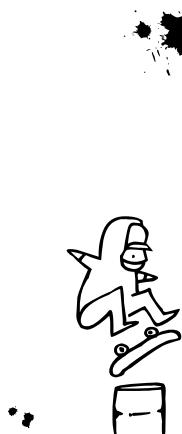
“The principle of shared and committed leadership recognizes that all partners in education—including community partners, parents, and students—are responsible for preparing students to live in a diverse society. However, bringing change to instructional practices and the learning culture requires strong, focused leadership from, in particular, school board trustees, directors of education, superintendents, principals, and teachers. Boards and schools are expected to provide leadership that is responsive to the diverse nature of Ontario’s communities and committed to identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to learning”. See <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

Leadership with regard to LGBTQ issues requires the acknowledgment of the presence of LGBTQ individuals (and the barriers they face due to discrimination, harassment and systemic discrimination) in our schools. It also requires that policies go further to outline that homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and cis-sexism in our schools are unacceptable, and will be addressed. Not only is this the right thing to do within the context of creating safe and caring schools, but it upholds the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

According to “Youth Speak Up about Homophobia and Transphobia,”

“LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much more likely than other LGBTQ students...

- to feel their school community was supportive (one half compared to fewer than one-fifth),



- to feel comfortable talking to a counsellor (one half compared to fewer than one-third), and to feel comfortable talking to classmates (over a third compared to one-fifth),
- 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 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". See [In 2004 Manitoba made it law that schools must ensure safe and caring environments for all students, that regulations be made about positive and safe school environments, codes of conduct and emergency plans created, and that committees be established to advise principals in preparing these codes and plans.](http://MyGSA.ca>YouthSpeakUp</a></p>
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See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/38-2/b030e.php>

The Public Schools Act states that codes of conduct must include “a statement that pupils and staff must behave in a respectful manner and comply with the code of conduct. Abuse (in various forms) and bullying must be included as unacceptable in these statements.

See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>

In addition, the Department of Education and Advanced Learning document *A Whole School Approach to Safety and Belonging: Preventing Violence and Bullying* further supports committed leadership: “a school-wide approach to safety and belonging sends a strong message to all individuals in the school community.”

See: [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole\\_school\\_approach.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole_school_approach.html)

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-homophobia, anti-biphobia, and anti-transphobia. If your school or school division 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>.



Amendments made to The Public Schools Act in 2013 concerning Safe and Inclusive Schools also addresses professional development and training of school personnel:

“A respect for human diversity policy is to (b) address training for teachers and other staff about (i) bullying prevention, and (ii) strategies for promoting respect for human diversity and a positive school environment.”

See: <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>

Training about LGBTQ issues helps to increase understanding and awareness of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism, and cissexism as well as teachers' responsibilities. Because homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and cissexism are common, they are often not easy to detect if one is not affected by them. Teachers and all school staff need to learn about homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and cissexism 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 school climate.

A positive school climate is supported by Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning publications as crucial for academic achievement, but also for staff productivity. A *Whole-School Approach to Safety and Belonging: Preventing Violence and Bullying* describes “a school-wide approach to safety and belonging as an ongoing collaborative process that encourages



Boards are expected to provide training in “bullying prevention and strategies for promoting respect for human diversity and a positive school environment.” See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/b018e.php>

a safe and caring climate and addresses concerns related to harmful behaviours, including bullying, violence, threat, intimidation, and harassment...A whole-school approach requires a conscious effort to meet the needs of all students in all educational environments. This is particularly important in terms of appropriate responses to negative or hurtful behaviours...Sometimes it becomes necessary for the school staff to take steps to ensure that students are understanding of unique differences among all people and that they accept all other students." See: [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole\\_school\\_approach.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole_school_approach.html)

While GSAs provide education for staff and students, staff are role models and shape the curriculum within their classrooms. The codes of conduct required of schools by The Public Schools Act include expectations for staff as well as students. School staff that are aware and prepared to be proactive (as well as reactive) help to set expectations for positive behaviour and influence the school climate.

Contact Egale at [mygsa@egale.ca](mailto:mygsa@egale.ca) or 1.888.204.7777 (toll-free) to arrange for a workshop for your school or school board!



Amendments made to The Public Schools Act in 2013 concerning Safe and Inclusive Schools address bullying and respect for human diversity.

The amendments includes a definition of bullying. The definition recognizes that bullying can take a variety of forms, including... written, verbal, physical and electronic...(cyberbullying).

The amendments also require each school board to establish a respect for human diversity policy. The policy is to promote the acceptance of and respect for others in a safe, caring and inclusive school environment. It includes training for teachers and staff with regard to bullying prevention as well as strategies for promoting respect for human diversity and a positive school environment. The policy must accommodate student activity that promotes the school environment as being inclusive of all pupils, including student activities and organizations that use the name “gay-straight alliance”.”

See: <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>

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, including those of Catholic schools, along with steps for the implementation of these policies, in order to provide institutional support and motivation to divisional and school staff”. See [Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning has begun this process with amendments to The Public Schools Act made in 2013. The requirement for school boards to develop respect for human diversity policy is important, as is the requirement that it include accommodation for “students who want to establish and lead organizations that \(among other things\) promote gender equity, the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and that use the name “gay-straight alliance” or any other name that is consistent with the promotion of a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils.”](http://MyGSA.ca>YouthSpeakUp</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

While this is an important step, the success of this initiative will be dependent on the efforts of school divisions and funded independent

schools to support and implement the changes required locally.

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/cis-normativity— for students and for the whole school community. Strong policies and action plans that delineate the steps divisions and schools will take to address these issues will further support positive school climates and create safer and more inclusive schools.

In addition, while respect for human diversity policies 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 policies and practices, and to demand this of their school districts and schools. Here is an example:

“In the course of its policy review cycle, a board is expected to embed the principles of equity and inclusive education in all its policies and practices and to integrate an equity and inclusive education focus into its way of doing business and all operations of its schools, including instructional practices...All the board’s policies, guidelines, programs, practices, and services should reflect the diverse viewpoints, needs, and aspirations of the broader community. Discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to equity and inclusive education should be identified and addressed so that students can see themselves represented in the curriculum, programs, culture, and teaching, administrative, and support staff of the school”.

**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](mailto:mygsa@egale.ca)  
Telephone (toll-free): 1.888.204.7777**



## DID YOU KNOW... ?

- ¾ of Canadian lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) students feel unsafe at school, as reported in “Youth Speak Up about Homophobia and Transphobia” (Egale Canada, 2009).



To access the Final Report on the First National School Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia, check out Egale’s national LGBTQ safer schools and inclusive education website: *MyGSA.ca*.

- Amendments made to The Public Schools Act in 2013 concerning Safe and Inclusive Schools require school boards to have a respect for human diversity policy and to ensure that the policy is implemented in each school in the school division or school district. This policy is also meant to “address training for teachers and other staff about bullying and prevention and strategies for promoting respect for human diversity and a positive school environment”.

See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>

Respect for human diversity policies must be prepared with “due regard for the principles of The Human Rights Code” and “must accommodate students who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that

- a) promote:
  - gender equity
  - antiracism
  - the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people who are disabled by barriers, or
  - the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities
- b) use the name “gay-straight alliance” or any other name that is consistent with the promotion of a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils.”

See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>

- Homophobia and transphobia are linked with alcohol and drug misuse, truancy to escape persecution, giving up on academic achievement, and suffering from mental and/or physical health conditions (Stonewall's The School Report, 2007).  
To download a copy of The School Report, go to [http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education\\_for\\_all/research/1790.asp](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/research/1790.asp).
- To remove the barriers and disincentives to education that exist for many children and youth, the Ontario government recommended ensuring that teachers and administrators better reflect the neighbourhoods they serve, developing and providing inclusive curriculum, and implementing services for families of all forms. (*The Roots of Youth Violence Report, Volume 1*, 2008). Information about this Report can be found at <http://www.rootsofyyouthviolence.on.ca>.
- The Department of Education and Advanced Learning document *A Whole-School Approach to Safety and Belonging: Preventing Violence and Bullying* states that “sometimes it becomes necessary for the school staff to take steps to ensure that students are understanding of unique differences among all people and that they accept all other students.” See: [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole\\_school\\_approach.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole_school_approach.html)
- The *Manitoba Human Rights Code* makes it against the law to discriminate against someone or to harass anyone because of sexual orientation or gender identity. The Code makes it against the law to discriminate against someone or to harass anyone because of sexual orientation or gender identity. This right to be free from discrimination and harassment applies to your school environment. This means that a person, student or staff member, cannot be treated unequally or subjected to harassment in a school environment because of sexual orientation or gender identity. If harassment or discrimination have been reported to administration and have not been addressed, a human rights complaint can be filed with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. See <http://www.manitobahumanrights.ca/>

- The Manitoba Teachers' Society has a policy on Equity Issues that includes: a “commitment to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all federal and provincial legislation related to human rights, which accept that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and human rights.’; The elimination of all forms of discrimination in the schools and communities of Manitoba, with discrimination being defined by the Manitoba Human Rights Code, Section 9(1); That Society members and employees promote and understanding and active inclusion of ‘equity-seeking groups,’ the applicable characteristics of which are specified in the Manitoba Human Rights Code, Section 9(2); and that the Society actively advocate and promote actions that provide plans for prevention of and appropriate responses to discriminatory incidents, develop a climate of respect for diversity, and promote positive interactions among all members of the education community.” Furthermore, the policy states that “the Society provide appropriate and/or necessary support for members who identify themselves as members of the GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) community and, further, that the Society support all members in providing safe and inclusive learning environments that respect human diversity and prevent the expression of negative judgments based on gender bias, sexual stereotyping, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.”

See: <http://www.mbteach.org/library2/constitution-bylaws-and-policies-governing-the-manitoba-teachers-society>



# FROM QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT LGBTQ HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION AND POLICY IN MANITOBA

**Q:**

*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?*

**A:**

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-spirited, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) matters. These clubs support LGBTQ students, allies, and youth with LGBTQ parents 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 Kit. See <http://MyGSA.ca/content/terms-concepts>

Regarding the film, your principal should 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>

**YOUR PRINCIPAL SHOULD HAVE SAID** that the Department of Education and Advanced Learning is supportive of Manitoba’s diverse school communities and that in Manitoba’s publicly-funded school environments—whether public, independent, high school, middle school, or elementary school—diversity explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>26</sup>



Your principal should have told the parent that a Gay-Straight Alliance is *not* a “dating club.”

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



Inclusive curriculum  
is integral to  
student success.

1. The Department of Education and Advanced Learning document *A Whole-School Approach to Safety and Belonging: Preventing Violence and Bullying* states that “sometimes it becomes necessary for the school staff to take steps to ensure that students are understanding of unique differences among all people and that they accept all other students.”

See: [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole\\_school\\_approach.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole_school_approach.html)

The preamble to The Public Schools Act includes the following: “WHEREAS public schools should contribute to the development of a fair, compassionate, healthy and prosperous society; AND WHEREAS the public school system must take into account the diverse needs and interests of the people of Manitoba”. <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>

GSA's address both of these statements by helping to develop understanding and awareness, and providing a safe space for LGBTQ youth in schools.



Any learning environment that neglects to integrate LGBTQ matters into the curriculum is unwelcoming to LGBTQ students, allies, and youth with LGBTQ parents 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>

2. Amendments made to The Public Schools Act in 2013 concerning Safe and Inclusive Schools require school boards to have a respect for human diversity policy and to ensure that the policy is implemented in each school in the school division or school district.

The respect for human diversity policy must be prepared with “due regard for the principles of The Human Rights Code” and “must accommodate students who want to establish and lead organizations that

- a) promote:
  - gender equity
  - antiracism
  - the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people who are disabled by barriers, or
  - the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities
- b) use the name “gay-straight alliance” or any other name that is consistent with the promotion of a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils.”

The Public Schools Act applies to all public and funded independent schools. See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>

Your principal should have explained to the parent that GSAs are an important part of inclusive and diverse school environments.

3. Manitoba's Public Schools Act requires each school division to "ensure that each pupil enrolled in a school within the jurisdiction of the school board is provided with a safe and caring school environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours". See <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250e.php>. The principal should have explained that GSAs help create safe and caring school environments.

The Public Schools Act applies to all public and funded independent schools.

4. The respect for human diversity policy must be prepared with "due regard for the principles of *The Human Rights Code*." Gender identity and sexual orientation are both applicable characteristics that are protected from discrimination under *The Code*. <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/h175e.php>
5. Several school divisions in Manitoba already have respect for human diversity policies that specifically mention sexual orientation and gender identity. You can find some of them in the Guide section of this kit. Check out your division's policy, bring it to your teacher's attention, and speak up!
6. The Department of Education and Advanced Learning document *A Whole-School Approach to Safety and Belonging: Preventing Violence and Bullying* states that "sometimes it becomes necessary for the school staff to take steps to ensure that students are understanding of unique differences among all people and that they accept all other students." A GSA could help in these efforts. See: [http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole\\_school\\_approach.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/guidance/whole_school_approach.html)

Department of Education and Advanced Learning documents apply to all public and funded independent schools.

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*.





## RESPONSES TO EGALE CANADA'S FIRST NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY



"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 asked them to stop they would laugh or stop for a few days then start again. I told the teacher and they jokingly asked 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 they 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."



"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



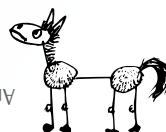
## SAFE SCHOOLS QUIZ

Based on Egale's First National School Climate Survey Report "Youth Speak Up about Homophobia and Transphobia":

1. What percentage of trans students feel reasonably safe at school?
  - a) 5%
  - b) 15%
  - 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) 75%

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. Of every 10 LGBTQ students, how many would not be comfortable talking about LGBTQ matters to their principals?
- a) 1
  - b) 3
  - c) 6
  - d) 10

Answers: 1. a. 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.



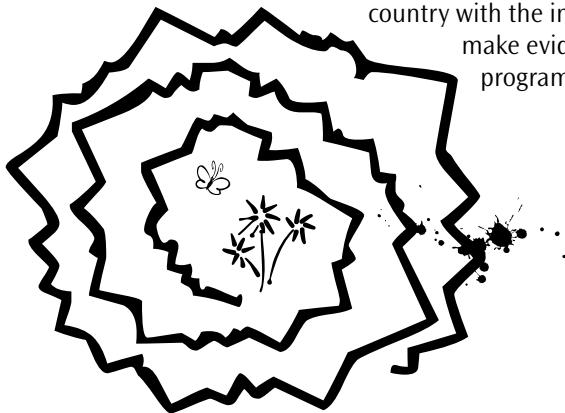
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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.<sup>1</sup> 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 ( $\chi^2$ ) 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.



<sup>1</sup> 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-

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 lgbtq 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

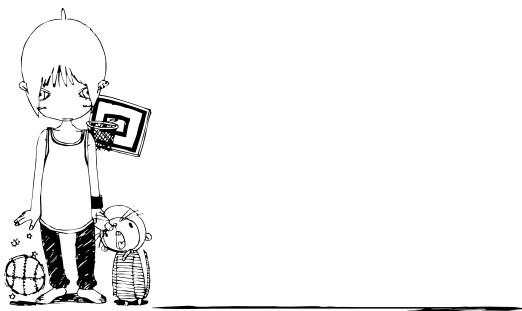
Not only do youth not want to have to hear their loved ones spoken about in cruel ways, but youth with LGBTQ family members also avoid disclosure to protect themselves from harassment. As one student wrote, “I am not out about my family members because people are so stupid that they think that if you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

**Safe and Caring Schools –  
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