

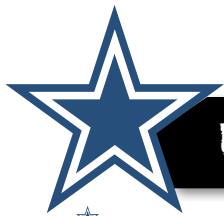


Equity and Inclusive Education Resource Kit for  
Newfoundland and Labrador, Grades 7 -12

# INFORMATION FOR ADMINISTRATORS



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## INFORMATION FOR ADMINISTRATORS



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## MAKING SCHOOLS IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR SAFER AND MORE INCLUSIVE SPACES

The Newfoundland and Labrador Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) launched in 2006 has six strategic priorities:

- Increasing public awareness and attitudinal change about violence against vulnerable populations;
- Increasing community participation;
- Improving legislation, policy, programs, services, information and facilities;
- Supporting Aboriginal women and children;
- Supporting Research and Development; and
- Improving leadership, coordination and accountability.

Within this strategy is an acknowledgment that factors such as sexual orientation increase the risk of being a victim of violence, and therefore the targeted vulnerable populations include people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual.

The guiding principles for this Violence Prevention Initiative include:

- People have the right to a safe and secure environment.
- Health, well-being and productivity are enhanced in a violence-free environment.
- The social and cultural roots of violence are based on inequality. While all women, children and seniors are more likely to be victims of violence, factors such as ability, sexual orientation, economic status or ethnicity can put them at even higher risk.
- Society reinforces violence through expressions of sexism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, and other biased attitudes.
- Violence is a choice and is preventable. There is strong evidence that effective intervention can reduce and prevent violence.
- Prevention of violence is everyone's responsibility.

**This is a unique opportunity for schools in Newfoundland and Labrador to take a leadership role.**



- The elimination of violence requires a comprehensive response including prevention, public education, services and enforcement of the law.
- Criminal and other acts of violence and abuse require effective consequences including punishment under the law.

For the full report, visit <http://www.gov.nf.ca/VPI/initiative/index.html>

As partners in this initiative, the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education created the *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* in 2006. The purpose of the *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* is to provide a framework for each school district and school to develop their own safe and caring schools policy and teams. Each school is also required to develop an action plan.

The Department of Education's *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* states that safe and caring learning environments are built on six guiding principles, which include:

- A positive environment is respectful and caring of all its members;
- Fair and consistently implemented school policies and codes of behaviour contribute to positive environments and reduce bullying, racism, and other forms of harassment;
- An inclusive curriculum develops an understanding of the underlying causes of violence and inequality, recognizes diversity, promotes equal opportunity and enhances safety, respect and mutual understanding;
- Positive social behaviour, beliefs and values are taught and reinforced throughout the curriculum

For the complete policy visit [http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/student supportservices/publications/scs\\_prov\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/student supportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf)

Sexual orientation is identified within the *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* which provides guidance for embracing diversity and fostering respect.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association has a *Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Policy* that includes:

- we recognize that people of all gender identities and sexual orientation have the right to be treated fairly, equitably and with dignity.
- we acknowledge that students and staff come from diverse backgrounds, and we advocate for educational systems and environments that are safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming for all people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

The policy is available at [http://www.nlta.nl.ca/files/documents/policy\\_hndbk.pdf](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/files/documents/policy_hndbk.pdf).

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 its Safe Schools Campaign, Egale Canada is 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.

The goal is to help 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*;<sup>3</sup> Equity and Inclusive Education Resource Kits; and an anti-heterosexism, anti-homophobia, anti-biphobia, anti-transphobia, and intersectionality workshop series.



Evidence that these resources are vitally needed in schools is seen in 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, their principal, or their coach 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.<sup>4</sup>

The Department of Education is demonstrating its commitment to upholding the values of genuine acceptance and respect in learning environments by initiating the *Provincial Safe and Caring Schools Policy*, requiring districts to develop their own policies, and requiring schools to develop action plans. The Department is also upholding the government's vision, as promoted through the VPI, of “people living in safe, caring communities where there is respect for each other, and violence is unacceptable”. The following recommended initiatives regarding Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), Curriculum, and Training present a unique opportunity for schools in

Newfoundland and Labrador to take a leadership role with regard to LGBTQ human rights, inclusive education, and safer and more welcoming schools. Within the context of the Department of Education's *Safe and Caring Schools Policy*, the goal of creating "peaceful schools where every child feels nurtured, safe and able to focus on learning" can be realized.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gov.nf.ca/VPI/initiative/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs\\_prov\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://MyGSA.ca>

<sup>4</sup> <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gov.nf.ca/VPI/initiative/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs\\_prov\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf)

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education's *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* requires school district teams to establish guidelines for the "implementation of preventative and proactive school-wide practices that foster positive behaviours by all members of the school community". School teams are also to include school-wide preventative initiatives in their action plans.

GSAs fall under the category of preventative and proactive school-wide practices. They foster positive behaviours of awareness, understanding and support for LGBTQ students and non-LGBTQ students alike in confronting and eliminating homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism – and the discrimination, harassment and violence that can result from these biased attitudes. Harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity exists in our society and are prohibited by the *Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Act*. Establishing GSAs is one way schools can become places where LGBTQ individuals can count on being safe and feeling accepted.

**"School action plans must include school-wide prevention initiatives..."**



In *Every Class in Every School*, 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 (p. 80).

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>9</sup>

A significant finding in *Every Class in Every School* 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%)" (p. 81).<sup>10</sup>

For further information on the value of GSAs in creating safer spaces in schools, see "Weighing Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) against Generic Human Rights Clubs" (from Egale Canada's *Every Class in Every School*), included at the end of this section.

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/GSAGuide>.



### 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, 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 *MyGSA.ca* continues to be blocked at your school, contact Egale at 1.888.204.7777 (toll-free) or [mygsa@egale.ca](mailto:mygsa@egale.ca) and let us know.



<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs\\_prov\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.justice.gov.nl.ca/hrc/act/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> This report will also be available at <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>

<sup>10</sup> <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>

*Unless we are talked about in the school curriculum, these issues are going to continue to grow. Without education, we are never going to combat this ignorance.* - Jeremy, former student

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education's *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* speaks about the importance of inclusive curriculum in its guiding principles as follows:

An inclusive curriculum develops an understanding of the underlying causes of violence and inequality, recognizes diversity, promotes equal opportunity and enhances safety, respect and mutual understanding.<sup>11</sup>

Keeping in mind that the VPI recognizes sexual orientation as one of the factors that increase someone's risk of being a victim of violence, an inclusive curriculum must include positive images and examples of LGBTQ lives and realities. When students 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. What appears in the curriculum, as well as what is left out, sends a message



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


of what is valued in society. The omission of LGBTQ issues and realities in the curriculum is a manifestation of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism. Since, according to the VPI, "violence is reinforced through expressions of sexism... heterosexism and other biased attitudes"<sup>12</sup>, making sure these are not present in the curriculum and challenging them when they arise are in keeping with the VPI and the provincial *Safe and Caring Schools Policy*. Furthermore, the opportunity to examine and think critically about these isms (and others) and the way they manifest in society, the media and 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 caring schools for all members of the school community and to fulfill the VPI vision of “communities where violence is considered unacceptable”.<sup>13</sup>

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).

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association is committed to equitable and inclusive education for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Their *Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Policy* includes (among other things) the following commitments:

- We accept that as educators we have a critical role to play in creating these environments in our workplaces, and also within the broader society and will uphold actions or take actions to do so, including educating young people and preparing them to live in open, pluralistic and democratic societies where discrimination and aggression is not tolerated.
- We will monitor curriculum materials, pedagogy, policies, practices and programs to ensure that they are not homophobic or heterosexist, and further, we will make complaint against any which are found to be so.<sup>14</sup>



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

The complete policy can be found at the end of this section and at [http://www.nlta.nl.ca/files/documents/policy\\_hndbk.pdf](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/files/documents/policy_hndbk.pdf).

Under the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education’s *Safe and Caring Schools Policy*, school districts must create their own safe and caring schools policy, and

schools must develop action plans. An inclusive curriculum demonstrates appreciation and respect for diversity, principles included in the guidelines for all members of the school community.<sup>15</sup> District policies and school action plans can further demonstrate commitment to safe and caring schools for all by clearly outlining that LGBTQ issues must be part of an inclusive curriculum.

Ontario has further outlined the importance of an inclusive education:

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.<sup>15a</sup>

For more information, see <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.html>

According to *Every Class in Every School*,

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

## BE PROACTIVE IN TAKING A LEADERSHIP ROLE

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



are respectable, but they and their issues are not fit for classroom discussion (71).<sup>16</sup>

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 Equity and Inclusive Education 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 district, contact [mygsa@egale.ca](mailto:mygsa@egale.ca) or 1.888.204.7777 (toll-free).



<sup>11</sup> [http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs\\_prov\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.gov.nf.ca/VPI/initiative/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.gov.nf.ca/VPI/initiative/index.html>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.nlta.nl.ca/files/documents/policy\\_hndbk.pdf](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/files/documents/policy_hndbk.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

<sup>15a</sup> [http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs\\_prov\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>

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 (17).<sup>17</sup>

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 and heterosexism 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 *Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Act*.

The *Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Act* (the *Act*) is a law that recognizes the “inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family”.<sup>18</sup> The *Act* 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 Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission. <http://www.justice.gov.nl.ca/hrc/contact.html>

The *Nunatsiavut Constitution* states that “no person who is subject to Inuit law may unfairly discriminate against a Labrador Inuk on one or more grounds referred to in section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.” (section 2.4.4) And that “every Labrador Inuk has inherent dignity and the right to have his or her dignity respected and protected; and every Labrador Inuk has a responsibility to treat others with respect and to contribute to the wellbeing, safety and freedom of all members of Labrador Inuit society.” (section 2.4.5). Sexual orientation is included in Section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Although the category of gender identity is not explicitly mentioned in the *Charter*, the category of sex is protected and has been interpreted by many courts to include trans persons.

According to *Every Class in Every School*,

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,
- to feel comfortable talking to a counsellor and to feel comfortable talking to classmates,
- 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 (p. 5-6).<sup>19</sup>



The national safer schools and inclusive education website, *MyGSA.ca*, has a space for sharing and reviewing school and school district policies pertaining to LGBTQ matters and anti-heterosexism, 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 school districts across the country: <http://MyGSA.ca/SchoolBoardPolicies>.



<sup>17</sup> <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.justice.gov.nl.ca/hrc/act/index.html>

One of the required components of schools' safe and caring schools action plans is professional development and training of school personnel. Training about LGBTQ issues helps to increase understanding and awareness of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism as well as teachers' responsibilities. Because homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism 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 and heterosexism, how to recognize them, the impact they have as well as how to intervene in order to help create safe and caring schools. While GSAs provide education for staff and students, staff are role models and shape the curriculum within their classrooms. 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.

The Ontario Department of Education is clear on the crucial role that teachers play: "In order to promote a positive school climate, school boards must provide opportunities for all members of the school community to increase their knowledge and understanding of such issues as homophobia, gender-based violence, sexual harassment, inappropriate sexual behaviour, critical media literacy, and safe Internet use" and "Boards must also help school staff to give support to students who wish to participate in gay-straight alliances and in other student-led activities that promote understanding and development of healthy relationships. Schools must also engage their school councils and student councils to support these student-led activities."<sup>20</sup>

For more information, see <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.html>.



**School action plans are expected to include professional development.**

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education has partnered with Egale to deliver training. The Department of Education and the school districts have training and resources available.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association also provides workshops as well as resources on LGBTQ issues. There is also a Newfoundland and Labrador resource book entitled *Piecing Together a Caring Community: A Resource Book on Dismantling Homophobia* by Ann Shortall. Information and a link to this book can be found in the resource section of this guide.

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 district!



<sup>20</sup> <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.html>



The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education's *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* includes sexual orientation in its examples of the diversity that is to be embraced and respected by all members of the school community. Creating district and school policies and school action plans that clearly highlight the needs and realities of LGBTQ individuals as they relate to the creation of safe and caring schools is required to pave the way for safer schools for all students.

The Violence Prevention Initiative recognizes that society reinforces violence through expressions of sexism, ageism, classism, heterosexism and other biased attitudes.<sup>21</sup> This can no longer go on in our schools. Unless school administrators recognize and acknowledge, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism, include the clear message that these are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any form in a school environment, and commit to acting on these expectations by training staff, demanding inclusive curriculum and teaching practice, and creating and revising policies and practices, schools will not be safe for LGBTQ individuals.

*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 (p. 88).<sup>22</sup>

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education has begun this process, however much remains to be done to ensure that this message is heard and implemented at the district and school levels. Part of this process will be stronger and clearer language that names LGBTQ bullying, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and cis-normativity as an issue in schools. There are clear expectations that districts and

schools must take steps to address these issues in order to make schools safer.

Some provincial Departments of Education have begun to recognize the need and benefit of inclusive and equitable policies and to demand these 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 (16).<sup>23</sup>

**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



<sup>21</sup> Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Violence Prevention Initiative

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>



## DID YOU KNOW... ?

- Three-quarters 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](http://MyGSA.ca).



- 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.rootsofyouthviolence.on.ca>.

- As schools become safer and more caring places, LGBTQ students will eventually have LGBTQ teachers and other school staff as role models.

Students should be able to see themselves represented in the curriculum, programs, and culture of the school. Also, since schools have a pivotal role in developing the work force of tomorrow, students should be able to see themselves represented in the teaching, administrative, and support staff employed at the school.”<sup>24</sup>

- The *Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Act* (the Act) is a law that recognizes the “inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of

the human family”.<sup>25</sup> The *Act* 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 Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission. <http://www.justice.gov.nl.ca/hrc/contact.html>

- The *Nunatsiavut Constitution* states that “no person who is subject to Inuit law may unfairly discriminate against a Labrador Inuk on one or more grounds referred to in section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.” (section 2.4.4) And that “every Labrador Inuk has inherent dignity and the right to have his or her dignity respected and protected; and every Labrador Inuk has a responsibility to treat others with respect and to contribute to the wellbeing, safety and freedom of all members of Labrador Inuit society.” (section 2.4.5). Sexual orientation is included in Section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Although the category of gender identity is not explicitly mentioned in the *Charter*, the category of sex is protected and has been interpreted by many courts to include trans persons.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association has a *Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Policy*. It can be found in the NLTA Policy Handbook on their website: [http://www.nlta.nl.ca/files/documents/policy\\_hndbk.pdf](http://www.nlta.nl.ca/files/documents/policy_hndbk.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/119.html>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.justice.gov.nl.ca/hrc/act/index.html>



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

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" (referring to the GSA) at our school and that certain movies should not be shown in classrooms. I didn't hear the principal's response. What should she have said?*

A:

As the principal, it is important to inform the parent that a Gay-Straight Alliance or 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 and they also serve as support groups for LGBTQ students, allies, and youth with LGBTQ parents or other family members. (For more extensive definitions, see the Terms & Concepts section this Equity and Inclusive Education Resource Kit.)

**YOUR PRINCIPAL SHOULD HAVE SAID** that Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Education is supportive of diverse school communities and that in Newfoundland and Labrador's publicly-funded school environments—whether high school, middle school, or elementary school—diversity explicitly includes sexual orientation.



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

Regarding the film, inform the parent that the goal of the Newfoundland and Labrador Safe and Caring Schools Policy is to create "peaceful schools where every child feels nurtured, safe, and able to focus on learning". One of the guiding principles of the policy states that "inclusive curriculum develops an understanding of the underlying causes of violence and inequality, recognizes diversity, promotes equal opportunity, and enhances safety, respect and mutual understanding."<sup>1</sup> In addition to these important results, an inclusive curriculum helps students to feel engaged and excited about what they are learning, and supported by teachers and staff.<sup>2</sup>

For more extensive definitions, see the Terms & Concepts section of Egale's national LGBTQ safer schools and inclusive education website, [MyGSA.ca](http://MyGSA.ca).



**Inclusive curriculum is integral to student success.**

Given that “students are receiving conflicting messages and misinformation from the media and from each other” about LGBTQ matters, GSAs are an important component of a student’s learning process.<sup>3</sup> Explain to the parent that GSAs are an important part of inclusive and diverse school environments.

1. The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education’s *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* “expects all members of the school community to embrace the diversity of all peoples, regardless of...sexual orientation.”<sup>4</sup> The school community includes parents, and so your response should help these parents understand how GSAs contribute to this expectation so that they can help you in your efforts to create a safe and caring school.
2. The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education’s *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* is meant to provide a framework for each school district to develop their own safe and caring schools policy. Each school is also required to develop an action plan. Part of the school’s responsibility is to ensure that their action plan is communicated to all members of the school community. This means that parents, students, and staff should know what is included in the school action plan, as well as what their responsibilities are. How are you communicating your school action plan to your community?

In addition, school action plans are supposed to include professional development and training. Training around LGBTQ issues would help to increase understanding and awareness of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and cis-normativity as well as teachers' responsibilities, thereby helping teachers (and all staff) to feel better prepared to intervene in cases of harassment or bullying, as well as better prepared to answer some of the questions students, staff and parents may pose. Such training will help create a safe and caring learning environment, as outlined in the Department of Education's policy. The Department of Education and the school districts have training and resources available. The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) also provides workshops and resources. Remind the parent of their own responsibility as listed in the code of conduct in the *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* which expects all members of the school community to promote safe, caring and inclusive practice by doing their best to embrace diversity. In addition, in order to foster a safe and caring learning environment, the *Safe and Caring Schools Policy* asks for parents to support the efforts of the school community by encouraging their children to abide by the code of conduct and demonstrate appreciation and respect for diversity. Sexual orientation is listed as one aspect of diversity.<sup>5</sup>

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*.



<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs\\_prov\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.carfleo.org/Family%20Life/Intermediate/Grade%208%20Same%20Sex%20Attraction.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs\\_prov\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs\\_prov\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/scs_prov_policy.pdf)



# WEIGHING GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

## (GSAs) AGAINST GENERIC HUMAN RIGHTS CLUBS

From Egale Canada's Every Class in Every School (p139 - 140)

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

...

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.

Understanding the importance of GSAs, and how they differ from generic human rights groups can be achieved by considering several factors:



### Visibility

The explicit outreach a GSA can do to LGBTQ communities is often unmatched by generic human rights groups. While human rights groups can be publically known as supporting a number of causes (including LGBTQ rights) it would be difficult for all of their branding, promotion, and outreach to reflect this at the same level as a GSA. As this is the core message of GSA groups, GSAs present greater opportunities to have an impact on LGBTQ students, as well as the broader student body, with messages regarding LGBTQ safer and more inclusive schools. They do this:

#### A. WITHIN THE SCHOOL

- i. GSAs can be effective at a school level by simply existing, even affecting students who don't necessarily attend meetings. The presence of posters, announcement, events and activities can have an effect on the school environment, presenting students with

the idea that LGBTQ identities have a place in the school, and society at large. Directly engaging LGBTQ youth and their allies within school, as well as those who are ambivalent regarding LGBTQ themes, is an excellent means towards addressing school climate, isolation, promoting social connectedness, issues which are further elaborated on in Every Class in Every School.

## **B. WITHIN THE BROADER COMMUNITY**

- i. The same potential exists for the GSA to indirectly have an impact on staff and parent communities that are part of the school community. The existence of a GSA is something that can be discussed and broadcast throughout the surrounding neighbourhood, both through supportive and damning conversation meaning that word of a LGBTQ specific safe-space existing in a public institution will reach many different ears, and maybe most significantly, those of LGBTQ youth.
- ii. The GSA itself, through its visibility, can provide a strong point of connection for local LGBTQ focussed service providers and youth organization to facilitate information sharing, presentations, and a number of positive interactions between the school and the broader community.



## **Commitment to LGBTQ Safer Space**

GSAs are themselves about the creation of safer space within the school environment. Once safer space is established, students and educators can begin organizing around making the entire school community safer and more inclusive.

With LGBTQ issues at the core of a GSAs mission, these groups have particularly powerful potential to address the numerous issues facing LGBTQ youth, including invisibility, bullying, discrimination, coming out, challenges at home, etc... While generic human rights groups have some potential to address these issues, the focus on a broad diversity of human rights topics means the specific challenges facing LGBTQ youth cannot be addressed as comprehensively. In worst-case scenarios, generic groups can ignore existing homophobic, transphobic behaviours in the larger school community and even reproduce them within the smaller community of the human rights group.

At the root of a GSA's work is the acknowledgement that not all spaces can be safe for LGBTQ people, and that the creation of a safer space involves the direct and explicit acknowledgement and neutralizing of a number of existing social stigmas and stereotypes regarding LGBTQ people. Again, since a GSA is designed for this exact purpose, it is currently the best tool to address this issue.



## **Overall accomplishment of LGBTQ safer and inclusive schools**

From a very practical perspective, GSAs can get more done for the LGBTQ community because they are specifically focussed on LGBTQ issues. While generic human rights groups are equally capable in terms of output, at the end of the day the focus of their work will not be as LGBTQ specific, and hence impact the LGBTQ community less than that of a GSA.

This is particularly relevant because GSAs have so much work to do. Simply providing a constant supportive space in the school can be work enough, but further tasks can include hosting events and presentations, expanding LGBTQ library and class materials, partnering with local youth groups, collaborating with existing school clubs, taking field trips, and a number of other projects to promote the school as an LGBTQ safer and more inclusive environment.



## **Institutional Response**

Supporting a GSA is an excellent opportunity for schools to explicitly take leadership on LGBTQ inclusion and safety in school. Related to the above point of visibility, having a GSA, or a safe space group that explicitly and singularly address LGBTQ issues means the school is clearly broadcasting their support for LGBTQ safety and inclusion in schools. This message, when matched with comprehensive and inclusive policy regarding support of a diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities is an extremely significant message to youth, staff, and parent communities alike. While endorsement of a generic human rights club can act to broadcast a schools support to a number of issues, the potential for that message to resonate specifically with LGBTQ youth, educators and parents is somewhat lessened.



## Why not have both?

The above points illustrate a variety of ways in which a GSA can more effectively address the challenge of creating safer and more inclusive schools around issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. These arguments should be compelling enough to convince anyone of the importance of GSAs. However, it should be said that what are referred to here as “generic human rights clubs” are often valuable and important additions to a thriving school community. With that in mind, none of the arguments should be taken as reasons not to have a human rights club at your school. Indeed, these clubs can present a number of opportunities to engage students interested in a broad number of causes. At the same time, clubs such as these present opportunities for cooperation and interaction with a number of other school clubs, including GSAs. With that in mind, why not have both at your school?



## 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 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 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 recieved 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>.





## LGBT SAFE SCHOOLS QUIZ

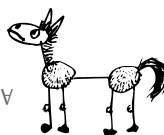
Based on Egale's First National School Climate Survey Report "Youth Speak Up about Homophobia and Transphobia": <http://MyGSA.ca/YouthSpeakUp>



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





## SOCIOMETRY OF OPPRESSION

Used with the permission of Susan Diane RN, BA, MA

Grades: 10-12

Time: 30 to 60 minutes

### Context:

The basic premise for this experiential educational exercise came from Logan et al. (1996) who were educating social work students about heterosexual privilege. Although this educational tool still includes sexual orientation/identity, it has been expanded to include gender, race/ethnicity, age, class, occupation, ability, and religion. It is expanded here to give a sense of the interconnections and complexity of identity within the multiple structures of oppression in a hierarchical, capitalist, patriarchal society. Although the activity is complex, students can gain a sense of these issues through role play and assuming other identities.

### Learning Outcomes:

- to introduce the concepts of privilege and oppression and that all individuals are affected by them;
- to develop a better understanding of the complexity of individuals within our society;
- to increase awareness and understanding of the meanings of power and control;
- to gain a better understanding of how and why our culture maintains the status quo; and
- to develop empathy for others.

### Preparation:

- Photocopy and cut identity cards.
- If necessary, photocopy the Sociometry of Oppressions Question Sheets to read out to the group.
- A fairly large open space is needed which often necessitates moving furniture or using a gym or hall instead of a classroom.
- A class of about 15-20 participants seems ideal, but it can be used with smaller or larger numbers.
- About half an hour is needed to complete the exercise, although this will vary depending on the amount of time it takes for debriefing each participant.

### Lesson:

1. Explain that participants will be given an identity card and asked to move forward one step (or its equivalent if there are wheelchair participants) when answering affirmatively to a series of questions. It is helpful to explain that everyone will be taking the same amount of risk in playing the game. If it seems the students may be reluctant, try using a “fish bowl” technique, where some students do the activity and others watch. (All the students report on what they learned from the activity. It does not work as well, but is one way to adapt this for shy students.)

2.

Hand out cards to each participant. Instruct them not to show their cards to other participants. You may need to help some participants individually if they have questions about their identity card. If you have a small number of participants, try to pick identities so that you have a mix of sexual orientations, genders, ethnic origins, religious denominations, and abilities.

3.

Have participants line up against a wall. Start with all participants facing towards the wall. Ask those who can be open about their sexual orientation to turn around and face forward—you may choose to broaden this by asking all those who can be open about their own sexual orientation and gender identity as well as the sexual orientations and gender identities of their loved ones to turn around and face forward.

4.

Read out the questions regarding social and economic privileges which are worded so that those who can participate in the activity (e.g., take out a loan) can take a step forward. Those who would not be able to do that in our society must remain where they are. After reading out all the questions, and allowing participants to move forward to various degrees, have participants stay in their resulting positions of privilege when the questions are finished.

5.

Ask each one in turn to read out their identity and discuss what the experience was like for her or him. You are actually debriefing each participant, but others will usually join in the discussion as this process continues. Be sure to have each and every student discuss what the experience was like for her or him in order to ensure they can all make sense of what they experienced. As in any experiential activity, be prepared for the possibility of someone's personal experiences being triggered so that further debriefing may be needed. Participants are asked to take on a pseudo-identity (a type of role-playing) here, which usually does not trigger major personal revelations.

6.

After each student has shared what it was like, discuss how privilege works and how those with it can be successful, while those without it find themselves falling behind in our society. Talk about intersectionality and “double and triple oppressions.” This is when a person has a number of interconnecting factors holding them back (e.g., racism, homophobia, and transphobia). Discuss the reason this happens in our society. Why are groups oppressed? What is the purpose of oppressing a group of people? Whose needs does it serve? Is it acceptable? Legal? Fair? Ethical? What can we do to change this? How can we do it? Who is responsible for what is happening in our society? What did we learn from this discussion?

### Related Activities:

- Have the students write a journal about any of the questions above that they are interested in.
- Share with the students some historical examples of oppression, such as Apartheid, the Holocaust, Black slavery in the USA, the Stonewall Riots, and the continuing oppression of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) community. Have them research a group of people (or a specific person) and the oppression they have suffered and present their findings to the class.

Share your thoughts about this exercise on the *MyGSA.ca* discussion forums!






Pseudo-Identity Cards:

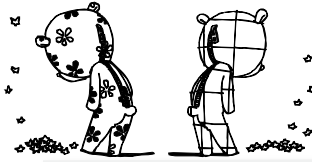


19 year-old gay male who has a girlfriend and secretly has sex with guys. His girlfriend thinks they should get married.	16 year-old white female who had sex for the first time last year. She has just found out she is HIV+.	17 year-old First Nations female. She is talented at basketball and wants to play, but she's usually late for practice because she has to look after her siblings.
17 year-old white heterosexual female whose father is rich. She skis in Whistler and stays in their cottage during the summer.	16 year-old Cambodian female who is an ESL student. Her family ignores her and she is behind at school by 2 years. She is always by herself and looks lonely.	Indo-Canadian female who is dating a white male. Her family is against the relationship. She is thinking of getting pregnant.
White male Goth student who is in a relationship with a black female. His family lives in poverty.	Grade 8 white male student, skateboarder. He has a close group of friends, both male and female.	Grade 8 student with learning difficulties, thinking of dropping out of school. Parents don't really expect him to graduate.
Grade 12 student who is an out lesbian. Her friends are trying to find a sponsor teacher to start a GSA in their high school.	17 year-old white depressed female who uses a wheelchair and is questioning her sexuality. She has attempted suicide four times.	15 year-old white female student who is in a violent relationship with an older man. She is scared to tell anyone.
16 year-old straight male hippy who smokes pot openly and was home-schooled.	Grade 12 trans M2F (male-to-female) student. Wants to wear dresses and make-up to school and use the female washroom.	Grade 10 female student who cares about the environment and educates others about food choices.

15 year-old white male who skips school most days and hangs out at the mall. He is starting to do drugs.	17 year-old white lesbian stay-at-home-mom of two small children living on welfare. She is studying by distance education.	19 year-old, vegetarian female rock musician in a relationship with another woman. She identifies as bisexual.
17 year-old female with a one year-old baby, living with her parents. She is trying to finish her last year of high school.	17 year-old Caucasian female who is living on the street. She is addicted to crack.	19 year-old lesbian female, who is a practising Wiccan.
19 year-old white heterosexual female who is in a relationship with an older Jamaican-Canadian man.	16 year-old white male who lives with his mom. She is addicted to heroin. He was recently beaten up by her boyfriend.	16 year-old gay male who is in the closet. He dates girls and plays sports. He recently met a guy he likes.
16 year-old lesbian high school student who uses sign language to communicate.	16 year-old First Nations female student going out with a white male. She practices traditional native spirituality.	16 year-old female who works at the bakery to help her family that has recently immigrated. Her mom speaks very little English.
17 year-old student who identifies as queer and is a practicing Muslim.	Grade 9 student going to a Catholic school and who believes strongly in her religion. Her best friend since kindergarten just came out to her as gay.	Attractive and popular athlete with 2 dads. Nobody knows.

## Sociometry of Oppression for Teenagers: revised list of questions for lesson plan

- 
1. Going to school every day is something I look forward to.
  2. I am confident that I will do well in most of my school subjects.
  3. I look forward to seeing my friends at school.
  4. I have plans for post-secondary education.
  5. I plan to go to the school dance with my favourite friends.
  6. I usually meet my friends for lunch.
  7. I usually buy my lunch in the cafeteria.
  8. I get along well with the teachers at the school.
  9. I feel comfortable walking down the hallway at school.
  10. I feel comfortable in the change room before and after Phys. Ed.
  11. I am well regarded by other students.
  12. I am considered to be a leader at school.
  13. My parents listen to my plans and support them most of the time.
  14. My parents are happy to have my friends visit me in our home.
  15. My parents approve of the person (or people) I date.
  16. I am able to be open with my friends about my sexuality.
  17. I am able to be open with my parents about my sexuality.
  18. I feel comfortable visiting my friends at their home and meeting their parents.
  19. I am able to speak up in class and know I will be heard.
  20. The teachers at my school are good role models for me.



- 21. I feel comfortable letting others know my religious beliefs.
- 22. I am able to speak freely with others about what is important to me in life.

### Debriefing Questions (for feedback from individual participants)

[Feedback may be verbal—especially for a, b, c, d, and e—or students may write/discuss/reflect.]

- a. What holds people back?
- b. What gives people privilege?
- c. Are there inherent assumptions in our school system?
- d. Are there assumptions in our school system? (about roles, aspirations, abilities, interests of students)
- e. Do people in our homes and our communities make assumptions?
- f. How can we support other people to be themselves and to achieve their potential?
- g. What insights have you gained through this exercise?
- h. What would you like to tell others about identity?
- i. How important is a person's identity in achieving goals or having a happy life?





# 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.



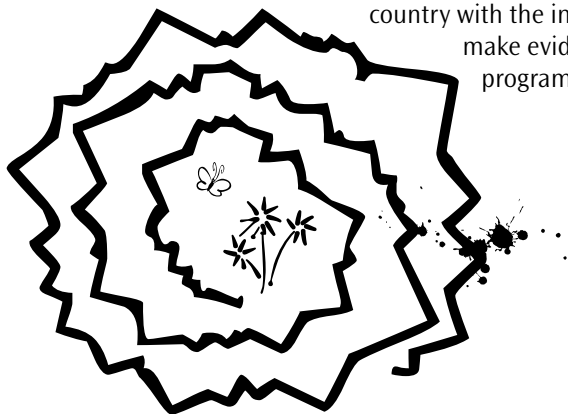
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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.

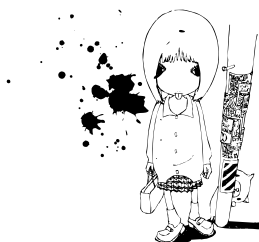


## **GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES (GSAs) AND OTHER LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE STUDENT GROUPS**

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 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 |

### Skiping 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.

**This Equity and Inclusive  
Education Resource Kit for  
Newfoundland and Labrador,  
Grades 7-12 is part of Egale's  
Safe Schools Campaign.**

