

A large, colorful rainbow umbrella is the central focus of the image, set against a background of a cloudy sky. The umbrella's canopy is divided into segments of various colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, creating a bright and airy atmosphere. The overall composition is centered and balanced, with the umbrella's peak pointing towards the top center of the frame.

# **Beyond the Rainbow:** Creating Safe School Spaces for LGBTQ Youth

**Jessica R. Toste, PhD**

Department of Special Education, The University of Texas at Austin  
National Advisory Council—Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)

## **Mission of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**

**GLSEN strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.**

We believe that such an atmosphere engenders a positive sense of self, which is the basis of educational achievement and personal growth. Since homophobia and heterosexism undermine a healthy school climate, we work to educate teachers, students, and the public at large about the damaging effects these forces have on youth and adults alike. We recognize that forces such as racism and sexism have similarly adverse impacts on communities and we support schools in seeking to redress all such inequities.





# Overview

## ① **LGBTQ 101**

- Terminology
- Check yourself

## ② **LGBTQ youth**

- Unique stressors
- Anti-LGBTQ bullying
- Texas school climate

## ③ **Creating safe schools**

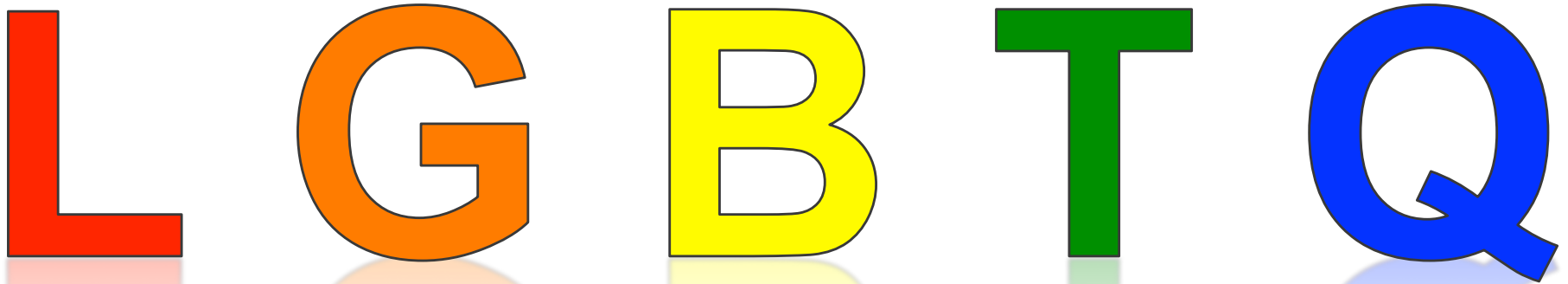
- Comprehensive policies
- Inclusive curriculum
- Supportive school staff

## ④ **Summary & Questions**

# **LGBTQ 101**

## Terminology



The image shows the letters 'L', 'G', 'B', 'T', and 'Q' in a row, each a different color: red, orange, yellow, green, and blue respectively. Each letter has a black outline and a soft, semi-transparent reflection of itself directly below it. The letters are contained within a thin black rectangular border.

- **Importance of respect for self-labeling**

# Terminology

- **Thinking about what we know**
  - We won't do this today
  - Match term with appropriate definition

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. <b>Sexual Orientation</b>    | <b>A</b> The irrational fear or aversion to transgender people of those who are perceived to break or blur societal norms regarding gender identity or gender expression.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. <b>Lesbian</b>               | <b>B</b> The inner feelings of who we are attracted or oriented to sexually and emotionally.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. <b>Gender Identity</b>       | <b>C</b> Refers to an irrational fear of or aversion to homosexuality or lesbian, gay or bisexual people.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. <b>Gender Expression</b>     | <b>D</b> An identity of a person whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth and/or whose gender expression is non-conforming.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. <b>Transgender</b>           | <b>E</b> An individual's physical characteristics, behaviors and presentation that are linked, traditionally, to either masculinity or femininity, such as: appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. <b>Gay</b>                   | <b>F</b> A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is female-identified and who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some other females.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. <b>Gender Non-Conforming</b> | <b>G</b> A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some males and some females.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. <b>Androgynous</b>           | <b>H</b> Applies to attitudes, bias and discrimination in favor of heterosexual sexuality and relationships. It includes the presumption that everyone is heterosexual or that male/female attractions and relationships are the norm and therefore superior. It is the belief that everyone is or should be straight. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. <b>Bisexual</b>              | <b>I</b> A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to some members of the same sex.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. <b>Transphobia</b>          | <b>J</b> How we identify ourselves in terms of our gender.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. <b>Homophobia</b>           | <b>K</b> An identity of a person who has gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal gender expectations.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. <b>Heterosexism</b>         | <b>L</b> An umbrella term used to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to heteronormative society.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. <b>Queer</b>                | <b>M</b> Having the characteristics or nature of both maleness and femaleness; neither specifically feminine nor masculine.  |



# Sexual Orientation

- **The inner feelings of who we are attracted or oriented to sexually and/or emotionally.** Many individuals begin to examine or accept their sexual orientation during the identity forming years.



# Sexual Orientation

- ✧ **Straight/Heterosexual:** A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually/emotionally attracted to some members of the “opposite” sex (specifically, a male who is attracted to some females or a female who is attracted to some males).
- ✧ **Lesbian:** A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is female-identified and who is sexually/emotionally attracted to some other females.
- ✧ **Gay:** A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is male-identified and is sexually/emotionally attracted to some other males.
  - Can refer to both males and females, but many people prefer the term *lesbian* for females.
- ✧ **Bisexual:** A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is sexually/emotionally attracted to some males and some females.





# Gender Identity

- **How we identify ourselves in terms of our gender.** Generally, this includes an individual identifying as female, male, or both/other.
- ✧ **Cisgender:** An identity of a person whose gender identity is aligned with their sex assigned at birth.
- ✧ **Transgender (trans\*):** An identity of a person whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth.



# Gender Expression

- An individual's physical characteristics, behaviors and presentation that are linked, traditionally, to either masculinity or femininity. Such as: appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions. Someone's gender expression does not necessarily align with their gender identity.
- ✧ **Gender Non-Conforming:** An identity of a person who has gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal gender expectations.
- ✧ **Androgynous:** Having the characteristics or nature of both maleness and femaleness; neither specifically feminine nor masculine.



# What's the Q?

- ✧ **Queer:** An umbrella term used to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression that does not conform to the heteronormative society.
  - While it is used as a neutral or positive term among many LGBT people today, it has historically been used negatively and is still considered derogatory by some.
- ✧ **Questioning:** An identity of a person who is uncertain of their sexual/gender orientation or identity.



# What the –ism?

**Perpetuates stereotypes and creates unsafe environments.**

## **Heterosexism:**

- Attitudes, biases, and discrimination in favor of heterosexual relationships and sexuality. This includes the presumption that everyone is heterosexual or that male/female attractions and relationships are the norm (and are therefore superior). It is the belief that everyone is or should be straight.

## **Genderism:**

- The systematic belief that people need to conform to the gender role assigned to them based on a binary system of female versus male.



# Check Yourself!

- **Read each question**
  - Be honest with answers
  - They are just for you! 😊

1. If someone were to come out to you as LGBT, what would your first thought be?
2. How would you feel if your child came out to you as LGBT? How would you feel if your mother, father or sibling came out to you as LGBT?
3. Would you go to a physician whom you thought was LGBT if they were of a different gender than you? What if they were the same gender as you?
4. Have you ever been to an LGBT social event, march or worship service? Why or why not?
5. Can you think of three historical figures who were lesbian, gay or bisexual?
6. Can you think of three historical figures who were transgender?
7. Have you ever laughed at or made a joke at the expense of LGBT people?
8. Have you ever stood up for an LGBT person being harassed? Why or why not?
9. If you do not identify as LGBT, how would you feel if people thought you were LGBT?



# **LGBTQ Youth**

## Risks Associated with LGBTQ Identities



# Unique Stressors

- Homo/Bi/Transphobia
- Heterosexism/Genderism
- Discrimination
  - Housing
  - Employment
  - Health care
  - Legal rights
- Macroaggressions and microaggressions



# Unique Stressors

- In addition to everyday stressors, LGBTQ youth deal with intense stressors related to their sexual or gender identity.
- **These stressors increase the level of risk for LGBTQ youth:**
  - Anxiety and depression
  - Alcohol and substance use/abuse
  - Unsafe sex practices
  - Non-suicidal self-injury
  - Suicidal thoughts and behaviors



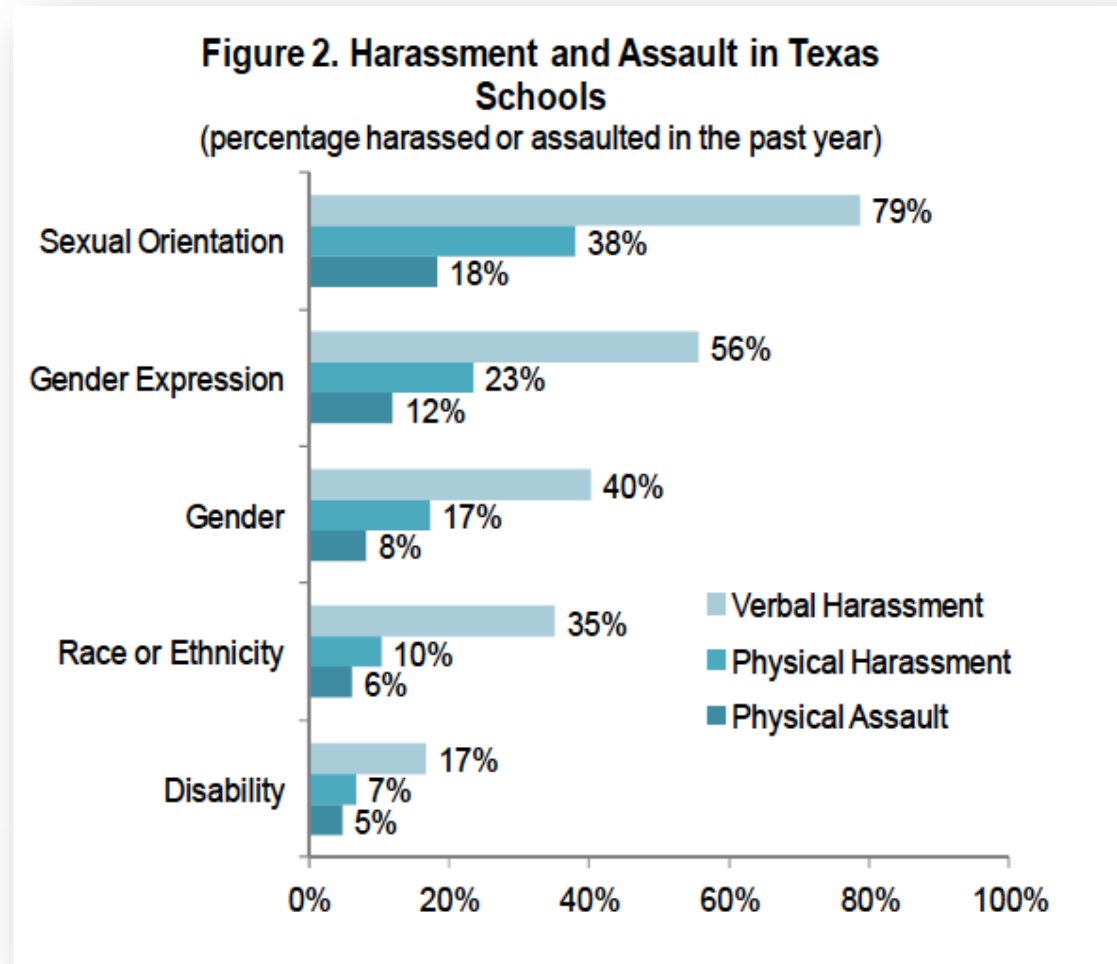


# GLSEN's National School Climate Survey (2013)

- LGBTQ students report being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation (74.1%) or gender expression (55.2%).
- 71.4% of LGBTQ students have heard “gay” used in a negative way (“that’s so gay”) and 64.5% heard homo/transphobic remarks (dyke, faggot, tranny, etc.) frequently or often at school.
- Almost 6 in 10 LGBTQ students (55.5%) report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation; and 4 in 10 (37.8%) felt unsafe because of their gender expression.
- One third (30%) of LGBTQ students missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe, and 10.6% had missed four or more days.



# School Climate in Texas



(GLSEN State Snapshot, 2013)  
2015 survey currently underway

# School Climate

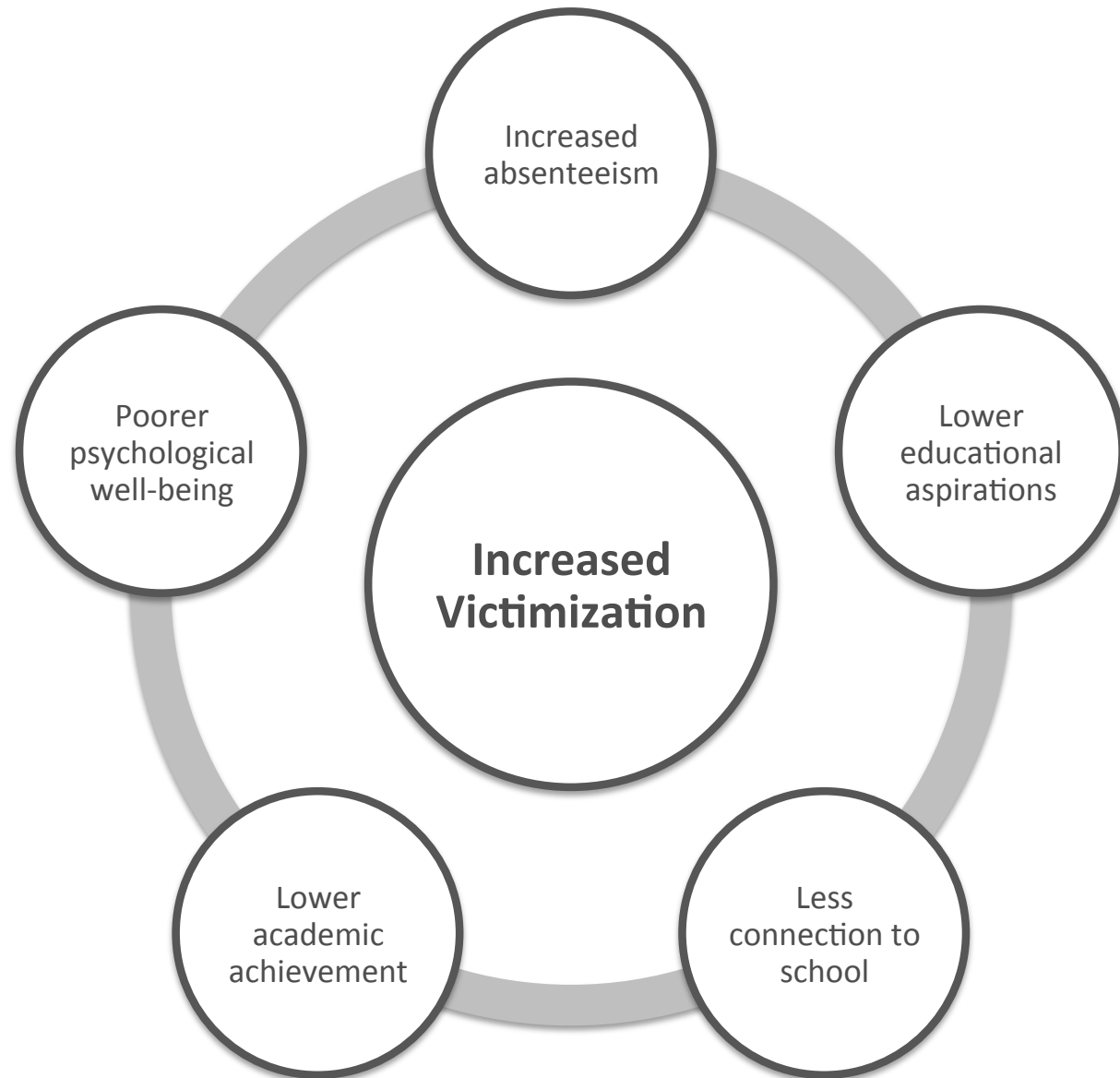
The majority (56.7%) of students *never* reported incidents of harassment or assault to school staff.

*“I never reported being harassed or assaulted to a teacher because they would not have done anything about it.”*  
(Female student, 9<sup>th</sup> grade)

61.6% of the students who did report an incident said that school staff did nothing in response.



# The Impact



# Safe Schools

- Anti-LGBTQ bullying is one of the most pervasive forms of bullying and often the weapon of choice for bullies, regardless of student's sexual orientation (i.e., *perceived* to be LGBTQ).
- Safe schools organizing focuses on collective actions to create safe and inclusive K-12 schools. Generally refers to specific efforts to create safe and inclusive schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students.

How do we create safer schools?



# **Creating Safe Schools**

## The Steps We Can Take



# Creating Safer Schools

- ① **Comprehensive policies**
- ② Inclusive curriculum
- ③ Supportive school staff



# Comprehensive Anti-Bullying Policy

- Enumerated policy
  - Sexual orientation
  - Gender identity/expression
- School, district, state, and federal-level advocacy efforts





# Comprehensive Anti-Bullying Policy

- Federal-level advocacy efforts
  - **Safe Schools Improvement Act** was reintroduced in the Senate by Sens. Bob Casey (D-PA) on January 29, 2015 and referred to a congressional committee.
  - Endorsed by President Barack Obama in April 2012.
  - Wording from SSIA has been included in proposed reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (i.e., ESEA).

## Safe Schools Improvement Act (S.403 / H.R.1199) **GLSEN**

### Bullying and harassment creates significant adverse consequences for students.

These harmful behaviors directly interfere with student learning and achievement and threaten the safety and well-being of millions of students each year:

- A U.S. Department of Education study has concluded that bullying and harassment affects nearly one in every three American school children in grades six through ten, and another study confirms that harassment in schools is experienced by a majority of students;
- Eight in ten (81.9%) lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students report being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, and nearly two-thirds (63.9%) were harassed because of their gender expression. Additionally, over a third of LGBT students reported being physically harassed based on their sexual orientation or gender identity;
- Evidence shows that bullying can result in long-term social, academic, psychological, and physical consequences, including decreased interest in school, increased absences, and decreased concentration levels for students.

### The Safe Schools Improvement Act will help educators effectively address this problem.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act will ensure that:

- Schools and districts develop and use comprehensive and effective student conduct policies that include clear prohibitions against bullying and harassment;
- Schools and districts focus on effective prevention strategies designed to help school personnel meaningfully address bullying and harassment;
- States and districts maintain and report data regarding incidents of bullying and harassment in order to inform the development of effective federal, state and local policies that address these issues.

### GLSEN urges Congress to pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act.

As policies are adapted to make schools safer, Congress should act now to meaningfully address school climate by passing the bipartisan Safe Schools Improvement Act.

- Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) and Senator Mark Kirk (R-IL) reintroduced the Safe Schools Improvement Act in the Senate in late February 2015. Representative Linda Sánchez (D-CA) introduced companion legislation in the House in March 2015;
- SSIA has been introduced in the past four Congresses and had increasing support each session. SSIA ended the 112th Congress with 170 cosponsors in the House and 41 in the Senate. The bill has always had bipartisan cosponsors;
- Key provisions of SSIA were included in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee's bill to reauthorize ESEA in the 112th Congress, which passed out of committee with bipartisan support.

### The Safe Schools Improvement Act has a broad range of support.

- SSIA is supported by the National Safe Schools Partnership, a coalition of over 100 leading national organizations in education, health, civil rights, youth development, and religion;
- 85% of Americans support a federal law requiring that schools enforce specific rules to stop bullying and 89% of parents support comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies in schools.

If you have any questions about the bill, please contact Christina Baumgardner in Senator Bob Casey's office, Valeria Carranza in Representative Linda Sánchez's office or Nathan Smith, Public Policy Associate at GLSEN, at 202.621.5815 or [nsmith@glsen.org](mailto:nsmith@glsen.org).



# Comprehensive Anti-Bullying Policy

- U.S. Department of Education has made significant efforts over the past two years to address bullying
  - Analysis of state bullying laws (released December 2011)
  - Development of online resources: [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov)
  - July 2013 announcement of including LGBT-related data collection:
    - ✓ *Office of Civil Rights Data Collection*: Questions based on actual or perceived sexual orientation as it relates to bullying
    - ✓ *High School Longitudinal Survey*: Adding sexual orientation and gender identity/trans status items
    - ✓ *School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey*: Adding sexual orientation and gender identity/trans status items



# Creating Safer Schools

- ① Comprehensive policies
- ② **Inclusive curriculum**
- ③ Supportive school staff



# Inclusive Curriculum

## Benefits all students:

- Exposure to inclusive and accurate history
- Understanding of LGBTQ people and their contributions
- Question stereotypes
- Promote acceptance



# Inclusive Curriculum

## Support LGBTQ students:

- Validate LGBTQ students' experiences
- Reinforce their value and self-worth
- Provide space for their voices



# Inclusive Curriculum

## How to Celebrate LGBT History Month

### 31 DAYS, 31 LIVES, 31 STORIES

October is LGBT History Month! It's the perfect time for GSAs to step forward, get active, and start educating your peers and teachers about the important contributions of LGBT people throughout history.

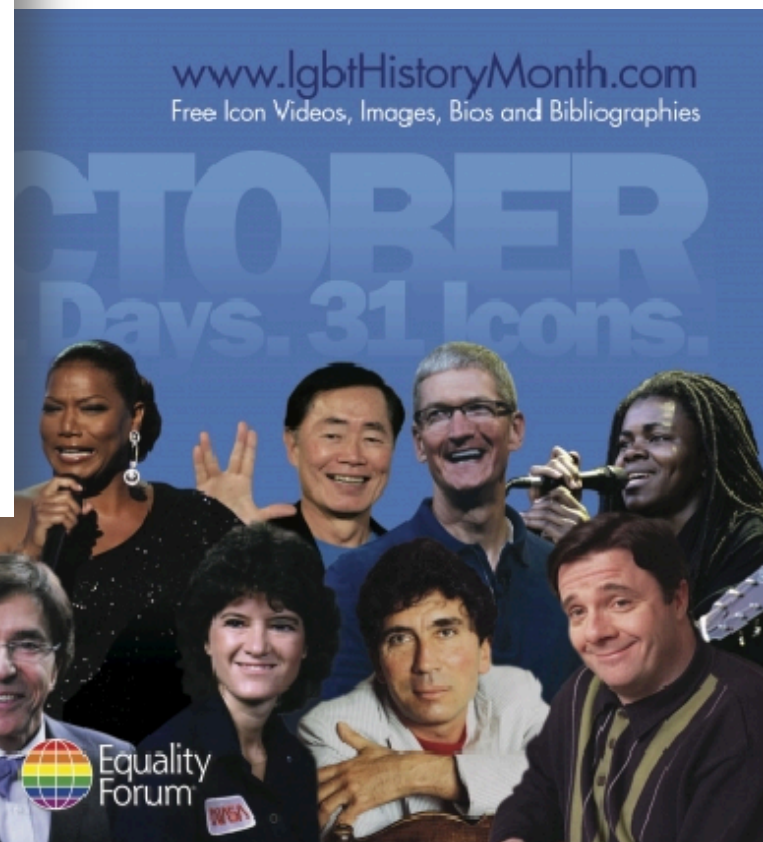
GSA Network has partnered with Equality Forum to bring an excellent LGBT History Month resource to your GSA club. Equality Forum has created a great resource online for you featuring 31 leaders, heroes, and community members who have made a difference in the LGBT community. Each day in October, a new icon is featured with a video, biography, bibliography, images and other resources.

[www.lgbthistorymonth.com](http://www.lgbthistorymonth.com)

### How To Use the LGBT History Month Resources at Your School

Here are some ideas about how to bring LGBT History Month resources to your school.

- 1. Make an exhibit at your school** – Go to the LGBT History Month website and download the icons' pictures and bios from each day of October to create an exhibit that you post on campus. You'll need to find some place to put it up where it will be seen (i.e.- the library, cafeteria, gym, theatre, art room, or the main office).
- 2. Learn about LGBT heroes in class** – Ask your history teachers, or any supportive teachers, to read the brief description of each icon being profiled each day for LGBT History Month aloud at the start of each class during the month of October. Short biographies and info are on the LGBT History Month website.



# Inclusive Curriculum

- **Age-appropriate curriculum**
  - GLSEN's elementary curriculum was developed in partnership with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).



[glsen.org/readyssetrespect](https://glsen.org/readyssetrespect)



# Creating Safer Schools

- ① Comprehensive policies
- ② Inclusive curriculum
- ③ **Supportive school staff**





# Supportive School Staff

## What can we do to be supportive...?

- ✓ Be a visible ally
- ✓ Support students who come out to you
- ✓ Respond to anti-LGBT language and behavior
- ✓ Support student clubs, such as Gay-Straight Alliances



# Be a Visible Ally



This is a safe and inclusive space for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and their allies.



[glsen.org/safespace](https://glsen.org/safespace)

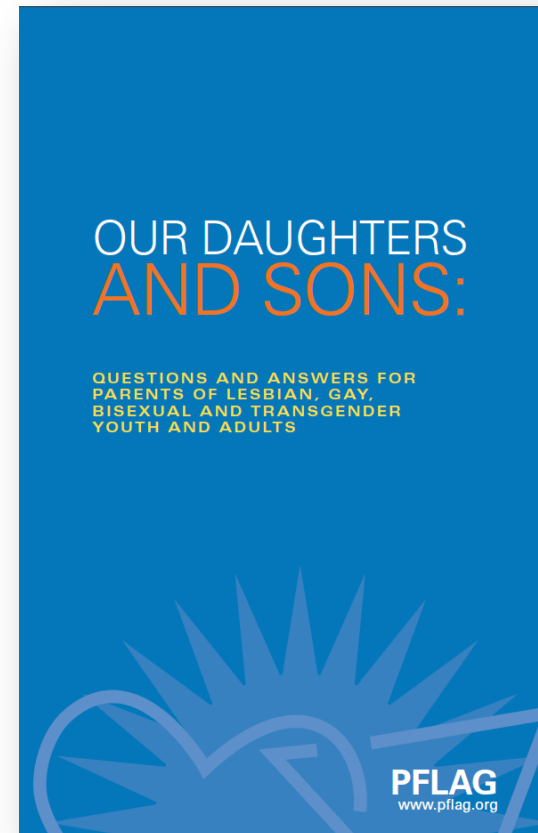
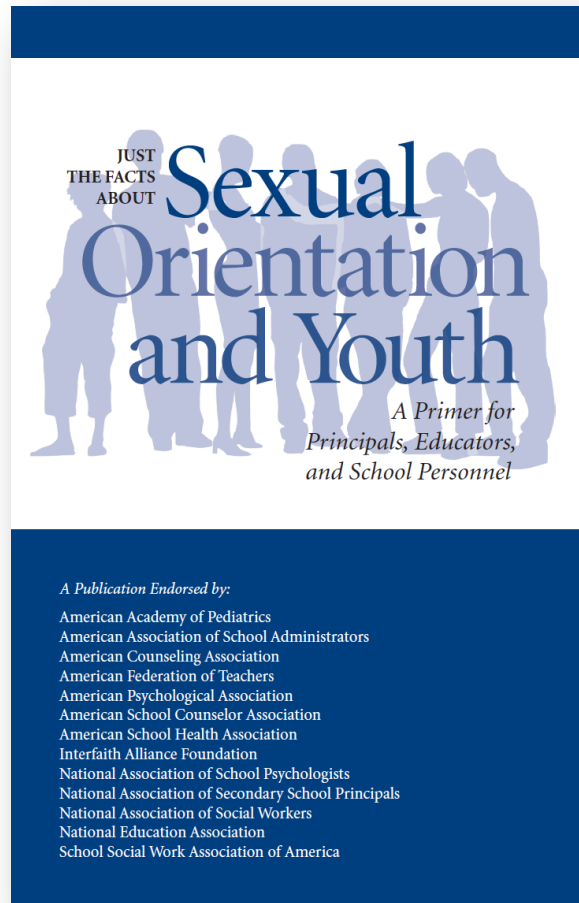
# Support Students Who Come Out

- **Extension of being a safe space**
  - Be a listening ear
  - Appreciate the student's courage
  - Assure and respect confidentiality
  - Ask questions that demonstrate compassion
    - Have you been able to tell anyone else?
    - Has this been a secret you felt that you had to keep?
    - Do you feel safe in school? Do you have support at home?
    - Do you need any kind of help?
  - Offer support, but don't assume they need help
    - Do you need any resources? For yourself? Your family?



# Support Students Who Come Out

## Family Resources



# Respond to Anti-LGBT Language & Behavior

- When a student uses a slur or negative language toward LGBTQ people, respond immediately and appropriately.

## That's Gay!

RESPONSES	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
"What do you mean by that?"	Doesn't dismiss it.	Students might not be forthcoming.
"How do you think a gay person might feel?"	Puts responsibility on the student to come up with the solution.	Student may not say anything.
"Do you say that as a compliment?"	Asking this rhetorical question in a non-accusatory tone may lighten things up enough for your students to shake their heads and admit, "No."	Students may just laugh off your question, or reiterate that they're "Just joking."
"So the connotations are negative?" or "So maybe it's not a good thing?"	Not accusatory. Could open up the floor for discussion.	There's always the chance that students will still be reluctant to speak up.



# Support Student Clubs

- A Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is a student-run club that provides a safe place for students to meet, support each other, and organize to end homophobia and transphobia.
  - **Similarly-named club:** Gay-Straight-Trans\* Alliance, Queer-Straight Alliance, Rainbow Club, Anti-Bullying Club, NOH8 Club
  - Under **Federal Equal Access Act**, any school that receives government funding and has at least one other non-curricular club must also allow a GSA. The law also says that your school must let all clubs use school resources in the same way. If your school lets other clubs meet in classrooms, put up posters, and organize school events—then the GSA must have the same access.





empowering youth activists to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools

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Start a GSA!

Want to start a GSA, but not sure how? Check out our resources!

LGBT History Month

October is LGBT History Month - celebrate with your GSA!

Fabulous by Design: Fifteen & Fabulous

Celebrating GSA Network's 15th anniversary

Building the National Movement

Check out the new statewide GSA networks

BLOG



National Coming Out Day - come out in support of undocumented youth

POSTED BY Mario

MORE

NEWS

GSA Network Statement in Support of Restorative Approaches to School Discipline

High School Student Files Complaint Against Fringe Anti-LGBT Group for Operating Illegally

An Open Letter to School Districts to Address Transgender Student Rights

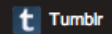
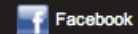
Audit Reveals Breakdown in Schools' Compliance With State Nondiscrimination Laws, Lack of Leadership From Department of Education

SPOTLIGHT



LGBT History Month MORE

CONNECT





## REGISTER YOUR GSA

### Register Your GSA

GLSEN's GSA Registration is an opportunity for you and your GSA to be counted as one of the thousands of student clubs across the country working to make schools safer and more affirming for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Please fill out the form below to get started.

What's a GSA? Known by many names (Gay-Straight Alliance, Gay-Straight-Transgender Alliance, Queer-Straight Alliance, Rainbow Club, etc.), GSAs share the common trait of bringing LGBT youth and Allies together in a safe space at school. They often do so much more, which is why registering your GSA is a great opportunity to tell GLSEN about all the amazing things your GSA does.

What are you waiting for? Get started now!

### Middle/High School GSAs

Do you have a middle or high school-based GSA? What are you waiting for? Register it [here!](#)

### Community-Based GSAs

Is there a GSA in your community that you'd like to register? Register it [here!](#)

### College GSAs

Does your college or university have a GSA? Register it [here!](#)

#### Share This:





School-based bullying, harassment, and discrimination **denies students their rights to an education and silences the voices of LGBTQ youth.**





[jrtoste@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:jrtoste@austin.utexas.edu)



[@DrToste](https://twitter.com/DrToste)

# Thank you!

