

# What LGBTI College Students Learned in High School



- Two-thirds of guidance counselors harbor negative feelings toward gay and lesbian people.
- Less than 20% of guidance counselors have received any training on serving gay and lesbian students.

Only 25% of guidance counselors consider themselves “highly competent” in serving gay and lesbian youth.

78% of school administrators say they know of no lesbian, gay, or bisexual students in their schools, yet 94% of them claim they feel their schools are safe places for these young people.

20% of LGB youth report skipping school at least once a month because of feeling unsafe while there.

42% of adolescent lesbians and 34% of adolescent gay males who have suffered physical attack also attempt suicide.

53% of students report hearing homophobic comments made by school staff.

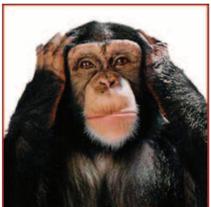


77% of prospective teachers would not encourage a class discussion on homosexuality; 85% oppose integrating gay/lesbian themes into their existing curricula.

45% of gay males and 20% of lesbians report having experienced verbal harassment and/or physical violence as a result of their sexual orientation during high school.

97% of students in public high schools report regularly hearing homophobic remarks from their peers.

The typical high school student hears anti-gay slurs 25.5 times a day.



53% of students report hearing homophobic comments made by school staff.

Teachers fail to intervene in 97% of incidents involving anti-gay slurs at school.

30% of gay and bisexual adolescent male attempt suicide at least once.

Gay and lesbian youth represent 30% of all completed teen suicide: extrapolation shows this means a successful suicide attempt by a gay teen every 5 hours and 48 minutes.

LGB students are four times more likely to attempt suicide than non-LGB students.

## Impacts Learning

Statistics are from: [http://www.lambda.org/Gay\\_student\\_facts.htm](http://www.lambda.org/Gay_student_facts.htm)

## Become an Ally

Educating others to respect all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is a key component of creating safer and more affirming schools for LGBTI youth. Educators are encouraged to include positive representations of LGBTI people, history, and events in curricula and classroom materials. Ad-

ditionally, students, parents, educators and other community members should take advantage of opportunities to join working groups that review curriculum standards and select textbooks and other classroom materials to ensure the positive representation of LGBTI people and history are included in local classrooms.

### LGBTI - huh?

**Lesbian:** is a term most widely used in the English language to describe sexual and romantic desire between females.

**Gay:** is a word (a noun or an adjective) that primarily refers to a homosexual person.

**Bisexual:** encompasses sexual or romantic attraction to all gender identities. People who have a distinct but not exclusive preference for one sex over the other may also identify themselves as bisexual. The term bisexuality, like the terms hetero- and homosexuality, was coined in the 19th century.

**Transgender:** is the state of one's "gender identity" (self-identification as woman, man, neither or both) not matching one's "assigned sex" (identification by others as male, female or intersex based on physical/genetic sex). "Transgender" does not imply any specific form of sexual orientation; some may consider conventional sexual orientation labels inadequate or inapplicable to them.

**Intersex:** as a term was adopted by medicine during the 20th century, and applied to human beings whose biological sex cannot be classified as clearly male or female.

Definitions from [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

**fag-got (fag'got)** 1. there was a time when the word "bugger" meant a bundle of sticks but then people started using it in an insulting, offensive way and things changed, so when you say things like "homo," "dyke" and "that's so gay" trying to be funny, remember, you may actually be hurting someone. 2. so please, knock it off. 3. get more information at ThinkB4YouSpeak.com

**gay (gā)** 1. there once was a time when all "gay" meant was "happy," then it meant "homosexual," now, people are saying "that's so gay" to mean dumb and stupid, which is pretty insulting to gay people (and we don't mean the "happy" people). 2. so please, knock it off. 3. go to ThinkB4YouSpeak.com

POSSIBLE RESPONSES TO "THAT'S SO GAY"  
(excerpted from GLSEN's ThinkB4YouSpeak Educator's Guide)

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.

### The Heterosexual Questionnaire

The Heterosexual Questionnaire was created back in 1972 to allow heterosexual people to experience questions asked of GLBTI people. Questions and assumptions made of Gays and Lesbians that are unfair, are reversed and this time asked to the straight people.

- What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
- When and where did you decide you were a heterosexual?
- Is it possible this is just a phase and you will out-grow it?
- Is it possible that your sexual orientation has stemmed from a neurotic fear of others of the same sex?
- Do your parents know you are straight? Do your friends know- how did they react?
- If you have never slept with a person of the same sex, is it just possible that all you need is a good gay lover?
- Why do you insist on flaunting your heterosexuality...can't you just be who you are and keep it quiet?
- Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?
- Why do heterosexuals try to recruit others into this lifestyle?
- A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexual... Do you consider it safe to expose children to heterosexual teachers?
- Just what do men and women do in bed together? How can they truly know how to please each other, being so anatomically different?
- With all the societal support marriage receives, the divorce rate is spiraling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?

**Check Yourself: Understanding Your Own Beliefs**

Anti-LGBT bias is all around us. Yet we tend to overlook the subtle biases—the anti-LGBT jokes, the exclusion of LGBT related-themes in curricula, even anti-LGBT name-calling. Subtle or not, bias has the power to hurt and isolate people. Your work as an ally includes recognizing and challenging your own anti-LGBT bias. Answer each question honestly, and consider how these will affect your work as an ally to LGBT students.

1. If someone were to come out to you as LGBT, what would your first thought be?	5. Can you think of three historical figures that were lesbian, gay or bisexual?
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?	6. Can you think of three historical figures who were transgender?
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?	7. Have you ever laughed at or made a joke at the expense of LGBT people?
4. Have you ever been to an LGBT social event, march or worship service? Why or why not?	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?

Recognizing your own biases is an important first step in becoming an ally. Based on our responses to these questions, do you think you have internalized some of the anti-LGBT messages pervasive in our world? How might your beliefs influence your actions as an educator of LGBT students? The more aware we are of our own biases and their impact on our behavior, the easier it is to ensure that our personal beliefs don't undermine our efforts to support LGBT students.

- How can you become a whole person if you limit yourself to compulsive, exclusive heterosexuality?
- Considering the menace of overpopulation how could the human race survive if everyone were heterosexual?
- Could you trust a heterosexual therapist to be objective? Don't you feel that he or she might be inclined to influence you in the direction of his or her leanings?
- There seem to very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that might enable you to change if you really want to.
- Have you considered trying aversion therapy?

- Martin Rochlin, Ph.D., 1972

### Experiencing Homophobia

- Locate and purchase a news magazine dealing with lesbian, gay or trans issues. Examples are Gay Community News, Lesbian Connection, Lesbian News, and The Advocate or, locally, The L-Word. Carry it home unwrapped, and read it in public. Leave it in plain sight at home or in your office.
- Purchase and wear openly and visibly a button proclaiming or suggesting a gay/lesbian/trans orientation. Examples include pink triangles, interlocking male or female signs, "Don't presume I'm heterosexual," "Gay and proud," "Support gay marriage," etc. If someone asks you what the button means, explain it in detail.
- Try to keep your relationship "in the closet" for a week. This involves at the very least having no physical contact with the person in any public area, being very careful about where and if you are even seen together, not mentioning this person or the relationship to anyone (or using vague pronouns when you do, called "The Pronoun Game" in GLBTI parlance), and not being seen or heard talking on the phone to this person.



Taken and adapted from Little and Marx (2011). Teaching About Heterosexism and Creating an Empathetic Experience of Homophobia. In E. Cramer (Ed.), Addressing homophobia and heterosexism on college campuses (202-215). New York, NY: Routledge.

## LGBTI-Inclusive Curriculum

For Many students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI), school is a hostile environment that can negatively affect academic performance and personal well-being.

FACT: Inclusive curriculum contributes to a safer school environment for LGBTI students.

They are half as likely to experience high levels of victimization.

They are less likely to feel unsafe at school because of the sexual orientation or gender expression.

They are about half as likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe or uncomfortable.

Only one-tenth of LGBT students were exposed to positive representations of LGBT people, history or events in their classes. Additionally, less than a fifth of LGBT students reported that LGBT-related topics were included in their textbooks or other assigned readings.

— 2007 National School Climate Survey

FACT: Inclusive curriculum helps LGBTI students feel more connected to their schools.

Students in schools with an inclusive curriculum feel a greater sense of connectedness to their school communities than other students.

By including LGBTI-related content in their curriculum, educators can send a message that they are a source of support for LGBTI students.

LGBTI students are more likely to report that their classmates were accepting of LGBTI people.

LGBTI students are less likely to hear homophobic remarks.

LGBTI students are more likely to report that their peers usually intervene when hearing homophobic remarks.

How hard is it to incorporate LGBT education? Teachable moments are all around us.



Did you know...

Under Nazi Germany every prisoner had to wear a concentration camp badge on their jacket, the color of which categorized them into groups. Homosexual men had to wear the Pink Triangle.

... Richard Plant gives a rough estimate of the number of men convicted for homosexuality "between 1933 to 1944 at between 50,000 and 63,000." [1]

After the camps were liberated at the end of the Second World War, many of the pink triangle prisoners were often simply re-imprisoned by the Allied-established Federal Republic of Germany.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pink\\_triangle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pink_triangle)

Most resources for this poster presentation were gathered from [www.GLSEN.org](http://www.GLSEN.org). For more inclusive curricular resources and information about how educators can be allies to LGBT students, visit [www.glsen.org/educator](http://www.glsen.org/educator).