 

timely techniques to help your child get through the school year

LGBTQQ2-S

(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Queer, Two-Spirited)

Students who identify and/or are perceived to be homosexual or non-heterosexual in some way are often bullied exponentially more due to the lack of understanding about their sexual and gender preferences. There are several dimensions to being an LGBTQQ2-S student, so it is important to understand the key terms, interventions and how to work with your students to demonstrate respectful behavior and have open, honest conversations when appropriate. (Also, it is important to reference the Bullying and Cyberbullying newsletters written by the School Psychologist for related information).

Key Terms:

Biological Sex: “Packaging” determined by our chromosomes, hormones, and internal and external genitalia

Bisexual: People who are sexually and emotionally attracted to males and females

Coming Out: To disclose one’s identity as an LGBTQQ2-S person to others

Gay: Males who are sexually and emotionally attracted to other males

Gender Expression: External communication of gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, etc.

Gender Identity: Our innermost feelings of ourselves as male, female or somewhere in-between

Gender Role: Society’s expectations about our behavior and appearance based on our sex (male/female)

Heterosexual/Straight: describes people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to people of the opposite sex

Homophobia: A fear or hatred of LGBTQQ2-S people, especially in others, but also in oneself

Lesbian: Females who are sexually and emotionally attracted to other females

Queer: historically used as a derogatory term against people perceived to LGBT; some have reclaimed it in a positive way to describe those who do not conform to notions of gender and sexual orientation

Questioning: A person who is questioning his/her sexual orientation, but may not identify as lesbian, gay or straight

Sexual Orientation: Refers to a person’s emotional and sexual attraction to other people based on the gender of the other person

Straight Ally: A non-LGBTQQ2-S person who supports, advocates and affirms the LGBTQQ2-S community

Transgender: an umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender expression is nonconforming and/or whose gender identity is different from their birth-assigned gender

Transphobia: a fear or hatred of transgender people

Sexual Orientation Continuum

A psychological and philosophical understanding of human sexuality that places [sexual orientation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_orientation) on a [continuous](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continuum_(theory)) [spectrum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spectrum) from [heterosexuality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heterosexuality) to [homosexuality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexual_orientation). This concept stems from [Alfred Kinsey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Kinsey)'s 1940s surveys of sexuality as significant numbers of Kinsey's subjects reported [bisexuality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bisexuality) of varying degrees, rather than the strict heterosexual/homosexual division that had been previously assumed. This work was expanded by [Fritz Klein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fritz_Klein_(sex_researcher)), who hypothesized that sexual orientation was a dynamic, multi-variable process, involving attraction, behavior, fantasies, emotional and social preferences, self-identification, and lifestyle.

4 Domains

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**Biological Sex**

Man Intersex Woman

**Sexual Orientation**

Gay Bisexual/Asexual Straight

**Gender Identity**

Male Transgender/Gender Queer Female

**Gender** **Expression**

Masculine Androgynous Feminine

\*All people identify themselves at various places on the line for each of the four domains.

Statistics:

* The average age when students realized they were gay was a little over the age of 13
* 1 to 3 of every 10 students is either gay, lesbian, or has an immediate family member who is gay or lesbian
* Between 3 – 9 students in every class of 10 has had a direct experience with issues of homosexuality and homophobia
* Nine out of 10 LGBTQQ2-S youth are harassed at school because of their sexual orientation.
* Two thirds of LGBTQQ2-S youth are harassed at school because of their gender expression.
* Nearly a third of LGBTQQ2-S youth miss at least one full day of school a month because they feel unsafe.
* Most students don’t tell anyone because they have learned that being gay was shameful and wrong from family, friends and other people in their community
* 26% of gay and lesbian youth are forced to leave home because of conflicts with their families over their sexual identities
* Families, parents, foster parents, caregivers and guardians can have a very dramatic impact on their LGBTQQ2-S children; family acceptance promotes well-being and helps protect these youth against risk; however family rejection has a serious impact on gay or transgender young person’s risk for health and mental problems such as depression, use of illicit drugs, suicide and STDs and HIV

Laws:

SB 08-200: Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act

In May 2008, Colorado expanded its anti-discrimination law to include protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, making it illegal to discrimination against LGBT Coloradans in housing and public accommodations such as hotels, restaurants, stores, hospitals, clinics and other places of business. This law also protects LGBT students and adults from harassment and discrimination in schools across Colorado.

HB 11-1254: Anti-Bullying Legislation

During the 2011 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly passed a bill aimed at reducing bullying and harassment in schools. On May 13, 2011, Governor John Hickenlooper signed that bill into law, making Colorado the 13th state in the nation to pass an anti-bullying bill that enumerates the personal characteristics often targeted for bullying, including race, religion, sex, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. The new law also clearly defines bullying, requires each school district to adopt comprehensive anti-bullying policies and create a grant program to which schools can apply in order to fund anti-bullying programs.

Additionally, schools that receive federal funding are required by federal law to address discrimination on a number of different personal characteristics. The statues the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights enforce include:

* Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin;
* Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex;
* Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504); and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II): prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability.

Key Findings:

* Having a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) in school was related to more positive experiences for LGBTQQ2-S students including: hearing fewer homophobic remarks, less victimization because of sexual orientation and gender expression, less absenteeism because of safety concerns and a great sense of belonging to the community
* The presence of supportive staff contributed to a range of positive indicators including fewer reports of missing school, fewer reports of feeling unsafe, greater academic achievement, higher educational aspirations and a greater sense of school belonging
* Students attending schools with an anti-bullying policy that included protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression heard fewer homophobic remarks, experienced lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation, were more likely to report that staff intervened when hearing homophobic remarks and were more likely to report incidents of harassment and assault to school staff than students at schools with a general policy or no policy

Best Practices in Schools:

1. Policy: adopt a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that enumerates categories such as race, gender, ethnicity, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation and gender expression/identity.
2. School Climate: focus on the social environment of the school. It must become “uncool” to bully and “cool” to help students who are bullied and requires the efforts of EVERYONE in the school.
3. Assessment: determine hot spots and incorporate interventions to stop them from occurring in these parts of the building (cafeteria, playground, hallway, bathroom).
4. Support and Buy-In: A majority of the staff members need to buy into your policy and bullying prevent efforts.
5. Training: staff need to be trained in bullying prevention and harassment, including LGBTQQ2-S bullying, effectively and in a timely manner.
6. Rules: school rules and policies about bullying should be posted and discussed with students and parents. Appropriate positive and negative consequences should also be developed for following or not following the school rules.
7. Intervention: Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations. Staff need to intervene immediately and then be sure to follow-up with students after information has been discussed.
8. Welcoming Spaces: Make classrooms and school buildings welcoming by displaying LGBTQQ2-S-inclusive materials.
9. Inclusive Materials: Incorporate LGBTQQ2-S materials into the curriculum to help students understand and respect differences within the school community and society as a whole.
10. Student Empowerment: support and empower student efforts to address bullying and harassments, such as a formal of a GSA or a “Safe Space” area.
11. Maintenance and Sustainability: These efforts need to be continued over time; there is no “end date”.

Interventions TO DO (where applicable):

* Talk with your child/student about their identity
* Express affection when your child/student tells you or when you learn that your child is gay or transgender
* Support your child/student’s LGBTQQ2-S identity even though you may feel uncomfortable
* Advocate for your child/student when he or she is mistreated because of their LGBTQQ2-S identity
* Require that other family members respect your LGBTQQ2-S child/student
* Bring your child/student to organizations or events
* Connect your child with an LGBTQQ2-S role model to show them options for the future
* Welcome your child/student’s LGBTQQ2-S friends and partners to your home
* Believe your child can have a happy future as an LGBTQQ2-S adult

Behaviors to Avoid:

* Hitting, slapping or physically hurting your child because of their LGBTQQ2-S identity
* Verbal harassment or name calling because of your child’s LBGTQQ2-S identity
* Excluding LGBTQQ2-S youth from family and family activities
* Blocking access to LGBTQQ2-S friends, events and resources
* Blaming your child when they are discriminated against because of their LGBTQQ2-S identity
* Pressuring your child to be more (or less) masculine or feminine
* Telling your child that G-d will punish them because they are gay
* Telling your child that you are ashamed of them or that how they look or act will shame the family
* Making your child keep their LGBTQQ2-S identity a secret in the family and not letting them talk about it

Resources…

Websites 🡪

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN): The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network strives to assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes in creating a more vibrant and diverse community. We welcome any and all individuals as members, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or occupation, who are committed to seeing this philosophy realized in K-12 schools.

Website: [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

One Colorado: One Colorado is a statewide advocacy organization dedicated to securing and protecting equality and opportunity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Coloradans and their families. We work toward that goal by effectively advocating for LGBT Coloradans and their families and by lobbying the General Assembly, executive branch, and local governments on issues like safe schools, relationship recognition, and LGBT health and human services. Our vision is a fair and just Colorado.

Website: [www.one-colorado.org](http://www.one-colorado.org)

Planned Parenthood: Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains has been helping women, men and teens make responsible choices for 90 years. Since 1916, we have been committed to delivering the highest quality reproductive health care, teaching responsible and age-appropriate sexuality education and have been working diligently to protect a woman's right to choose.

Website: [www.pprm.org](http://www.pprm.org)

The Center: The Center at 1301 E Colfax is the only statewide, nonprofit community center dedicated to providing support and advocacy for Colorado’s gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) population. We serve as a catalyst for community organizing, support services, social activities, and cultural events.

Website: [www.glbtcolorado.org](http://www.glbtcolorado.org)

Trevor Project: The Trevor Project is determined to end suicide among LGBTQ youth by providing life-saving and life-affirming resources including our nationwide, 24/7 crisis intervention lifeline, digital community and advocacy/educational programs that create a safe, supportive and positive environment for everyone.

Website: [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

Books For Kids 🡪

Bryan, J. & Hosler, D. (2006). *The different dragon.* Two Lives: USA.

Newman, L. (2009). *Mommy, mama and me.* Tricycle Press: China.

Ross, E. (2011). *My uncle’s wedding*. CreateSpace: USA.

Willhoite, M. (1994). *Daddy’s roommate.* Alyson Books: Hong King.

Books For Teens 🡪

Belge, K. & Bieschke, M. (2011). *Queer: The ultimate LGBT guide for teens.* Zest Books: CA.

Garden, N. (2007). *Annie on my mind.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux: Canada.

Peters, J. A. (2005). *Keeping you a secret.* Little, Brown Books for Young Readers: USA.

Ryan, S. (2003). *Empress of the world.* Penguin: NY.

Books For Parents 🡪

Brill, S. A. & Pepper, R. (2008). *The transgender child*: *A handbook for families and professionals.* Cleis Press: CA.

DeWitt, P. (2012). *Dignity for all: Safeguarding LGBT students.* Corwin Books: CA.

Savage, D. & Miller, M. (2011). *It gets better: Coming out, overcoming bullying and creating a life worth living.* Penguin: NY.

Wahls, Z. (2012). *My two moms.* Penguin: NY.

Some information for this article was taken from:

One Colorado Education Fund. *That’s so gay: Ending bullying and harassment against LGBT students in Colorado schools.*

Colorado GSA Network. *Make is safe: A resource guide for students combating bullying, homophobia and transphobia in schools.*

Ryan, C. (2009). *Supportive families, healthy children: Helping families with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children.* Family Acceptance Project: San Francisco State University: CA.