LGBT STUDENTS

Developing an inclusive school environment includes supporting students with mental health disorders, exceptionalities, and those from various backgrounds and living situations, as well as students who identify within the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community. The following provides information on basic educational issues, the struggles these students face, and how schools can create a secure and compassionate environment.

Important Statistics

The following statistics are important in understanding the experience of LGBT students.

- *Community:* 42% of students who identify as LGBT do not feel their communities are accepting of individuals like them.[1]
- *Suicide Risk:* Lesbian, gay, and bisexual students in grades 7-12 are twice as likely to attempt suicide as the rest of the student population. In a small study, one in four transgender students reported having attempted suicide.[2]
- *Missed Opportunities:* According to the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveys (YRBS),[3] 11-30% of students who identify as lesbian or gay and 12-25% of students who identify as bisexual indicated that they had missed at least one day of school within the past 30 days due to concerns about their safety.
- *Safety:* When surveyed, 61% of middle and high school students who identify as LGBT indicated that due to their sexual orientation, they have felt uncomfortable or concerned for their safety.[4]

Impact

As reported by the Human Rights Campaign,[5] the differences between LGBT and non-LGBT students are important to note:

- **26% of LGBT youth** noted that their largest concerns involved being open about their identity, bullying, and acceptance from family vs. **22% of non-LGBT youth,** who reported their biggest struggles was difficulty with school, tests, and grades.

What Schools Can Do

1. **Address safety.** Addressing student safety is a priority in all schools. Educators can remain aware of potential bullying or threats directed at students who identify as LGBT and provide support as needed.
   - Schools should consider updating their policies to include specific language regarding LGBT students and provide examples of bullying behavior to raise awareness with all students.
2. **Foster tolerance and provide support.**
   - Assist students in establishing and developing supportive relationships with staff members and peers. Students who feel connected and supported are more likely to attend school and thereby achieve academic success, paving the way for continued success as an adult.
   - Consider implementing or adapting SEL programs with all students. Such programs can provide lessons in acceptance, empathy, and emotion management that are beneficial to all students. Review SEL programs with the use of guides from organizations such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to determine what is most appropriate for each school or classroom.

References

[1] Human Rights Campaign. (n.d.). *Growing up LGBT in America*. Retrieved from http://www.hrc.org/youth/view-statistics/#.VqZDF1MrJE4

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014, November 12). *LGBT youth*. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Human Rights Campaign. (n.d.).

Resources

- **A Gender Spectrum Glossary**
  http://www.tolerance.org/LGBT-best-practices-terms

- **Responding to Hate and Bias at School Guide**
  http://www.tolerance.org/publication/responding-hate-and-bias-school

- **Speak up at School Guide**
  http://www.tolerance.org/publication/speak-school

- **Best Practices: Creating an LGBT-Inclusive School Climate**
  http://www.tolerance.org/lgbt-best-practices

- **Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools**
  http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//files/assets/resources/Schools-In-Transition.pdf

- **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**
  http://www.casel.org/

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health**
  http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm#school

- **Human Rights Campaign**
  http://www.hrc.org/explore

- **Teaching Tolerance**
  http://www.tolerance.org/