GOING BEYOND GSA’s: Effective Counseling and Advocacy for LGBTQ Youth

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LGBTQIA+ – Intersecting Identities

- **L**: Lesbian
- **G**: Gay
- **B**: Bisexual
- **T**: Transgender
- **Q**: Queer / Questioning
- **I**: Intersex
- **A**: Asexual / Ally
- **+**: Other Identities:
  - Pansexual, Polyamorous, Gender Fluid, Gender Flexible, Gender Queer, Gender Variant

SELF-IDENTIFICATION IS KEY

Blue: Gender Identity
(Internal; not based on biological sex or romantic attraction to others)

Red: Presence of Romantic Attraction to Others
(External; not based on biological sex or gender)

Purple (Blue + Red): Queer / Questioning Non-Binary Identity
(a unique combination of biological sex, gender, and attraction that can be undefined)
Early Awareness of Identity

Age of first awareness of gender difference or transgender identity:

3 – 5 years old

Age of first awareness of sexual orientation:

8 – 11 years old

Age of first identification as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual:

15 – 17 years old

(Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000)
Representation At School

- **Gen Ed**
  - LGBT issues not generally represented in core curriculum
  - LGBT books not present in most libraries

- **Sex Ed**
  - Abstinence-Only Curricula Prevalent in U.S.
    - Heteronormative focus
    - LGBT not represented or educated on issues unique to their sexual orientation, creating health risks
    - Sends a message to other students - increases verbal harassment of LGB students by 10%*

- **Athletics / P.E.**
  - LGBT Students are half as likely to play sports as their peers*
  - Unequal access / unwelcome environment to sports teams, locker rooms
  - Over half of LGBT students were bullied in the locker rooms or in physical education class*

* 2011 National School Climate Survey, produced by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
Harassment in the Hallways
- **Verbal:** 82% LGBQ, 64% Trans
  - Harassment by both students and staff
  - Relational Aggression (Exclusion)
- **Physical:** 38% LGBQ, 27% Trans
- **Cyberbullying:** 55% LGBTQ

No One To Help
- 60% did not report harassment due to fear of situation not changing or worsening
- 37% who did report harassment said no corrective action was taken

* 2011 National School Climate Survey, produced by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
Absenteeism
- 1/3 of LGBT students missed at least one day of school in the past month due to safety concerns

Lower GPA’s
- Harassed students had lower GPA’s than students less often harassed (2.9 vs. 3.2)

Post-Secondary Plans
- Harassed students were half as likely to pursue post-secondary education than students who were less often harassed (5.1% vs 10.7%)

* 2011 National School Climate Survey, produced by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
LGBT students report higher levels of depression and lower levels of self esteem than their non-LGBTQ peers.

LGBTQ children are at greater risk for:
- substance abuse
- harassment/bullying
- depression
- anxiety
- homelessness
- suicide

than their non-LGBTQ peers.

* 2011 National School Climate Survey, produced by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
School systems are increasingly being held more accountable for school climates and practices that are hostile toward students.

**Federal Equal Access Act (1984)** states that federally funded secondary schools must provide equal access to extracurricular clubs. This act protects the rights of students who want to form Gay Straight Alliances.

**Henkle v. Gregory, 2005, Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund**
The court ruled that public school systems may be subject to punitive damages if they do not provide protection from discrimination and harassment. In this case, it was stated that “public school systems must allow gay and lesbian students to be fully out and protect them from anti-gay discrimination.”

**Title IX (2014)** The U.S. Department of Education initiated an historic milestone that extends federal civil rights protections to transgender students. The new Title IX law now bars discrimination on the basis of gender identity.

**Student Non-Discrimination Act – (NOT PASSED)** introduced in the House and the Senate in 2015 – prohibits public schools from discriminating against any student on the basis of actual or perceived gender expression or sexual identity of a student or any student whom they are associated with. Retaliation for filing a discrimination complaint is prohibited.
ASCA’s Position

ASCA Position Statement (Adopted 1995, Revised 2014)

- “Professional school counselors promote equal opportunity and respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Professional school counselors work to eliminate barriers that impede student development and achievement and are committed to the academic, personal/social, and career development of all students.”

School Counselor’s Role (according to ASCA):

- Assist students with identity development (conversion therapy not allowed)
- Advocate for equitable educational and extracurricular opportunities for all students, regardless of LGBTQ status
- Promote policies that create a culture of respect and denounce bullying, harassment and hostility towards LGBTQ students
- Address absenteeism, lowered educational aspirations, and low psychological well-being that results from victimization at school
- Encourage entire staff training on creating safe schools for LGBTQ students
- Support LGBTQ inclusive curriculum at all levels
- Provide resources to LGBTQ students and their families
Where do we start?

Ash Beckham
TedX Talk - Boulder
“Polarity vs. Duality & What it means to be an Ally”

https://youtu.be/zYhgy5ouYLM?t=395
6:30 - 11:30 – 5 minutes
Homonegativity in Counselors

- Homonegativity is prejudice against people who are gay or lesbian.

- Satcher & Leggett (2007) found that how school counselors view homosexuality influences the services they provide to these students.
  
  These counselors are more likely to be reluctant to plan and carry out activities that promote the welfare of LGBTQ students.
Help students find their identity

(different goal than helping students “come out”)

Stage 1: Identity Confusion “Who Am I?”
Stage 2: Identity Comparison “I Don’t Belong!”
Stage 3: Identity Tolerance “Maybe I Belong Here”
Stage 4: Identity Acceptance “I Do Belong Here!”
Stage 5: Identity Pride “These Are My People”
Stage 6: Identity Synthesis “We’re All More Similar Than Different”  - adapted from Vivienne Cass (1979)

• Coming out is their choice, and choices have + and - consequences. Support their choice.
• Be careful not to “out” anyone.
• Coming out is a continuous process over a lifetime – we can help them learn to navigate.
Advocacy in Schools

- Start or Support GSA / Order GLSEN Safe Space Kit
- Partner and connect students with Youth Outlook (Chicago Suburbs), Howard Brown Center on Halsted – speakers, programming, advocacy
- Ensure student access to LGBTQ materials in library, on internet, and in counseling office – LGBTQ book club
- Encourage inclusion of LGBT issues in history, government, English, and health or physical education classes
- Develop or revise policies, including Anti-Bullying/Harassment, access for transgender students to preferred changing rooms, locker rooms, restrooms, and physical education/athletic teams
District-Wide LGBTQ Training for all school staff at every level

Eliminate “That’s so Gay!” in your school

School staff that request and use preferred names & gender pronouns

Career/College Planning to curb homelessness and unemployment

Life Skills Training - laundry, checkbook, cooking

Access and Safety – lockable, private bathrooms and dressing areas with locked spaces for storing belongings
GLSEN School Campaigns
(FREE; www.glSEN.org)

- **Think B4 You Speak ("That’s So Gay!")**
  - Addresses homonegative language and namecalling using posters, classroom / small group curriculum, and ads

- **Changing The Game**
  - *School climate assessments and resources for P.E. teachers, athletic coaches to create a safe space in athletic classes and sports teams*

- **Ally Week (October 13-17)**
  - *Resource and activity guide for hosting Ally Week at your school*

- **www.youthresource.com** – excellent website for LGBTQ students


