

# SCHOOL CLIMATE: LGBTQ

NORTH DAKOTA  
ASSOCIATION OF  
SCHOOL  
PSYCHOLOGISTS  
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*“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends”*  
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

## **“Nearly 6 in 10 LGBT students reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation.”**

– Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen (2014)

“Schools nationwide are hostile environments for a distressing number of LGBT students, the overwhelming majority of whom routinely hear anti-LGBT language and experience victimization and discrimination at school. As a result, many LGBT students avoid school activities or miss school entirely.”

- Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen (2014)



## EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

The most commonly reported reason why LGBT students did not plan on graduating and reason for leaving school was because of unsupportive or hostile school environments

LGBT students who experienced high levels of in-school victimization:

- Had lower GPAs than other students
- Were less likely to plan to pursue any post-secondary education
- Were more than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month because of safety concerns
- Were less likely to feel a sense of belonging to their school community
- Had lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression.

LGBT students who experienced discrimination at school:

- Had lower GPAs than other students
- Were about three times as likely to have missed school in the past month because of safety concerns
- Were less likely to feel a sense of belonging to their school community
- Had lower levels of self-esteem and higher levels of depression

- Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen (2014)



## SCHOOL CLIMATE AND RESOURCES

LGBT students experienced a safer environment when their school had a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or comparable student club; yet only half of LGBT students attended a school that had a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or similar student club that addressed LGBT issues in education.

LGBT students experienced safer environments when they were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events through their school curriculum, however less than 1 in 5 students were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, or events in their classes. Nearly the same amount had been taught negative content about LGBT topics.

LGBT students experienced safer environments when they had supportive school staff who frequently intervened in biased remarks and effectively responded to reports of harassment and assault, yet less than a third of students reported that their school administration was supportive of LGBT students.

LGBT students experienced safer environments when their school had an anti-bullying/ harassment policy that specifically included protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, yet few students reported that their school had a comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policy that specifically included protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression

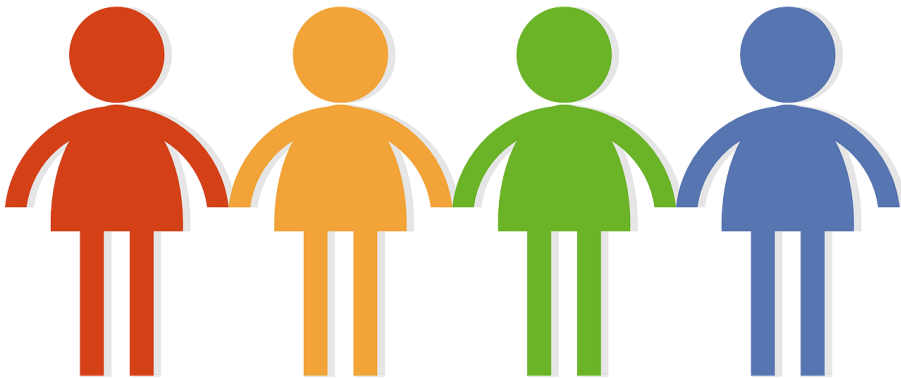
- Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen (2014)

## SUPPORTING LGBT STUDENTS IN EDUCATION

Based on the findings from the 2013 National School Climate Survey, the following are ways in which school-based supports can positively affect LGBT students experience in school:

- Increase student access to appropriate and accurate material regarding LGBT people, history, and incidents through an inclusive curriculum
- Support GSA clubs that address LGBT issues and provide support for LGBT students in education
- Increase the number of supportive teachers and staff by providing professional development opportunities
- Ensure that school policies and practices do not discriminate against LGBT students
- Bullying/harassment policies should be implemented that specifically document sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Documents should also state clear and effective procedures for reporting and addressing incidences that student's experience.

- Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen (2014)



**“A hostile school climate affects students’ academic success and mental health. LGBT students who experience victimization and discrimination at school have worse educational outcomes and poorer psychological well-being.”**

- Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen (2014)

“LGBTQ topics are inherent in U.S. History, World History, American Government, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, and so on. LGBTQ people and their allies are everywhere in the curriculum, but we just do not acknowledge them as such”

- Maguth & Taylor (2014)

## PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE

The 2013 National School Climate Survey reported that increases in the availability of many LGBT-related school resources may be having a positive effect on the school environment. Results showed that school climate for LGBT students has improved somewhat over the years, however remains quite hostile for many.

- LGBT students reporting that they had a GSA in their school was higher in 2013 than in all previous survey years.
- LGBT students reported a lower incidence of homophobic remarks than in all previous years. The percentage of LGBT students hearing these remarks decreased from over 80% in 2001 to about 60% in 2013.
- LGBT student who experienced verbal harassment and physical harassment based on sexual orientation decreased in 2013 than in all prior years, and lower physical assault based on sexual orientation since 2007.
- The percentage of supportive school staff increased as reported by LGBT students in 2013 than in all previous survey years.
- More students reported that they had access to LGBT material in their textbooks when compared to all other survey years



- Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer & Boesen (2014)

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## REFERENCES

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Palmer, N. A., & Boesen, M. J. (2014). *The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

Maguth, B. M., & Taylor, N. (2014). *Bringing LGBTQ topics into the social studies classroom*. *The Social Studies*. 105, 23-28.