Addressing the Needs of Marginalized Youth at School

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on promoting the safety of marginalized youth in schools, with particular focus on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) students, especially those who are racial or ethnic minorities. These students are at elevated risk of victimization and, therefore, diminished access to educational opportunities and compromised mental health. This chapter addresses what is known about LGBTQ students in terms of school-based victimization, additional risk factors, and how to intervene to make their years in school safer and more enriching.

Some students are at elevated risk for victimization at school related to their membership in groups that are marginalized in the larger community or within their school buildings. Among them, this chapter addresses Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) students, especially those who are racial or ethnic minorities. Membership in one of these minority groups puts a student at significant risk of victimization as well as poorer mental health and academic outcomes. Membership in more than one of these groups can mean additive risk.

Although these students are frequently underserved in schools, they have not evaded the attention of researchers and practitioners concerned about their well-being. Professional organizations of pupil service personnel and educators have developed publications calling for equitable treatment of LGBTQ students (e.g., Just the Facts Coalition, 2008; National Association of School Psychologists, 2006; National Education Association, 2006). Not only are school psychologists and other educators ethically obligated to meet the needs of all students in schools, including LGBTQ students, but they are also legally required to do so in the United States (McFarland, 2001). This chapter addresses the challenges faced by LGBTQ students, related research, and best practice implications.

Who Are LGBTQ Students?

People who are sexual minorities are referred to in the academic literature in multiple ways. LGBTQ references Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning people. At
least one group of researchers has included those who are intersex in their abbreviation as well (Varjas et al., 2008). These abbreviations include those whose sexual orientations involve some degree of same-sex attraction (i.e., gay, lesbian, and bisexual), and those whose gender identities and/or expression are unconventional or do not match sex assignment at birth (i.e., transgender). Queer and questioning generally refer to sexual orientation that does not conform to heterosexual norms, but may include gender identity and expression also. Those who are intersex share genitalia simultaneously resembling both females and males. Although individuals in these groups share similar experiences because of their minority status, they are also different despite the artificial melding of sexual orientation and gender identity inherent in LGBTQ abbreviations. Estimates of percentages of LGBTQ youth vary anywhere from less than 1% to nearly 8% (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008; Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001; Saewyc, Poon, Homma, & Skay, 2008).

**Risk Factors for LGBTQ Youth**

**Victimization**

Sexual minority students are victimized at alarming rates in their homes and communities, and schools offer no exception. The majority (65%) of the 230,000 LGBT students in the California Safe Schools Coalition and 4-H Center for Youth Development (CSSC & 4-HCYD, 2004) study reported being bullied based on their sexual orientation, and 27% had been bullied for their gender expression. Similarly, 65% of over 1,100 LGBTQ students in Britain experienced homophobic bullying including verbal taunts, relational aggression, cyber bullying, physical violence, property damage, death threats, sexual assault, threats of weapon use, and others (Hunt & Jensen, 2007).

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) conducts large-scale, biennial school climate surveys across the United States. The latest, in 2007, included perspectives of more than 6,000 LGBT secondary school students. The largest percentage (60.8%) felt unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation, followed by their gender expression (38.4%), religion, (18.1%), race/ethnicity (8.9%), gender (8.7%), and disability (5.0%). The GLSEN study revealed 86.2% of LGBT students experienced verbal harassment, 44.1% physical harassment, and 22.1% physical assault at school because of their sexual orientation. Regarding gender expression, 66.5% experienced verbal harassment, 30.4% physical harassment, and 14.3% physical assault. These incidences have remained relatively stable since the survey conducted in 2001. Further, middle school students seem to fare worse than high school students (Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008).

When transgender students were considered separately in the 2007 GLSEN survey, their school experiences seemed even bleaker than those of their LGB peers regarding victimization (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009). LGB youth in another, smaller study of older teens in the United States, Canada, and New Zealand also experienced slightly more victimization in middle school than high school, and an array of violence, including forms mentioned previously plus threats to disclose sexual orientation and having objects thrown at them. In this study, as in most others summarized previously, males were victimized more often than females and greater gender atypicality was related to greater victimization (D’Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002).

Sexual minority students are a diverse group in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, and a number of other variables. Regarding LGBT students of color in the 2007 GLSEN study (N = 2,130), Diaz and Kosciw (2009) found nearly half of students reported being bullied based on a combination of sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and/or gender. Native American students reported lower levels of bullying due to their race or ethnicity.
than other LGBT students of color, but elevated levels of bullying for their perceived religion. Further, they were more likely than other LGBT students of color to be physically assaulted due to their sexual orientation. There may be an additive risk of victimization for LGBT students of a variety of ethnicities and from otherwise diverse backgrounds.

Scherr and Larson (2010) identified that minority status within the school building exceeds importance of membership in majority or minority groups in the larger community in terms of vulnerability to victimization at school. Diaz and Kosciw (2009) drew a similar conclusion regarding LGBT students of color. They found that being a racial/ethnic minority within one’s school building was associated with lower levels of perceived safety and higher levels of verbal bullying with racial themes. As for influence of the larger community, schools in the southern United States and schools in small towns or rural communities were most hostile in terms of verbal bullying regarding sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and perceived religion. As the exception, Native American students in suburban areas received more verbal bullying based on their sexual orientation (Diaz & Kosciw). Hence, the ethnoracial constitution of the school building and characteristics of surrounding communities seem to interact to influence the experiences of sexual and ethnoracial minority youth at school.

**Additional Risk Factors and Relevant Research**

**Academics**

School engagement declines when students are bullied regarding their perceived sexual orientation or gender expression. Researchers found that being bullied by being called gay prompted boys to rate their school engagement lower than their male peers who were bullied for other reasons (Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008). The same sort of bullying resulted in lowered school engagement ratings for all students in another investigation, but particularly for questioning youth (Espelage et al., 2008). In addition, researchers have found transgender students report lower school engagement than their LGB peers (Greytak et al., 2009).

When LGBT students are engaged with their schools, they may feel more connected to teachers than to other students, despite being out to more students than teachers. This may be because revealing sexual orientation or gender identity increases likelihood of bullying victimization. Also, being out to students and staff relates to greater willingness to address LGBT issues in school and, thus, improved student engagement (Kosciw et al., 2008).

Many LGBTQ students skip school out of fear for their safety. Sexual minority students report missing school because of safety concerns at rates between three to five times higher than their heterosexual peers. Prior victimization at school relates to more absenteeism (CSSC & 4-HCYD, 2004; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw et al., 2008). In the GLSEN study, the majority of LGBT teens who were verbally bullied about their race/ethnicity and either their sexual orientation or their gender expression reported missing school within the month (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009). Presumably, many LGBTQ youth eventually drop out of school, although no reliable dropout statistics have been calculated for this group of students.

With so much missed school, it follows that GPA may suffer for LGBT students, particularly those who are bullied because of sexual orientation or gender expression (CSSC & 4-HCYD, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2008). In particular, bisexual boys have been found to have lower GPAs than other students (Russell et al., 2001). Transgender students who have been verbally bullied because of gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation tend to have lower GPAs (Greytak et al., 2009). In addition, LGBT students of color who are bullied about sexual orientation and race/ethnicity, as well as those who are bullied about race/ethnicity alone, have lower GPAs (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009).
In addition, LGBTQ students’ long-term educational goals are often compromised. Twice as many LGBT students (12.4%) as heterosexual students lacked plans for postsecondary education in the GLSEN study. When bullying due to gender expression was considered, the percentage rose to 41.5% not planning to attend college (Kosciw et al., 2008). Almost half of transgender youth in the GLSEN study who experienced verbal bullying related to their gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation indicated they did not plan to pursue postsecondary education (Greytak et al., 2009). Further, gay students who were also ethnic minorities reported lower educational aspirations, regardless of bullying history, than their White, gay peers in a study of British youth (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). Nearly half of GLBT students show interest in postgraduate degrees, though, a higher percentage than the national average (Kosciw et al., 2008).

**Substance Abuse**

Sexual minority youth are at elevated risk of substance use and abuse. Twenty-three percent of LGB youth in a multinational study reported drinking at least weekly. Of the 39% who reported marijuana use, 11% used it at least weekly (D’Augelli et al., 2002). Sexual minority students in another large multidistrict study reported more alcohol and marijuana use than their heterosexual peers. Use by questioning teens was most pronounced (Espelage et al., 2008). Although they were more likely to drink alone, youth attracted to same-sex peers used drugs at a level comparable to heterosexual matched peers in a relatively small sample of young teens in northern England (Rivers & Noret, 2008). As with other risk factors, bullying history relates to substance abuse for LGBTQ youth. In the Espelage et al. study, all groups who had endured bullying for being gay, regardless of actual sexuality, reported more substance use, with the most use reported among questioning youth who had been bullied. In the CSSC and 4-HCYD (2004) study, students bullied because of sexual orientation were three times as likely as peers to use methamphetamine or inhalants. They were also more likely to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, and/or use other drugs.

**Risky Sexual Activity**

Despite declining rates of youth pregnancy overall in recent years, LGBTQ students remain at elevated risk of pregnancy. LGB youth in a large scale longitudinal study of teens in British Columbia were two to seven times more likely than their heterosexual peers to have become pregnant or impregnated someone (Saewyc et al., 2008). This may seem counterintuitive. However, LGB teens in this study reported elevated risk factors related to teen pregnancy and potential for contraction of sexually transmitted diseases. These included frequent sexual activity, early sexual activity, sexual abuse, multiple sexual partners, substance use prior to sexual intercourse, and infrequent contraceptive use. Those who experienced pregnancy were also more likely than peers to have been victimized due to their sexual orientation. An imbalance of risk and protective factors has been cited as explanation of these findings in this and other studies. In addition, variables such as survival sex during homelessness following coming out to family, lack of appropriate sexual education for sexual minority youth, and denying sexual orientation or attempting to prove gender status have been referenced (Saewyc et al., 2008).

**Mental Health and Suicide**

The mental health of LGBTQ youth is at risk. In a study of young English teens, Rivers and Noret (2008) found students attracted to same-sex peers were more likely to report feelings of loneliness and hostility than matched heterosexual peers. Additionally, victimization compro-
mises the mental health of all students, but especially that of LGBTQ students. Victimization has been linked to posttraumatic stress for LGB youth and for gender atypical youth (D'Augelli et al., 2002; D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006). Depressive symptoms are also more common among LGBTQ students who have been bullied than among their peers (CSSC & 4-HCYD, 2004; Espelage et al., 2008). Mental health decline, especially depression, contributes to suicidality among LGBTQ students.

Researchers disagree about the extent of suicidal risk faced by LGBTQ youth. Most contend sexual minority youth are at much greater risk for suicide than their heterosexual peers. Others argue that estimates of suicidality are inflated due to methodological flaws in related investigations.

In D’Augelli, Hershberger, and Pilkington’s (2001) multinational study of 350 LGB teens, 42% reported thinking about suicide with some frequency at some point in their lives. Of those, 48% claimed suicidal ideation related to their sexual orientation. As for actual attempts, 35% acknowledged this behavior, and 57% of them indicated attempts related to their sexual orientation. Regarding lethality, 34% needed emergency medical treatment because of the attempts. The average age for attempts was 15.7 years, with significantly increased risk beginning at 16 years of age. Some gender differences were noted as well. Males attempted suicide earlier than females and were more likely to indicate their attempts were highly related to their sexual orientation. Grossman and D’Augelli (2007) found similar percentages of suicidal ideation in a sample of older transgender teens. Fewer transgender youth in their study attempted suicide, but all related attempts to their gender identity, and most (57%) attempts were considered serious by the researchers. Bisexual/homosexual males and females reported more suicide attempts (28.1% and 20.5%, respectively) than their heterosexual peers (14.5% of females, 4.2% of males) in a comparison study of teenage students. Further, bisexual/homosexual orientation predicted increased risk for suicidal intent and attempts (Remafedi, French, Story, Resnick, & Blum, 1998).

Conversely, Savin-Williams (2001) has cautioned against pathologizing LGBT youth by artificially inflating estimates of their suicidality. Savin-Williams acknowledges that sexual minority youth report more suicide attempts than do their heterosexual peers. However, according to Savin-Williams, many of their claims are false and reflect suicidal ideation rather than actual suicide attempts. In addition, Savin-Williams claims most attempts are not life-threatening.

Coming Out

Coming out, or sharing one’s sexual or gender identity with others, appears to put LGBTQ students at further risk. It might seem that coming out would allow one to be true to their identities
and thus promote psychological health. However, the earlier a young person identifies as LGBQ and/or transgender, and the earlier one reveals that identity to others, the worse that individual seems to fare.

Although they and others often suspect so earlier, LGB youth identify themselves as such between 15 to 16 years of age, on average, and share that identity with another person around 17 years of age (D’Augelli et al., 2002). Most transgender youth identify younger, presumably because this identity relates to gender versus sexual orientation, around 13 years of age, and reveal this identity at an average age of 14 years (Grossman, D’Augelli, & Salter, 2006). When youth do come out, they seem to share their identity with peers primarily, followed by teachers. Less share their identities with family members (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2007), although 61.3% of LGBT students in the 2007 GLSEN study were out to at least one parent (Kosciw et al., 2008). Also, transgender students may be more likely than their LGB peers to be out to school staff, perhaps because of the greater visibility of gender expression for some transgender students (Greytak et al., 2009).

The younger transgender youth self-identify, share their identity, or are noticed as gender atypical by others, the more likely they are to be victimized by parents or others (Grossman et al., 2006). Similarly, being out to peers regarding gender or sexual orientation has been associated with increased victimization at school for transgender students (Greytak et al., 2009). Openness about sexual orientation has been related to the amount of victimization for LGB youth as well (D’Augelli et al., 2002).

Coming out has been linked to increased suicide risk. The link may not be as direct as it seems, though. Within their multinational sample of LGB teens, D’Augelli et al. (2001) discovered about half of those youth who acknowledged at least one prior suicide attempt indicated the attempt occurred prior to coming out about their sexual orientation. However, 27% did attempt within the same year as they came out. Further, 19% attempted suicide more than one year following coming out. Family histories of both attempted and completed suicides were noted. Parents’ negative responses to their children coming out were related to their suicide attempts. Educators should be aware that a number of LGBTQ students become homeless or enter foster care following coming out because of conflict with family. Maintaining confidentiality regarding students’ sexual orientation and gender identity is essential.

Although being out increases risk for sexual minority students, there is a positive side also. Being out to school staff and students increases LGBT students’ comfort with raising LGBT issues at school and, in turn, increases student engagement. Further, being out to school staff increases the likelihood that LGBT students will report victimization at school (Kosciw et al., 2008).

### Jamie Nabozny’s Example

Jamie Nabozny endured perhaps the most notable example of the difficulties faced by LGBTQ youth in schools. Jamie’s peers in a small, midwestern school district bullied him verbally, physically, and sexually from seventh through eleventh grades due to his sexual orientation. The bullying resulted in surgery to repair damage caused to Jamie’s body. Jamie attempted suicide multiple times and required emergency medical treatment as a result. He dropped out of school and ran away to a large, metropolitan area to escape the bullying at school. Jamie and his parents had reported the abuse to school officials repeatedly. They did not intervene and even blamed Jamie for being openly gay. Ultimately, Jamie and his parents sued the school district and its principals, claiming he was denied equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The district did have a nondiscrimination policy that referenced sexual orientation, and a jury did not find the district liable. However, the jury found district administrators...
culpable, and they settled the suit for nearly $1,000,000. Now Jamie speaks publicly about his experiences to help others in similar situations (McFarland, 2001; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010).

Although Jamie Nabozny’s case was filed in the mid-1990s, these forms of egregious abuse against sexual minority students continue to occur. The websites of the American Civil Liberties Union, Lambda Legal, and other organizations working on behalf of oppressed peoples highlight many ongoing legal cases regarding offenses against LGBTQ students. The content ranges from verbal and physical abuse, death threats, and corresponding suicide attempts to freedom of expression cases. Schools have prohibited students from wearing t-shirts with gay pride slogans, wearing gender atypical dress, attending proms with same-sex dates, displaying affection towards same-sex girlfriends and boyfriends, and developing Gay Straight Alliances.

Interventions and Relevant Research

Supportive School Staff

As Jamie Nabozny’s situation illustrated, staff can either help or perpetuate school problems for sexual minority students. A majority of respondents in the 2007 GLSEN survey indicated school staff made homophobic remarks, negative remarks about students’ gender expression, or sexist remarks. A little over one third overheard staff make racist comments (Kosciw et al., 2008). Nearly half of students in the CSSC and 4-HCYD (2004) study, and in Hunt and Jensen’s (2007) study of British youth, also heard teachers make homophobic comments. In fact, 30% of British youth claimed school staff had perpetrated homophobic bullying, and the majority of LGBTQ youth could not identify a supportive adult at school or home. Feelings about teachers predicted school problems (attention, homework completion, and student relationships) for bisexual males and females in another large U.S. study (Russell et al., 2001).

However, most (approx. 80%) LGBT students in the 2007 GLSEN study could identify a school staff member who was supportive of sexual minority students. When students could identify at least a half dozen school staff who were supportive, they were less likely to miss school, reported greater school engagement, and had higher GPAs and post-secondary goals (Kosciw et al., 2008). Students in the CSSC and 4-HCYD (2004) study who knew of supportive staff were less likely to be bullied, felt safer at school, and knew of other supportive adults outside of school.

The majority of LGBTQ students do not report bullying to school staff (Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw et al., 2008). When students do report bullying, adult responses are essential. However, when they tell, many students report nothing is done or that what is done is ineffective (Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw et al., 2008). Most teachers agree that they are obligated to ensure safety and be supportive of LGBTQ students (Guasp, 2009; Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005), yet many ignore homophobic language (Guasp, 2009; Hunt & Jensen, 2007). Three fourths of secondary school principals in one investigation claimed to discipline perpetrators of bullying, yet a similar proportion indicated that LGBTQ students probably would not feel safe in their schools. Perhaps this is because only 20% have taken specific action to ensure a safe, supportive school for sexual minority students (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008). When staff intervene regarding homophobic comments, students report less related bullying, feeling safer at school, and having stronger support networks that include adults (CSSC & 4-HCYD, 2004; Hunt & Jensen, 2007).

Comprehensive Antidiscrimination Policies

Diversity education and bully prevention programs may help prevent bullying against LGBTQ youth, but they alone are insufficient. Students in schools with generic bullying policies report
similar levels of victimization as those with no safety policy (Kosciw et al., 2008). Bullying policies must prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender expression explicitly, and many do not (Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw et al., 2008). Although gender may appear in some statements, gender identity and expression may not be identified specifically (Greytak et al., 2009). Students in schools with specific statements report less victimization, feeling safer at school, increased likelihood of reporting bullying to school staff, more intervention from school staff, and knowing supportive teachers (CSSC & 4-HCYD, 2004; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw et al., 2008). The benefits of inclusive policies extend to sexual majority students as well (Harris Interactive & GLSEN, 2005). Further, methods for reporting and intervening with bullying should be clear and publicized to staff and students. Inclusive, respectful language should be used on school forms and in all communication.

Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs)

GSAs serve a variety of purposes. Some offer social opportunities and support for members, and others more actively advocate for the safety of LGBTQ youth in their schools through education and/or policy advocacy. Estimates of the prevalence of GSAs vary from only 6% of British students in the Hunt and Jensen (2007) study reporting a GSA at their school to about one third of students reporting one in the 2007 GLSEN study (Kosciw et al., 2008). Students in schools with a GSA hear fewer homophobic comments, experience less bullying focused on their gender expression and sexual orientation, are less likely to be absent from school because of safety concerns, feel more engaged with their school communities, and are more likely to report bullying problems to school staff, presumably because they are also more likely to have identified a supportive staff member or other adult (CSSC & 4-HCYD, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2008). On the other hand, membership in a GSA may require some degree of being out, especially if parental permission is required.

Inclusive Curricula

Most students (70%–90%) report no exposure to LGBTQ topics or people in their school curriculum or among their educational resources such as libraries, accessible Internet sites, etc. (Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw et al., 2008). When inclusive curricula and materials are present, some of the positive outcomes associated with comprehensive safety statements and GSAs are enhanced (CSSC & 4-HCYD, 2004; Hunt & Jensen, 2007; Kosciw et al., 2008). Even so, method of presentation is important. English youth reported low, but increased, coverage of LGBT topics in school, but also identified problems with the coverage in one investigation. Problems included compartmentalizing the topic, pathologizing it, and shrouding it in morality judgments and power struggles (Ellis & High, 2004). Additionally, sex education that focuses only on heterosexual youth ignores the needs of sexual minority youth, putting them at increased risk for unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Staff and Student Training

School staff should be trained regarding the challenges encountered by LGBTQ students and how to intervene with related bullying. Similarly, students should be instructed about how to respond to bullying specific to sexual orientation and gender expression. Staff and students should be taught to recognize and respond to signs of suicide in all students as well. Staff trainings about LGBTQ issues are not occurring as much as they are needed. Although 69% of secondary principals believed staff training would be effective to reduce bullying of LGBTQ stu-
The practice implications table includes: 1. Assess school climate with GLSEN's (2006) local climate survey available at www.glsen.org or another tool. 2. Consider climate specific to needs of transgender students (e.g., bathroom and locker room options, dress codes, gender segregated activities; Transgender Law Center, 2009). 3. Ensure antidiscrimination policies explicitly prohibit bullying on the basis of sexual orientation and gender expression; sample policies are located at www.coloradosafeschools.org/climate/samplepolicies.htm. 4. Identify safe, supportive school staff and administration. 5. Establish a Gay Straight Alliance according to guidelines provided by http://www.glsen.org, http://gsanetwork.org, and http://safeschoolscoalition.org. 6. Provide curricula and other educational resources inclusive of LGBTQ people and topics. 7. Provide staff training about gender and sexual development, LGBTQ youth, intervening with bullying specific to sexual orientation and gender expression, and recognizing suicidality and intervening appropriately. 8. Provide student training about intervening with bullying specific to sexual orientation and gender expression and about recognizing and reporting signs of suicide. 9. Provide parent education about gender and sexual development, responding to bullying, recognizing and responding to suicidality, the importance of supportive families, and negative outcomes of abuse. 10. Improve university training for preservice educators, administrators, and pupil service personnel regarding LGBTQ concerns. 11. Develop knowledge of community agencies that serve LGBTQ youth and their families. 12. Assess individual risk and protective factors of LGBTQ students by considering the variables presented in this chapter and by providing follow-up care for students identified at-risk during schoolwide mental health screenings, especially for depression and suicide. 13. Assess and intervene with suicidal students as necessary. Note. The Trevor Project has a crisis and suicide prevention helpline for LGBTQ youth.
presented, some require further investigation. For example, more work is needed to understand how race, ethnicity, culture, immigration status, and language proficiency interact with sexual orientation and gender identity to influence students’ experiences. Whenever practitioners assess risk, they should also assess resiliency. For example, supportive parents and positive school climate have been demonstrated to protect LGB and questioning youth against depression and drug use (Espelage et al., 2008). For the proportions of LGBTQ youth struggling regarding particular variables, there are percentages of youth who do not struggle or else have overcome the same things. We should not perpetuate negative stereotypes by ignoring positive psychology. We need to find out how these students are able to rise above the multitude of challenges they confront. Many LGBTQ students navigate childhood challenges and lead happy, fulfilling lives.

Change tends to be uncomfortable. Educators who have considered and/or implemented some of the strategies identified in this chapter have cited numerous obstacles. Fear of being perceived as gay or lesbian, fear of actually being outed or discriminated against, administrative resistance, and community resistance comprise some challenges. Some professionals reference personal conflict about the topic. Yet, educators are legally mandated and professionally obligated to protect and serve LGBTQ youth. Children’s lives depend on this work.

References


