Creating Supportive Environments for LGBTQIA2+ Students and Staff In Schools: Setting the Stage

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- Understanding Sexual and Gender Identity Development

- Homophobia and LGBTQ students

- Creating Safe and Supportive Schools

Definitions: Sex & Gender

- <u>Sex</u> – A person's biological status of being male or female

- <u>Gender Expression</u> - An individual's characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions that are perceived as masculine or feminine.

- <u>Gender Identity</u> - A person's internal, deeply-felt sense of being male or female, or something other or in between. Everyone has a gender identity.

Definitions

- <u>Sexual orientation</u>: A person's self-concept as based on sexual or emotional attractions to other persons. Realization of this self-concept may be outwardly expressed as a sexual identity (see below), it may be privately acknowledged but not publicly expressed, or the individual may be unaware of it consciously.

- <u>Sexual identity</u>: Personally and outwardly identifying oneself as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and so forth.

- <u>Sexual behavior</u>: Actual sexual behavior between people. Sexual practices may or may not be consistent with a person's sexual identity or orientation.

Definitions: Sexual & Gender Identities

- Lesbian: A sexual identity commonly held by women who have sexual attraction and/or same sex behavior with other women.

- Gay: A sexual identity commonly held by men who have sexual attraction and/or same sex behavior with other men.

- Bisexual: A sexual identity commonly held by people whose sexual attraction and/or behavior is not exclusive to people of one particular gender.

- Trans/gender: Refers to someone whose gender identity is different from the one they were assigned at birth.

Definitions: Sexual & Gender Identities

- Pansexual: A sexual identity held by people who have sexual, romantic or emotional attraction towards people regardless of their sex or gender identity. Pansexual people may refer to themselves as gender-blind, asserting that gender and sex are not determining factors in their romantic or sexual attraction to others.

- Queer: an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual or cisgender. Often held by people whose sexual orientation is not reflected by other definitions.

- Asexual: A sexual identity held by people who have little or no sexual attraction. Asexual people may have emotional/romantic attraction.

Homophobia at school &
LGBTQ+ student well-being

- Bullying is prevalent, and most is bias-based.
- Compared to general harassment, bias-based harassment is more strongly associated with:
    - High risk behaviors (alcohol-tobacco-drug use; suicide attempts)
    - Mental health problems
    - Compromised academic success
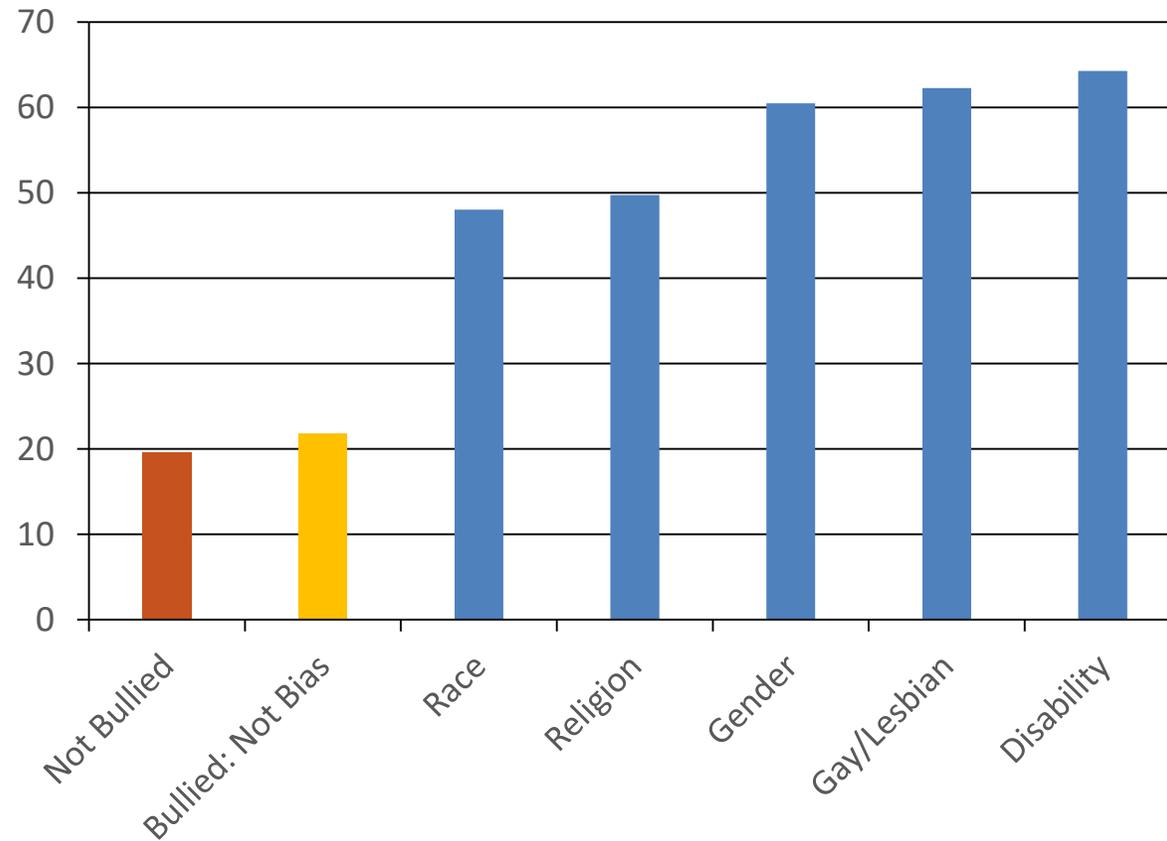   - Perception of school climate as unsafe

California Health Kids Survey
1,029,019 students

Type of bullying	Percentage of Students
Not bullied	**64.0**
Any bullying	**36.0**
Any bias-related bullying	24.2 **+77%**
Race, ethnicity, or national origin	14.4
Religion	7.1
Gender	7.9
Actual or perceived sexual orientation	8.0
Physical or mental disability	4.1

77.4% of any bullying is biased-based bullying

THE PROMISE OF ADOLESCENCE
Realizing Opportunity for All Youth

Understanding the Well-Being of
LGBTQI+ Populations

LGBTQ+ safe school strategies: Inclusive, Enumerated Policies

- **Enumerated policies** are policies that *explicitly* list characteristics of students that may be the basis of bullying or discrimination at school.

- Strong, consistent evidence that enumerated policies make a difference:
  - **Students** who report inclusive policies say they feel safer and do better academically
  - Fewer suicide behaviors among LGBT students in **schools** with inclusive anti-bullying policies
  - In **states** with enumerated laws, students report less harassment and fewer bias remarks

LGBTQ+ safe school strategies: **Inclusive, Enumerated Policies**

- With enumerated policies
  - teachers show more positive behaviors toward LGBT students and intervene in bullying;
  - students have less homophobic attitudes
- Factors associated with passage of enumerated state laws:
  - Not "hiding" LGBTQ inclusion
  - Youth involvement in advocacy
  - Engaging parents
  - Coalitions: LGBTQ, Race, Disability

LGBTQ+ safe school strategies:
School Personnel Support & Training

Evidence from **Students**:

- A supportive **teacher** is one of the strongest protective factors for LGBTQ students' academic success and mental health
- Students feel safer and do better in school when teachers intervene in harassment

Evidence from **Teachers**:

- When teachers feel school **administrators** take targeted bullying more seriously, they take it more seriously, and are more likely to intervene
- A national study on teachers found that LGBTQ-related professional development was linked to support for LGBTQ students

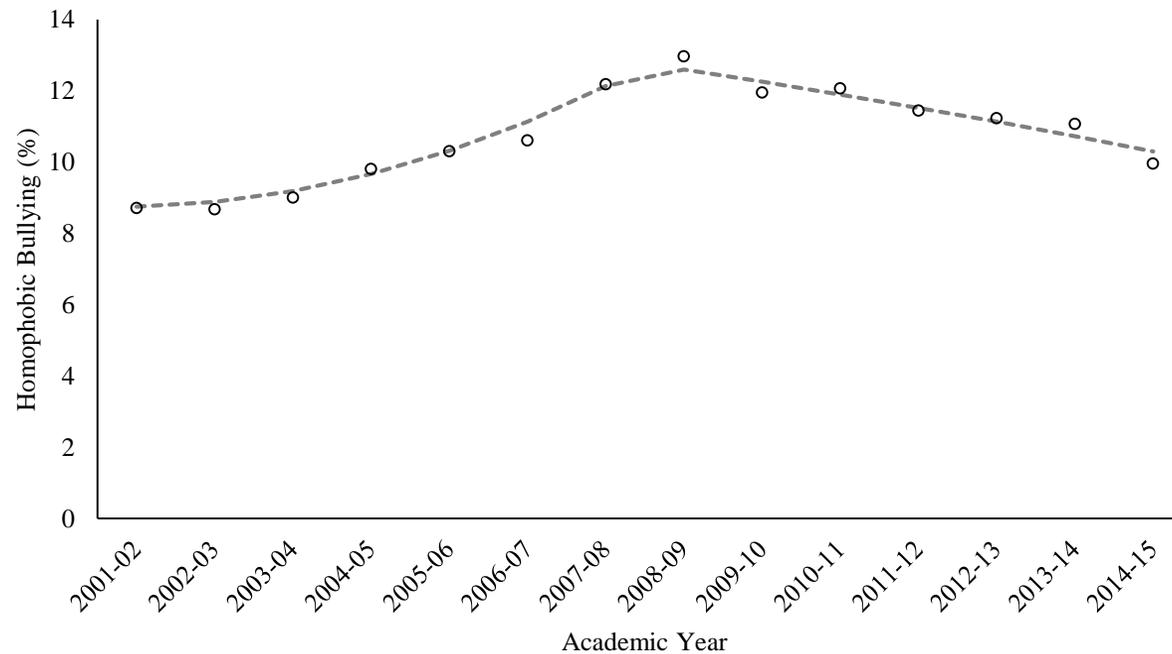# LGBTQ+ safe school strategies: Student-Led Clubs (GSAs)

- In 2018, 40.3**% of U.S. high schools had GSAs**

- Under federal law, a school that permits non-curricular student-led clubs may not prohibit students from forming a GSA

Benefits for **Students**:

- GSA participation is linked to better academic performance, more school belonging, and feeling safer at school

- GSAs have a stronger impact when 1) students participate more, 2) GSA advisors have more experience, and 3) students and advisors feel support from the school

- Simply having a GSA at school is linked to benefits for LGBTQ+ *and* heterosexual students: they report less bullying and more belonging
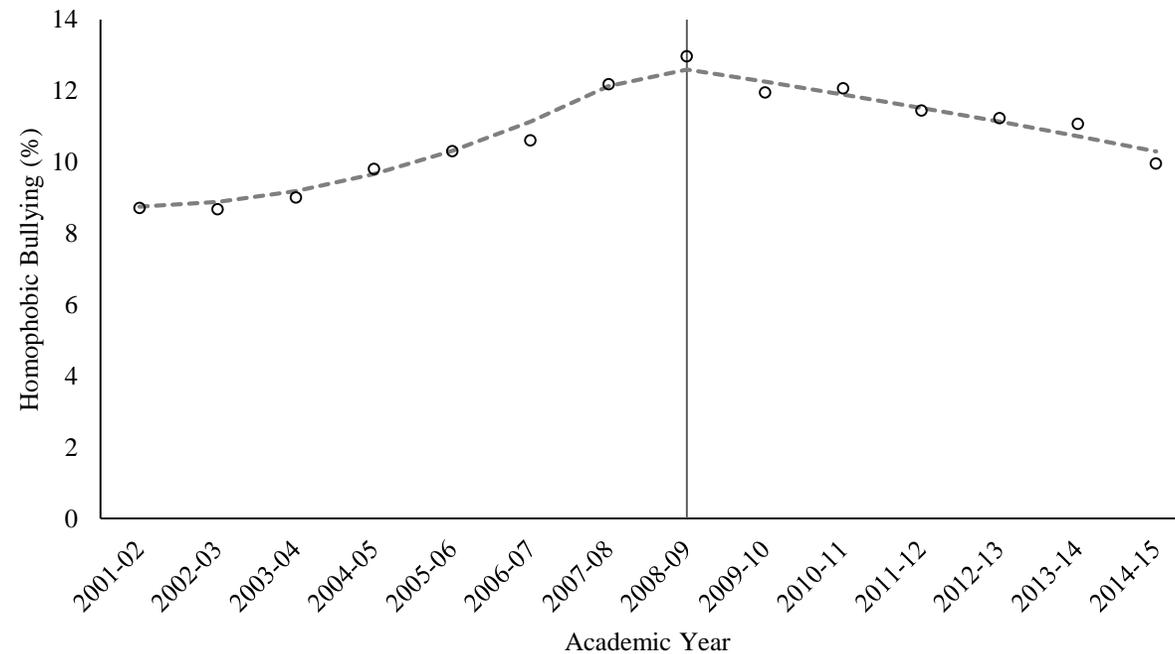
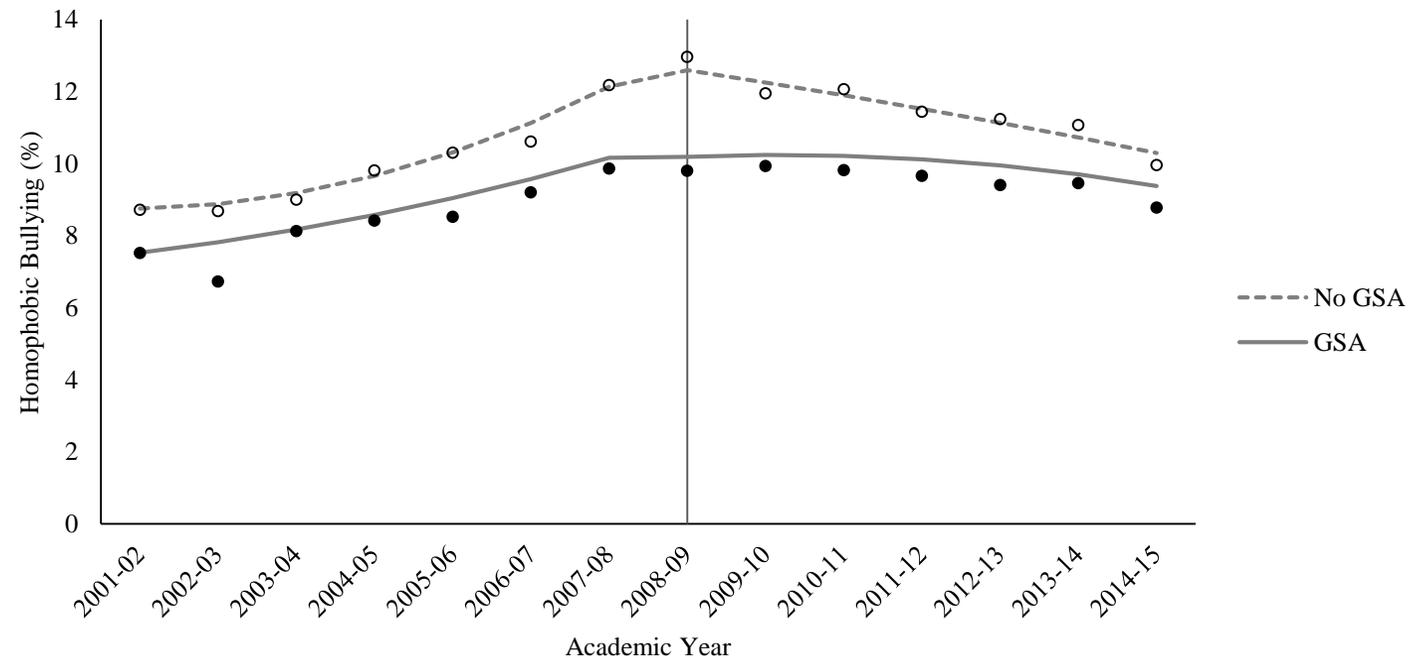# LGBTQ+ affirming strategies: Student-Led Clubs (GSAs)

California Healthy Kids Survey, >4mil youth
Pediatrics, 2019

LGBTQ+ affirming strategies: Student-Led Clubs (GSAs)

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LGBTQ+ safe school strategies:
LGBTQ-Related Resources & Curricula

LGBTQ+ Resources:

- Libraries; safe zone; visible images

- When students know where to access information and support, they feel their schools are safer

LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum:

- Links to **school safety**: Students who have learned about LGBTQ+ issues at school report less bullying and more safety

- Links to student **health**: Teacher sensitivity to LGB issues in HIV education was linked to lower sexual risk-taking for LGB youth

STORIES & NUMBERS

HELPING STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL
CREATE SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS FOR LGBTQ AND ALL YOUTH IN TEXAS

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LGBTQ+ safe school strategies: **Inclusive, Enumerated Policies**

- **Policy-makers** at the state and school district levels should enact inclusive and enumerated laws and policies.

- **School personnel** should establish local policies in school districts, schools, and classrooms.

- **School personnel, parents, and students** should learn about policies in their local school and school district.

- Using research evidence combined with personal stories about why it is important, **school personnel, parents, and students** should:
  - Raise awareness of the need for inclusive and enumerated policies; and
  - Advocate for local and state policy change.

LGBTQ+ safe school strategies:
School Personnel Support & Training

- **Schools of education** should integrate education about LGBTQ issues into teacher education.

- **Professional education associations** (e.g., the Texas Classroom Teachers Association, or the Texas Association of School Administrators) should offer continuing education about LGBTQ issues.

- **School personnel** should:
  - intervene in discriminatory bullying,
  - seek out resources and training to understand and support LGBTQ students.

- **Parents** should support LGBTQ-focused professional development.

- **Students** can advocate for, and participate in, LGBTQ-focused professional development for their teachers and other school personnel.

LGBTQ+ safe school strategies: Student-Led Clubs (GSAs)

- **Professional education associations** (e.g., the Teachers Associations, or Associations of School Administrators) should raise awareness of GSAs, and provide training to school personnel.

- **School personnel** should:
  - Identify and eliminate barriers to the formation and operation of GSAs, and treat them like any other student organization or club,
  - Collaborate with CBOs (like OutYouth and Texas GSA Network!) with expertise in supporting LGBTQ+ youth,
  - Provide resources and support to GSAs and other student organizations.

- **Students** can advocate for, start, and participate in GSAs in their schools.

LGBTQ+ safe school strategies
LGBTQ-Related Resources & Curricula

- **Policymakers and school administrators** should work to ensure that LGBTQ people and history are included in school curricula through state laws, educational guidelines and district policies, and professional development.

- **School personnel** should:
  - Be a resource for LGBTQ youth,
  - Ensure that libraries have resources for LGBTQ youth,
  - Request and attend safe zone trainings,
  - Promote visibility and inclusion through visual materials and in classroom curricula.

- **Students and parents** can request that LGBTQ resources be made available at school.

# Trans & Gender-Nonconforming Students

- **School policy-makers** should:
  - Adopt policies and practices that support transgender and gender non-conforming students: chosen names in school records and forms, inclusion in sports
  - Support professional development for school personnel on understanding gender identity.

- **School personnel** should:
  - Request training to understand and support transgender students, Intervene in bullying,
  - Call transgender students by their chosen names and pronouns.

- **Students** can:
  - Speak out and stand up for transgender and gender nonconforming students,
  - Find out if their school has policies that include gender identity or expression,
  - Call one another by chosen or preferred names and pronouns.
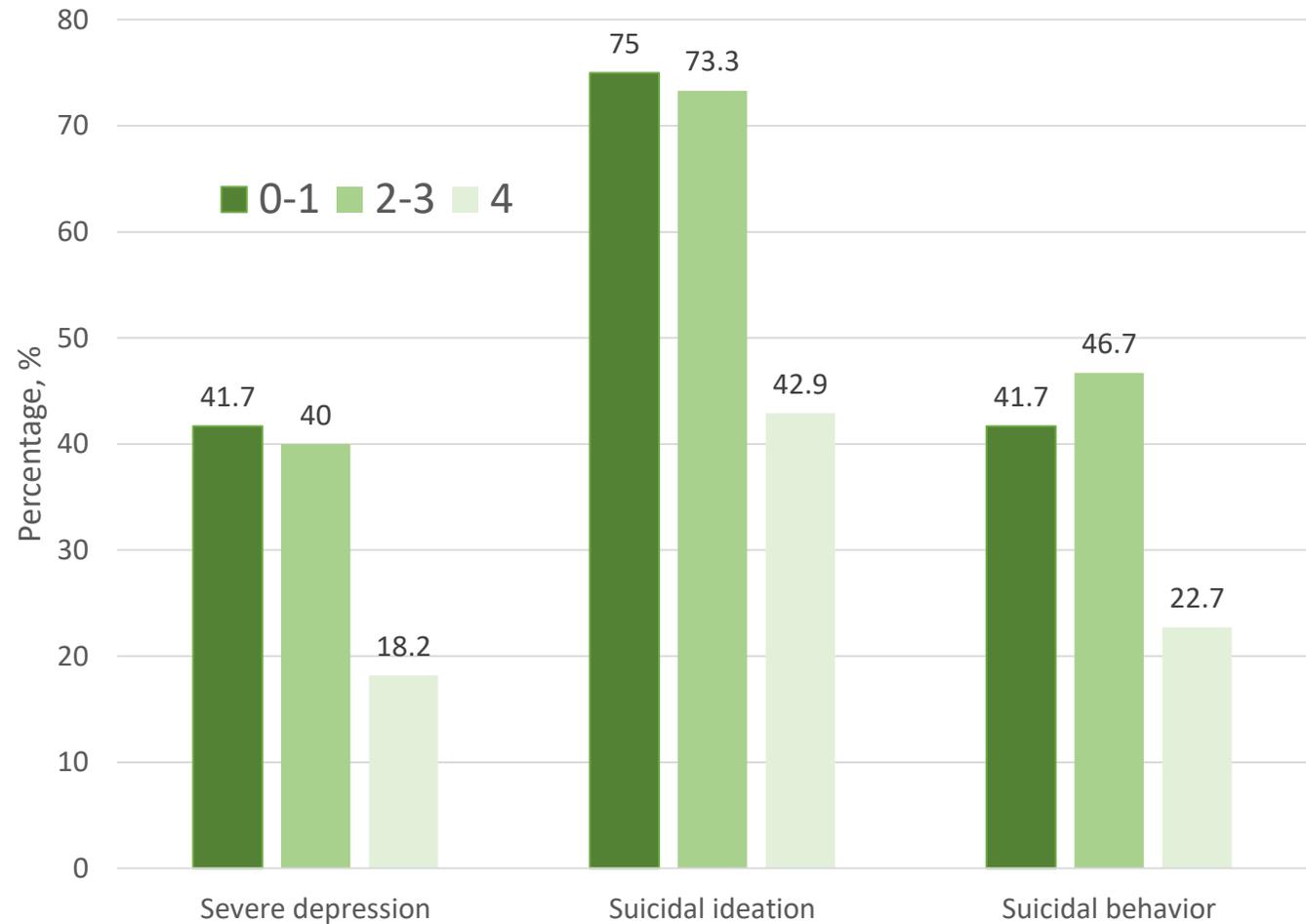
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Stories & Numbers

**Helping students, parents, and
school personnel
create safe and supportive schools
for LGBTQ and all youth**

STORIESANDNUMBERS.ORG

LGBTQ+ supportive schools:
Using research to make the case

Thinking about your communities and schools:

- How / Are these strategies currently used?

- What specific strategies might be most helpful to create safe and supportive schools?

- What steps would you take individually or as a group to implement one or more of these strategies?