

Quick Facts and Stats that Teachers Ought to Know

About 5% of males and 2.5% of females are believed to be gay/lesbian. If you have 150 students, equally divided by gender, that means that you have about four gay students and two lesbian students. In this area, most of us have fewer students of any other non-Hispanic minority.

In a study completed in a Seattle-area high school, 4% of students indicated that they were “not sure” of their sexual orientation. That means that of your 150 students, six are confused and scared about whether or not they are gay, and are probably actively seeking resources (books, people, etc.) to help them safely answer that question.

It’s difficult to get accurate numbers about bisexual youth, because bisexual people are less likely to understand or acknowledge their sexuality at a young age. Many bisexual people never “come out.” Truthfully, most of our statistics about the numbers of LGBTQ youth are probably artificially lowered due to people being scared to tell the truth in surveys.

More than half (60.8%) of LGBTQ students nationwide do not feel safe in their schools because of their sexual orientation, and more than a third felt unsafe due to their gender expression (sexual identity as opposed to orientation). That number is likely higher in conservative communities.

About 86% of LGBTQ youth report verbal harassment, 36% report sexual harassment, 44% report physical harassment, and 22% report physical assault—all taking place within the school. Overall, nearly nine out of ten LGBTQ students reported experiencing harassment at school.

Students who are frequently harassed due to sexual orientation have an average GPA almost half a grade lower than students who were less often harassed.

According to the Center for Disease Control, one in six LGBTQ teens has been beaten badly enough to require medical attention.

About 38% of LGBTQ youth do not feel comfortable talking to any member of their school’s staff about their personal lives. In the western states, specifically, 29.4% of LGBTQ youth report feeling uncomfortable talking to any school staff member about LGBTQ issues.

The average high school student in America heard anti-gay/homophobic remarks 25 times per day—in 1994, before the expression “that’s so gay” gained popularity.

Having a GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) or similar organization in a school reduces likelihood that students hear homophobic slurs from 75% to 57%; LGBTQ students with access to a GSA were half as likely to report dating violence, physical harassment or assault at school, or absenteeism due to fears for personal safety.

Although GSAs significantly reduce many of the issues affecting LGBTQ students, only about one-third of students report having a GSA at their schools. Fewer than 19% of students attend a school with a comprehensive safe school policy.

LGBTQ students:

- Are more than four times as likely to report being threatened with a weapon on school property
- Are almost five times more likely to skip school due to fears for their own safety
- Are more likely to drop out of school due to harassment about their sexuality
- Are more than three times as likely to have attempted suicide in any given year (this number increases to eight times more likely when their families reject them as a result of coming out)
- Report that they are more likely to carry a weapon to school for self-protection
- Are more likely to be in a physical fight at school
- Are more likely to report using tobacco, marijuana, and cocaine before the age of thirteen
- Are four to five times more severely affected by depression, probably due to isolation and harassment

According to the FBI, 95% of child molesters/pedophiles are heterosexual men.

Anecdotally (meaning I could find no printed statistics to confirm/deny) there is a slightly higher than average number of LGBTQ teachers than in many other professions—perhaps one in ten educators.

Resources

“Fact Sheet: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Issues.” *SIECUS Report*. <http://www.thebody.com/content/prev/art2449.html>

“Gay-Straight Alliances: Creating safer schools for LGBT students and their allies.” GLSEN (2007).

Johnson, Ramon. “Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth Suicide Statistics.” <http://gaylife.about.com/od/gayteens/a/gaysuicide.htm>

Presgraves, Daryl. “2007 National School Climate Survey.” <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/2340.html?state=research&type=research>

“Statistics.” GLIDE. <http://www.socal-glide.org/statistics.html>

LGBTQ Lit for Young Readers: A Not-at-All Comprehensive List

- Absolutely, Positively Not* by David LaRochelle
After Tupac and D Foster by Jacqueline Woodson
All Lost Things by Josh Aterovis
Almost Perfect by Brian Katcher
Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence ed. by Marion D. Bauer
And Tango Makes Three by Peter Parnell & Justin Richardson**
Annie on My Mind by Nancy Garden
The Arizona Kid by Ronald Koertge
Ash by Malinda Lo
Banshee by Hayden Thorne
Beautiful Americans trilogy by Lucy Silag
Behind You by Jacqueline Woodson
Between Mom and Jo by Julie Anne Peters
Box Girl by Sarah Withrow*
The Boy in the Dress by David Walliams & Quentin Blake*
Boy Meets Boy by David Levithan
Boy2Girl by Terence Blacker
The Boys and the Bees by Joe Babcock*
Choir Boy by Charlie Anders*
City of Bones trilogy by Cassandra Clare
Country Girl, City Girl by Lisa Jahn-Clough
Crush by Carrie Mac
Curse of Arachnaman by Hayden Thorne
Cycler (a.k.a. Recycler) by Lauren McLaughlin
Dairy Queen by Catherine Murdock
David Inside Out by Lee Bantle
Dear Julia by Amy Bronwen Zemser
Deliver Us from Evie by M. E. Kerr
Degranon by Duane Simolke
Down to the Bone by Mayra Lazara Dole
Empress of the World by Sara Ryan
Eon by Alison Goodman
Everywhere Babies by Susan Meyers and Marla Frazee**
50 Ways of Saying Fabulous by Graeme Aitken*
Fly on the Wall: How One Girl Saw Everything by E. Lockhart
Freak Show by James St. James
Free Your Mind: The Book for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth and Their Allies by Ellen Bass & Kate Kaufman***
From Alice to Zen and Everyone in Between by Elizabeth Atkinson*
From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun by Jacqueline Woodson
The Full Spectrum: A New Generation of Writing about Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Other Identities ed. by David Levithan & Billy Merrell***
Geography Club by Brent Hartinger
GLBTQ: The Survival Guide for Queer and Questioning Teens by Kelly Huegel***
The God Box by Alex Sanchez
Gravity by Leanne Lieberman
Hear Me Out ed. by Planned Parenthood of Toronto***
The Heart Sense trilogy by K. L. Richardsson
Hello, I Lied by M. E. Kerr
Hero by Perry Moore
Hey, Dollface by Deborah Hautzig
Holly's Secret by Nancy Garden*
The House of Night series by P.C. and Kristin Cast
The House You Pass on the Way by Jacqueline Woodson
If You Believe in Mermaids... Don't Tell by A. A. Philips*
Impulse by Ellen Hopkins
Ironside by Holly Black
Jack and Jim by Kitty Crowther**
King and King by Linda de Haan & Stern Nijland**
The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. LeGuin
The Less-Dead by April Lurie
Letters in the Attic by Bonnie Shimko*
Love and Lies: Marisol's Story by Ellen Wittlinger
Luna by Julie Anne Peters
Luv Ya Bunches by Lauren Myracle*
Magic's Pawn by Mercedes Lackey
The Manny Files series by Christian Burch*
The Masks trilogy by Hayden Thorne
Mermaids on Parade by Melanie Hope Greenberg**
The Misfits by James Howe*
Mousetraps by Pat Schmatz and Bill Hauser
My Most Excellent Year by Steve Kluger*
Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist by David Levithan
No Big Deal by Ellen Jaffe McClain*
Not the Only One: Lesbian and Gay Fiction for Teens ed. by Jane Summer
Out of Left Field by Barbara Clanton
Out Law: What LGBT Youth Should Know About Their Legal Rights by Lisa Keen***
Parrotfish by Ellen Wittlinger
Pedro and Me by Judd Winick
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
The Popularity Papers by Amy Ignatow*
Postcards from No Man's Land by Aidan Chambers
QUAD by C. G. Watson
The Realm of Possibility by David Levithan
Royally Jacked (a.k.a. Royally Crushed) by Niki Burnham*
Saints of Augustine by Patrick Ryan
The Shared Heart by Adam Mastoon**
Skim by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki
Slob by Ellen Potter*
The Skull of Truth by Bruce Coville and Gary A. Lippincott*
So Super Duper by Brian Anderson
Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You by Peter Cameron
Sonny's House of Spies by George Ella Lyon*
Sprout by Dale Peck
The Stone Dance of the Chameleon by Ricardo Pinto
A Strong and Sudden Thaw by R. W. Day
Sugar Rush by Julie Burchill
Tithe by Holly Black
Totally Joe by James Howe*
Tough Love: High School Confidential by Abby Denson
Tripping to Somewhere by Kristopher Reisz
21 Proms ed. by David Levithan & Daniel Ehrenhaft
Two Teenagers in Twenty: Writings by Gay and Lesbian Youth ed. by Ann Heron***
Valiant by Holly Black
Vintage: A Ghost Story by Steve Berman
Waiting for Normal by Leslie Connor*
What if Someone I Know is Gay? by Eric Marcus***
What They Always Tell Us by Martin Wilson
Wide Awake by David Levithan
Will Grayson, Will Grayson by John Green & David Levithan
The Will of the Empress by Tamora Pierce

* Suitable for middle level readers

** Picture books

*** Nonfiction

Online Resources for LGBTQ Literature and Support

ALA Rainbow Project: American Library Association reviews and selects the best of LGBTQ fiction for kids and teens
<http://rainbowlist.wordpress.com/>

2010 Reading List: <http://rainbowlist.wordpress.com/rl-2010/>

2009 Reading List: <http://rainbowlist.wordpress.com/rl-2009/>

2008 Reading List: <http://rainbowlist.wordpress.com/rl-2008/>

“Gay teen blogger/book reviewer takes librarians to task over LGBT lit”

<http://janettrumble.wordpress.com/2010/06/15/gay-teen-bloggerbook-reviewer-takes-librarians-to-task-over-lgbt-lit/>

Great Perhaps (my YA book blog, with LGBTQ “book club” reviews)

<http://gr8perhaps.wordpress.com>

I’m Here. I’m Queer. What the Hell Do I Read? (YA book blog)

<http://www.leewind.org>

Lambda Literary (awards for LGBTQ books, with category for YA/children’s books)

<http://www.lambdaliterary.org/>

2010 Finalists and Winners (YA about halfway down): <http://www.lambdaliterary.org/awards/awards-finalists/>

Past Finalists/Winners 1988-2008: <http://www.lambdaliterary.org/category/winners-finalists/>

Naughty Book Kitties (book blog by LGBTQ teens)

<http://naughtybookkitties.blogspot.com/>

Pinched Nerves (blog by ally and middle school librarian)

<http://janettrumble.wordpress.com>

Queer YA: Fiction for LGTBQ Teens

<http://daisyporter.org/queerya/>

Stonewall Book Award: ALA award for LGBTQ literature

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/rts/glbtrt/stonewall/index.cfm>

Past winners, 1971-2010: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/rts/glbtrt/stonewall/honored/index.cfm>

Think Before You Speak: program fighting anti-gay and homophobic language

<http://www.thinkb4youspeak.com/>

Young Adult Fiction with Gay/Lesbian Content, 1969-2009: A Chronological Bibliography

<http://people.lis.illinois.edu/~cajenkin/yabib.html>

GLSEN: Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network

<http://www.glsen.org>

Is Everyone Protected by the Bill of Rights? (Lesson plan)

<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/lessons/billofrights/>

***It’s Elementary* film trailer**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWyj_OfQpnU&feature=player_embedded

Reel Grrls: Coming Out... (short film, by teens, about homophobia)

<http://www.reelgrrls.org/coming-out>

Safe School Kit (free download includes educators’ guide and sticker templates)

<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1641.html?state=tools&type=educator>

Famous Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual People in History

Alexander the Great
*Macedonian Ruler, 300 B.C.

Socrates
*Greek Philosopher, 400 B.C.

Sappho
*Greek Woman Poet, 600 B.C.

Hadrian
*Roman Emperor, 1st-2nd c.

Richard the Lionhearted
*English King, 12th c.

Saladin
*Sultan of Egypt and Syria

Desiderius Erasmus
*Dutch Monk, Philosopher

Francis Bacon
*English statesman, author

Frederick the Great
*King of Prussia

Lord Byron
*English poet, 18th c.

Walt Whitman
*U.S. poet, author, 19th c.

Oscar Wilde
*Irish author, 19th c.

Marcel Proust
*French author, 20th c.

Colette
*French author, 20th c.

Gertrude Stein
*U.S. poet, author, 20th c.

Federico Garcia Lorca
*Spanish author, 20th c.

Cole Porter
*U.S. composer, 20th c.

Virginia Woolf
*English author, 20th c.

Leonard Bernstein
*U.S. composer, 20th c.

Pope Julius III
*1550-1555

T.E. Lawrence
*English soldier, author, 20th c.

Jean Cocteau
*French writer, director, 20 c.

Charles Laughton
*English actor, 20th c.

Marguerite Yourcenar
*Belgian author, 20th c.

Tennessee Williams
*U.S. Playwright, 20th c.

James Baldwin
*U.S. author, 20th c.

Andy Warhol
*U.S. artist, 20th c.

Michelangelo
*Italian artist, 15th c.

Leonardo Da Vinci
*Ital. Artist, scientist, 15th c.

Christopher Marlowe
*Eng. Playwright, 16th c.

Herman Melville
*U.S. author, 19th c.

Horatio Alger, Jr.
*U.S. author, 19th c.

Tchaikovsky
*Russian composer, 19th c.

Willa Cather
*U.S. author, 19th c.

Amy Lowell
*U.S. author, 19th & 20th c.

E.M. Forster
*English author, 20th c.

John M. Keynes
*English economist, 20th c.

Ludwig Wittgenstein
*Austrian mathematician, 20th c.

Bessie Smith
*U.S. singer, 20th c.

Noel Coward
*English playwright, 20th c.

Christopher Isherwood
*English author, 20th c.

Pier Paolo Pasolini
*Italian film director, 20th c.

Yukio Mishima
*Japanese author, 20th c.

Eleanor Roosevelt
*U.S. stateswoman, 20th c.

Julius Caesar
*Roman Emperor, 100-44 B.C.

Augustus Caesar
*Roman Emperor

Harvey Milk
*U.S. politician, 20th c.

Bayard Rustin
*U.S. Civil Rights activist, 20th c.

James I
*English King, 16th-17th c.

Queen Anne
*English Queen, 18th c.

Marie Antoinette
*French Empress, 18th c.

Melissa Etheridge
*U.S. Rock Star, 20th c.

"Within the typical secondary school curriculum, homosexuals do not exist. They are 'nonpersons' in the finest Stalinist sense. They have fought no battles, held no offices, explored nowhere, written no literature, built nothing, invented nothing and solved no equations. The lesson to the heterosexual student is abundantly clear: homosexuals do nothing of consequence. To the homosexual student, the message has even greater power: no one who has ever felt as you do has done anything worth mentioning."

Pope Benedict IX
*1032-1044

May Sarton
*U.S. author, (1912 - 1995)

Edna Ferber
*U.S. author, 20th c.

Elton John
*English Rock Star, 20th c.

Margaret Fuller
*U.S. writer, educator, 20th c.

Montezuma II
*Aztec ruler, 16th c.

Peter the Great
*Russian Czar, 17th-18th c.

Langston Hughes
*U.S. author, 20th c.

Pope John XII
*955-964

Martina Navratilova
*U.S. tennis star, 20th c.

Greg Louganis
*U.S. Olympic swimmer, 20th c.

Billie Jean King
*U.S. tennis star, 20th c.

Roberta Achtenburg
*U.S. politician, 20th c.

Barney Frank
*U.S. Congressman, 20th c.
Gerry Studds
*U.S. Congressman, 20th c.
Hans Christian Andersen
*Danish author, 19th c.
Tom Dooley
*U.S. M.D. missionary, 20th c.
J. Edgar Hoover
*U.S. director of the FBI., 20 c.
Frida Kahlo
*Mexican artist, 20th c.
Suleiman the Magnificent
*Ottoman ruler, 15th c.
Rock Hudson
*U.S. actor, 20th c.
Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz
*Mexican author, 16th c.
Ralph Waldo Emerson
*U.S. author, 19th c.

Candace Gingrich
*Gay Rights activist, 20th c.
Margarethe Cammermeyer
*U.S. Army Colonel, 20th c.
Zoe Dunning
*U.S. Military Reservist, 20tc.
Tom Waddel
*U.S. M.D., Olympic star, 20 c.
Kate Millet
*U.S. author, 20th c.
Janis Joplin
*U.S. singer, 20th c.
Rudolf Nuryev
*Russian dancer, 20th c.
Waslaw Nijinsky
*Russian dancer, 20th c.
Ernst Röhm
*German Nazi leader, 20th c.
Dag Hammarskjöld
*Swedish UN Secretary, 20 c.

Aristotle
*Greek philosopher, 384-322 B.C.
Paula Gunn Allen
*Native American author, 20th c.
Angela Davis
*U.S. political activist, 20th c.
June Jordan
*U.S. author, activist, 20th c.
Rainer Maria Rilke
*German poet, 20th c.
James Dean
*U.S. actor, 20th c.
Montgomery Clift
*U.S. actor, 20th c.
Baron VonSteuben
*German General, Valley Forge
Edward II
*English King, 14th c.

Also:

Gay and Lesbian Athletes: <http://www.outsports.com/outathletes/>

Gay and Lesbian Politicians: <http://www.equalitygiving.org/Gay-Politicians>

Was Emily Dickinson Gay? http://www.glbtq.com/literature/dickinson_e.html

Was Shakespeare Gay? http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexuality_of_William_Shakespeare

Glossary of LGBTQ Terms

Ally

A non-lesbian, gay man or bisexual whose attitudes and behaviors are anti-heterosexist in perspective and who works towards combating homophobia and heterosexism, both on a personal and institutional level.

Bisexual

A person who has a range of emotional, social and psychological commitment and responses to members of both genders. A person who is sexually attracted to both men and women, or to a set of qualities that do not necessarily line up with biological sex, public gender or social life.

Come Out

To declare to oneself and/or publicly affirm one's homosexual identity, sometimes to one person in conversation, sometimes by an act that places one in the public eye. It is not a single event but instead a lifelong process. In each new situation, a gay man or lesbian must decide whether or not to come out.

Crossdresser

Formerly called transvestites. Typically men (mostly heterosexual) who sometimes wear opposite-gender clothing for personal reasons. There are some women who crossdress also.

Dyke

A derogatory slur for lesbians. Reclaimed by some as a term of pride.

Fag(got)

A derogatory slur for gay men. Reclaimed by some as a term of pride.

FTM

Female-to-male (FTM): A person born or assigned at birth as biologically female, who identifies as a male and who takes the sex, gender, and identity of a male through dress, mannerisms, behavior, hormone therapy, and/or surgery.

Gay

While "gay" is sometimes used to refer to both men and women, it generally refers to men. Sometimes used derogatorily (i.e. "That's so gay!")

Gender

The social construction of masculinity and femininity in a specific culture in time. It involves gender assignment (the gender designation of someone at birth), gender roles (the expectations imposed on someone based on their gender), gender attribution (how others perceive someone's gender), and gender identity (how someone defines their own gender).

Gender Identity

The gender that a person sees themselves as. This can include refusing to label oneself with a gender. Gender identity is also often conflated with sexual orientation, but this is inaccurate. Gender identity does not cause sexual orientation. For example, a masculine woman is not necessarily a lesbian.

Heterosexism

The belief in the superiority of heterosexuality that is supported by the cultural and institutional practices of society. Also, the assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is right, correct and normal.

Heterosexual

A person whose sexual orientation is toward members of the opposite gender; a person who has emotional, social, psychological and physical commitment and responses to members of the opposite gender.

Heterosexual Privilege

The benefits granted automatically to heterosexual people that are denied to gay men and lesbians.

Homophobia

A fear and hatred of gays, lesbians and bisexuals based on a lack of knowledge and cultural conditioning. It is also manifested as a fear of being perceived as lesbian, gay or bisexual, the fear of one's own attraction for members of the same gender, or the fear of being gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Homosexual

A clinical term for people having emotional, physical, and sexual responses primarily to members of the same gender. Many gays, lesbians, and bisexuals find this term offensive because it is a clinical term assigned to them by others.

In the Closet

To be "in the closet" means to hide one's identity in order to keep a job, a housing situation, friends, or in some other way to survive. Many LGBTQ individuals are "out" in some situations and "closeted" in others.

Institutional Oppression

Institutional arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another, illustrated through the use of language, media, education, economics, religion, etc.

Internalized Oppression/Homophobia

The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate myths and stereotypes to the oppressed group.

Intersexed

Formerly called hermaphrodites. People born with chromosomal and/or physiological anomalies, and/or ambiguous genitalia. Many are surgically "normalized" by their parents, which can result in the lack of sexual response in adulthood.

Lesbian

A woman who has emotional, social, psychological and physical commitment and responses to other women. "Lesbian" is one of the oldest and most positive terms for gay women. Derived from the Greek Isle of Lesbos where the lesbian poet, Sappho, had a school in 400 B.C.

Lifestyle

The way individuals live their lives, such as an urban or a rural lifestyle, an artistic lifestyle, an entrepreneurial lifestyle, a hedonistic lifestyle; not appropriately used to denote sexual orientation (just as there is no heterosexual lifestyle, there is no homosexual or gay lifestyle either); the phrase 'homosexual lifestyle' is often used by anti-gay groups to imply that sexual orientation is a matter of choice rather than of identity.

MTF

Male-to-female (MTF): A person born or assigned at birth as biologically male, who self-identifies as female and who takes the sex, gender, and identity of a female through dress, mannerisms, behaviors, hormone therapy, and/or surgery.

Outing

Disclosing someone's sexual orientation or gender identity to others without permission (i.e. "He was outed at work".)

Partner or Significant Other

Terms most appropriate to use when referring to a gay or lesbian's spousal equivalent. GLBT people may also use "girlfriend/boyfriend," "lover," "roommate," "life partner," "wife/husband," or other terms when referring to their partners.

Queer

Once a derogatory term, the word "queer" has been embraced by the gay and lesbian community, and is used as an umbrella term for all sexual minorities. Use some caution, as many in the GLBT community consider it only appropriate that other GLBT people use the term.

Questioning

Being unsure of one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity; feeling uncomfortable with or unwilling or unable to self-categorize within traditional labels such as gay, straight, male, female, etc.

The Rainbow Flag

A recognized symbol of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. Use of the rainbow flag began in the 1970s primarily on the West Coast, where it could be seen waving in the wind during Gay Pride marches. Today, it is recognized throughout the U.S. and Europe as a symbol of gay and lesbian pride.

Sexual Orientation or Identity

Emotional, physical, and/or sexual attraction to others, which may be toward the same sex (homosexual), the other sex (heterosexual), or both sexes (bisexual). Innate sexual attraction. In all instances, use this term instead of Sexual Preference.

Transgender

Transgender 1) An umbrella term that refers to people who transgress gender norms in various ways, including both homosexual and heterosexual transsexuals and transvestites. 2) Refers to persons whose core gender identity, their self-perception as male or female is different than their biological sex and who live full-time as the other sex. Their internal sense of self does not match their biological status.

Transsexual

Transgender persons who opt to have their bodies surgically and hormonally reconstructed to match their gender identity.

Two Spirit

A Native/American/Indian-First Nation term for people who blend the masculine and the feminine. Used to describe individuals who historically crossed gender boundaries and were accepted (sometimes revered) by Native/First Nation cultures.

One of my friends, now a teacher himself, shared the following about his experience in a Boise area school.

Back at [...] in 2003, I was a very repressed, guilty, in the closet student. I was at the point in my life when considering being gay wasn't an option, but rather an acceptance to my own suicide. I had no sexuality. I was afraid to date girls because I couldn't see what all the other guys saw. I knew something in my life wasn't right, and I felt desperate to just be considered a normal person. As a result, I really became a recluse at my high school not socializing deeply with any one clique or having a group of friends to satisfy my sense of belonging.

In a national survey of 500 LGBTQ students under the age of 19,

“Over one-third (36.6 percent) of LGBTQ youth reported hearing homophobic remarks from faculty or school staff.”

(<http://tinyurl.com/25t5a4r>)

I remember sitting in my Government class. The teacher put me in the front row and I became a very proactive student in his class. I really enjoyed our class discussions. I appreciated my government teacher and his ability to generate a lot of student interest over current issues. It was a class I looked forward to going to every day.

This teacher was also a coach, and he had a lot of his athletes in my class. It was obvious that those students had a more personal relationship with this teacher through athletic activities. Which was fine, because this didn't effect my ability to be a focused and engaged student in his class. Until the day that all changed.

One morning, this government teacher had graded and handed back a paper in which I had put in a lot of time and effort. This teacher pointed me out to the whole class and said that I had written one of the best essays from all his classes. I remember feeling really good about myself and having a sense of accomplishment and pride. It was nice to feel like I had some sense of belonging in a class other than band.

Immediately after my recognition one of his athletes sitting directly behind me blurted out to the class that he proudly took an F. The teacher replied to his outburst saying, "that's because F's are for faggots." The whole class erupted into laughter and taunting. I froze and just stared down at the ground, not understanding why my feelings were telling me something wasn't right. In addition the athlete was sitting right behind me and it felt like the teacher said it directly towards me. My face turned red and a sense of embarrassment flushed through me head to toe. I suddenly felt ashamed even after receiving high recognition for my essay.

I just remember immediately feeling like I did something wrong. The rush of a sincere compliment was warming, and I suddenly felt like I was guilty of something that had nothing to do with my involvement in government. This is just one of the many times I've heard teachers use words like queer, fag, and dyke.

"F's are for faggots" perpetuates the stigma that gay people are failures. Just in the same manner using the word gay means something is stupid. At that time in my life, I didn't have the personal armor to understand myself and the situation to defend my feelings. Every time this teacher or another student used the words gay, fag, or queer, I felt like I was an insect under a magnifying glass with the sun focused on burning me. Even though their intentions weren't directed towards me. It's hard not to take it personal when people are poking and jabbing at serious and life altering emotions that you are experiencing.

The next time we were assigned to write an essay, I wrote it, but didn't feel comfortable turning it in. When confronted by the teacher about my zero, I assured him that everything was okay and that I just needed more time. In reality, I lost all respect for this teacher and I tried to go unnoticed for the rest of the semester in the front row, slouched over my desk, never looking up.

“A national study of secondary school counselors' perceptions of adolescent homosexuals found that

25 percent perceived that teachers exhibited significant prejudice toward homosexual students

and that

41 percent believed that schools were not doing enough to help gay and lesbian students adjust to their school environments.”

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Include literature (fiction and nonfiction) with LGBTQ characters in your classroom and school libraries.

Take a stand against bigoted language, anti-gay slurs, and other hate speech.

Let students know that your classroom is a safe zone.

Display stickers or posters that indicate that you are an Ally or that your classroom is a Hate-free area.

Talk to other teachers and administrators about making your school a safer place for all students.

Join or start a Gay-Straight Alliance in your school.

Eliminate anti-gay language from your own vocabulary.

Teach literature by LGBTQ authors, and acknowledge their lives and loves without making a big deal out of it.

Go online and check out the many excellent lessons, resources, books, activities, and support groups available for educators who want to make a difference in their schools.

Be educated so that you know how to talk to parents, other educators, and your students.

Know and care for your students.