



# School Climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth

Joseph G. Kosciw, PhD | GLSEN

2011 OSDFS National Conference  
U.S. Department of Education  
August 9, 2011

# About GLSEN

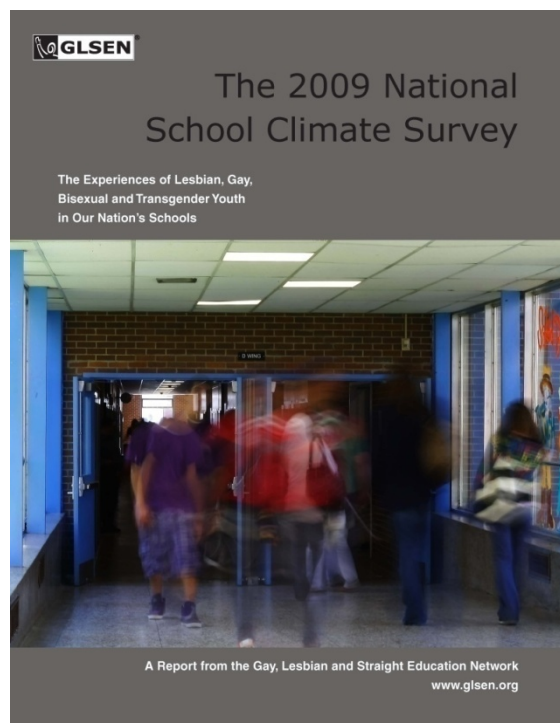
**GLSEN** (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community.

**GLSEN Research** supports the organization's mission by conducting original research on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in K-12 education and evaluating GLSEN programs and initiatives.

# National School Climate Survey

Biennial survey first conducted in 1999

Documents the experiences of LGBT students in U.S. schools



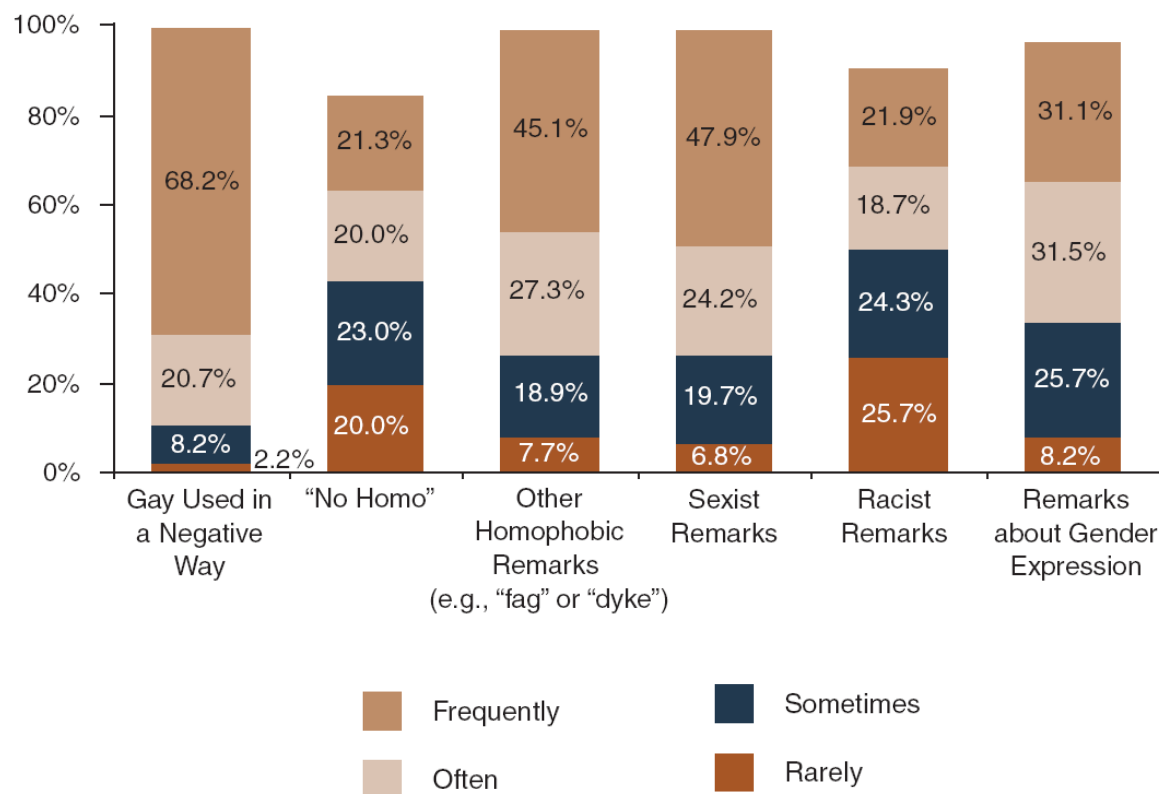
- Indicators of school climate (biased language, school safety, harassment and assault)
- Effects of negative school climate on mental health, self-esteem and educational outcomes
- Access to school resources and supports
- Utility of resources and supports
- Impact of education laws and policies on school climate
- Changes over time

# Anti-LGBT Remarks

# Anti-LGBT Remarks

Frequency of Hearing Biased Language from Students

Homophobic remarks were the most common type of biased language.



# School-Based Harassment and Assault

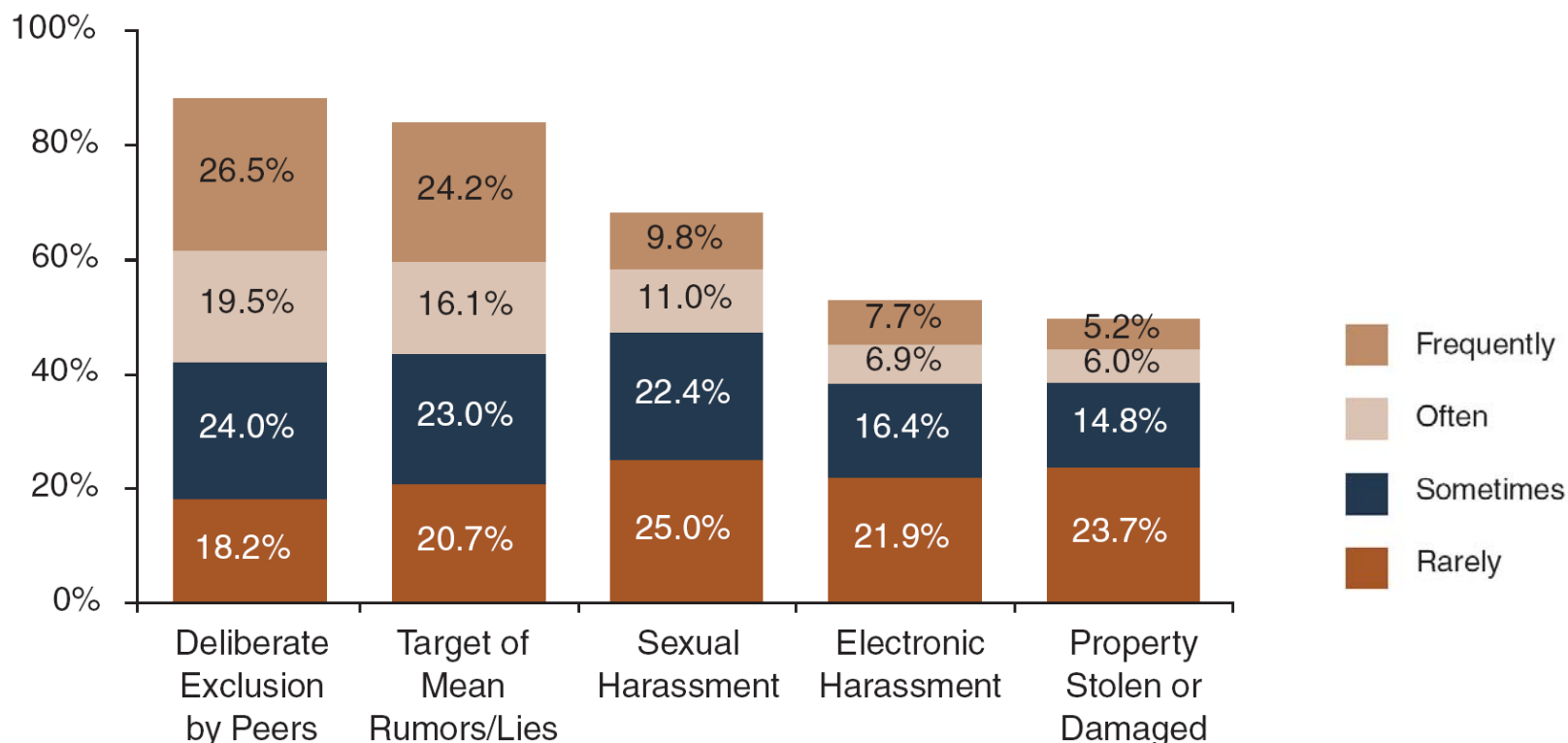
# School-Based Harassment and Assault

**Most LGBT students are victimized at school.**

- Almost all were verbally harassed in past school year
  - 4 in 5 (84.6%) because of their sexual orientation
  - 2 in 3 (63.7%) because of their gender expression
- Many were physically harassed (pushed, shoved)
  - 2 in 5 (40.1%) because of their sexual orientation
  - 1 in 3 (27.2%) because of their gender expression
- A number were physically assaulted (hit, kicked, injured with weapon)
  - 1 in 5 (18.8%) because of their sexual orientation
  - 1 in 8 (12.5%) because of their gender expression

# School-Based Harassment and Assault

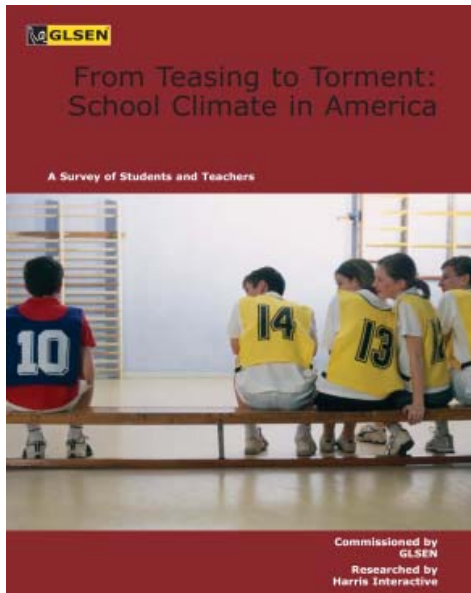
Frequency of Other Types of Harassment in School in the Past Year





# School-Based Harassment and Assault

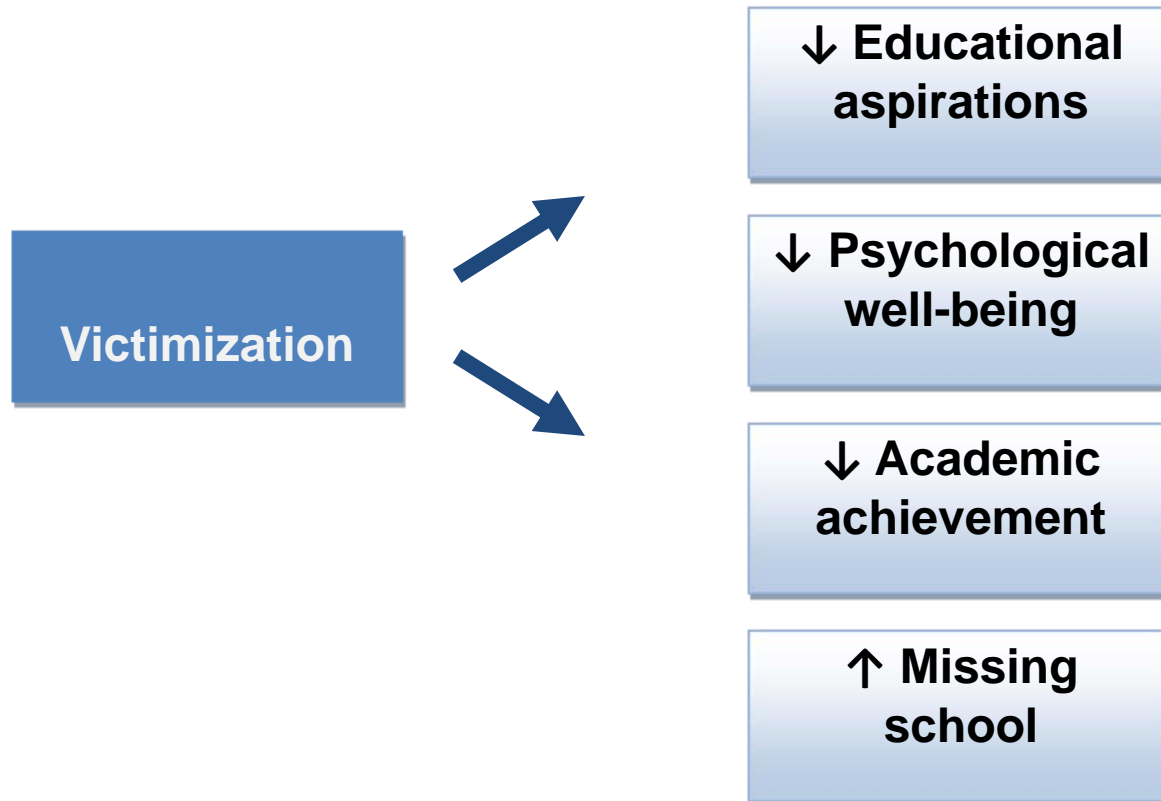
**LGBT students experience higher incidence of bullying and harassment.**



- Middle and high school students report that sexual orientation and gender expression are among the top three reasons students in their schools are bullied or harassed.
- LGBT students are more likely to be bullied and harassed than other students (90% vs. 62% of non-LGBT students harassed/assaulted in past year at school).

# School-Based Harassment and Assault

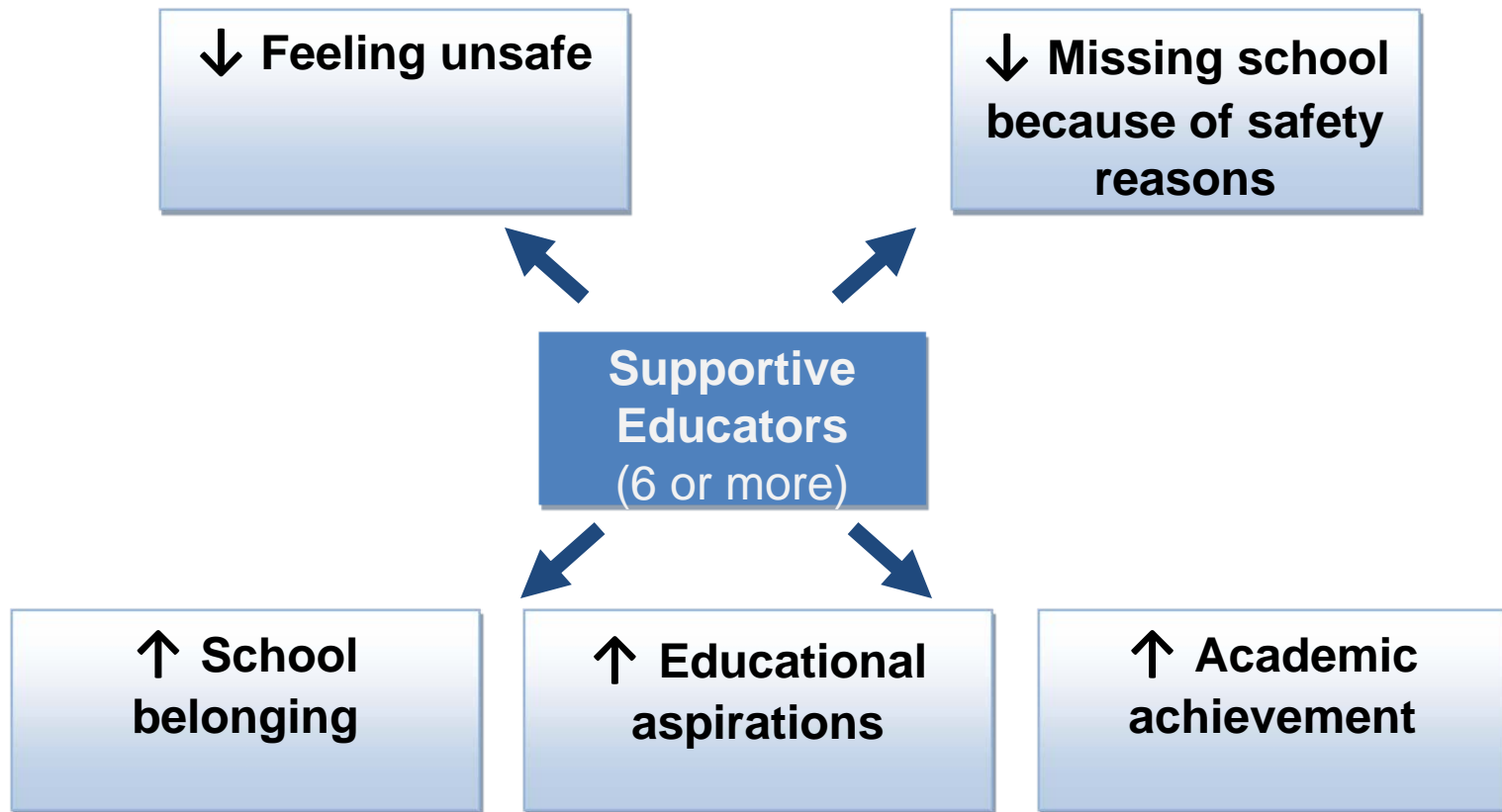
Students who experienced high levels of harassment and assault had poorer educational outcomes.



# Resources & Supports

# Supportive Educators

Supportive educators can improve school safety and educational outcomes for LGBT students.



# Supportive Educators

**Almost all students (94.5%) knew at least one staff member supportive of LGBT students.**

**Just over half (53.5%) could identify 6 or more.**

# Supportive Educators

- Staff training about anti-LGBT bullying/ harassment can improve educators' ability to effectively respond to bullying/harassment and create safer school environments for LGBT students.<sup>1</sup>
- Most secondary school teachers (86%)<sup>2</sup> and K-12 principals (69%) believe that professional development on dealing with anti-LGBT bullying/harassment would help to create safer schools.<sup>3</sup>

# Supportive Educators



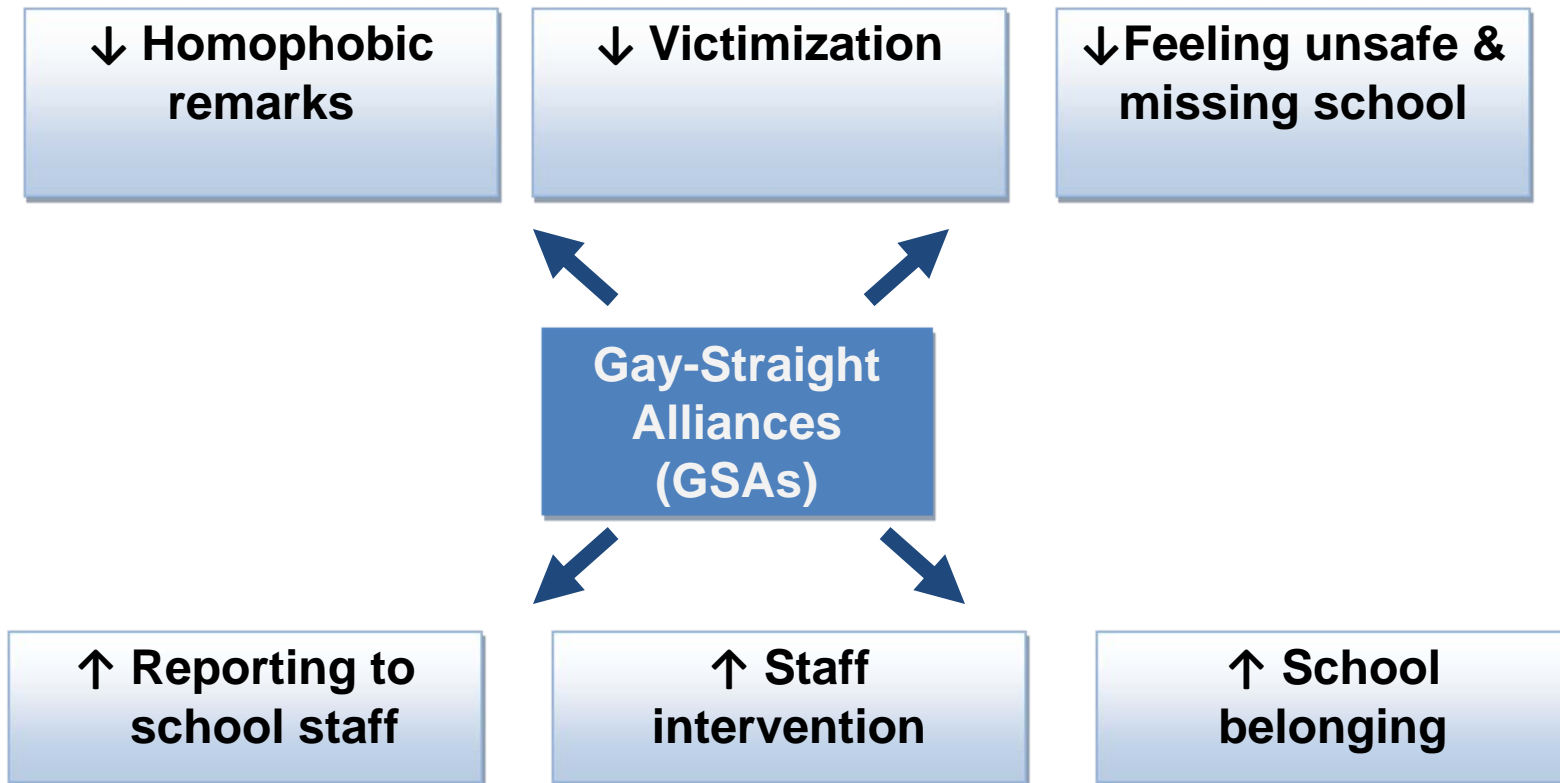
## Safe Space Kit

42-page *Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students*

- Supporting LGBT Students
- Educating Students and Staff
- Advocating for School-Wide Changes

# Supportive Student Clubs

Schools with GSAs provide a safer and more welcoming school environment for LGBT students.





# Supportive Student Clubs

**Less than half (44.6%) of LGBT students had a GSA in their school.**

# Supportive Student Clubs

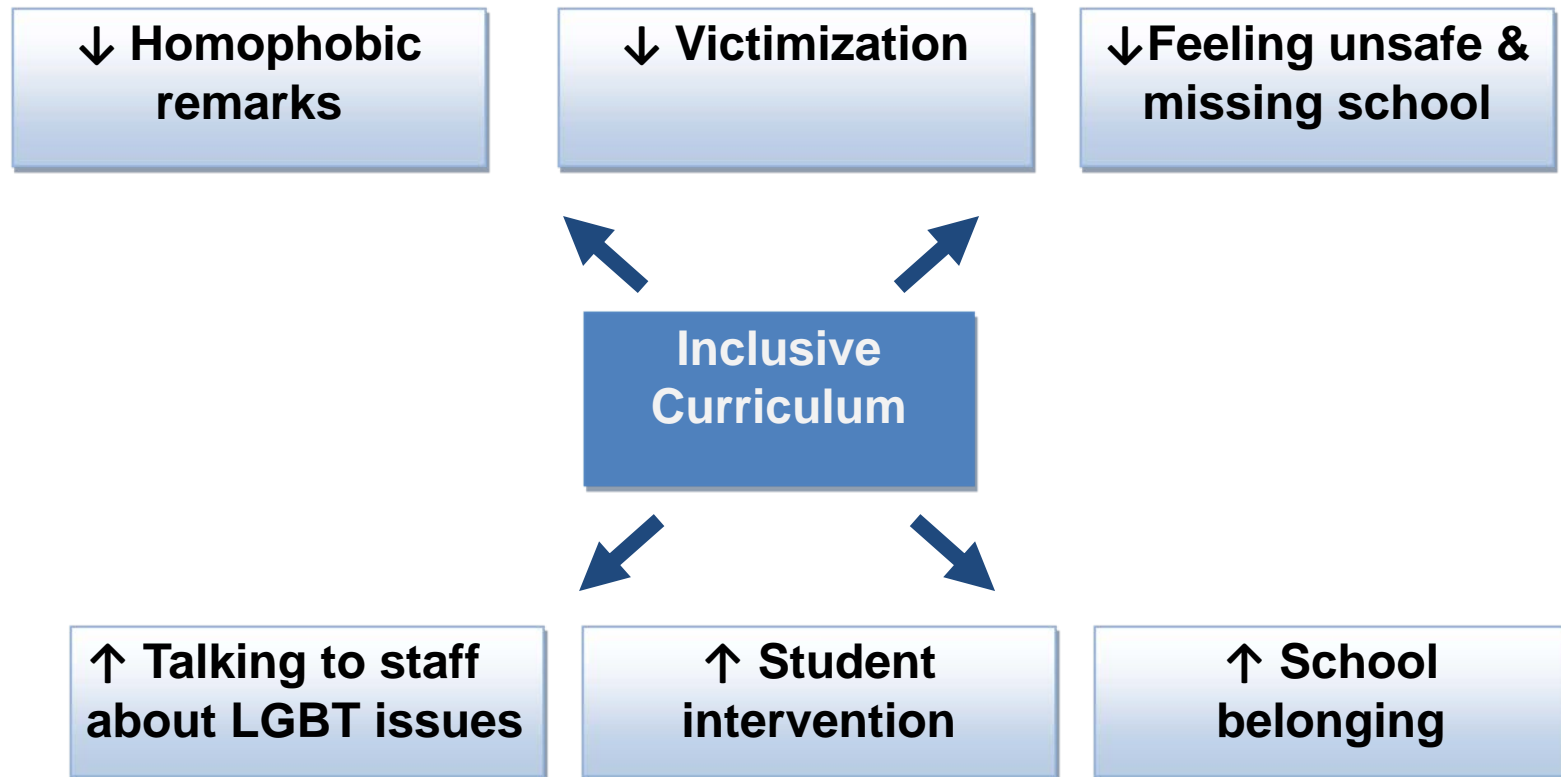


- Jump-Start Guide for Gay-Straight Alliances
- Empowering student advocates
  - National Day of Silence
  - Ally Week



# Curricular Resources

Teaching positive representations of LGBT people, history or events promotes safer, better learning environments.



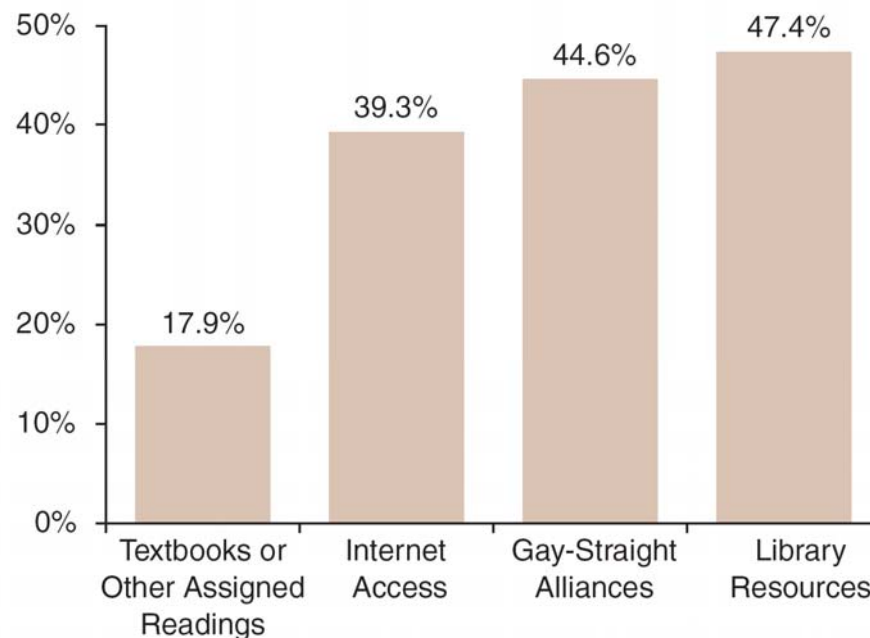
# Curricular Resources

**Only 11.7% students were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history or events.**

# Curricular Resources

Students have limited access to **other inclusive curricular resources**.

**Figure 31. Availability of LGBT-Related Resources in School**  
(percentage of students reporting that resource was available)



# Curricular Resources

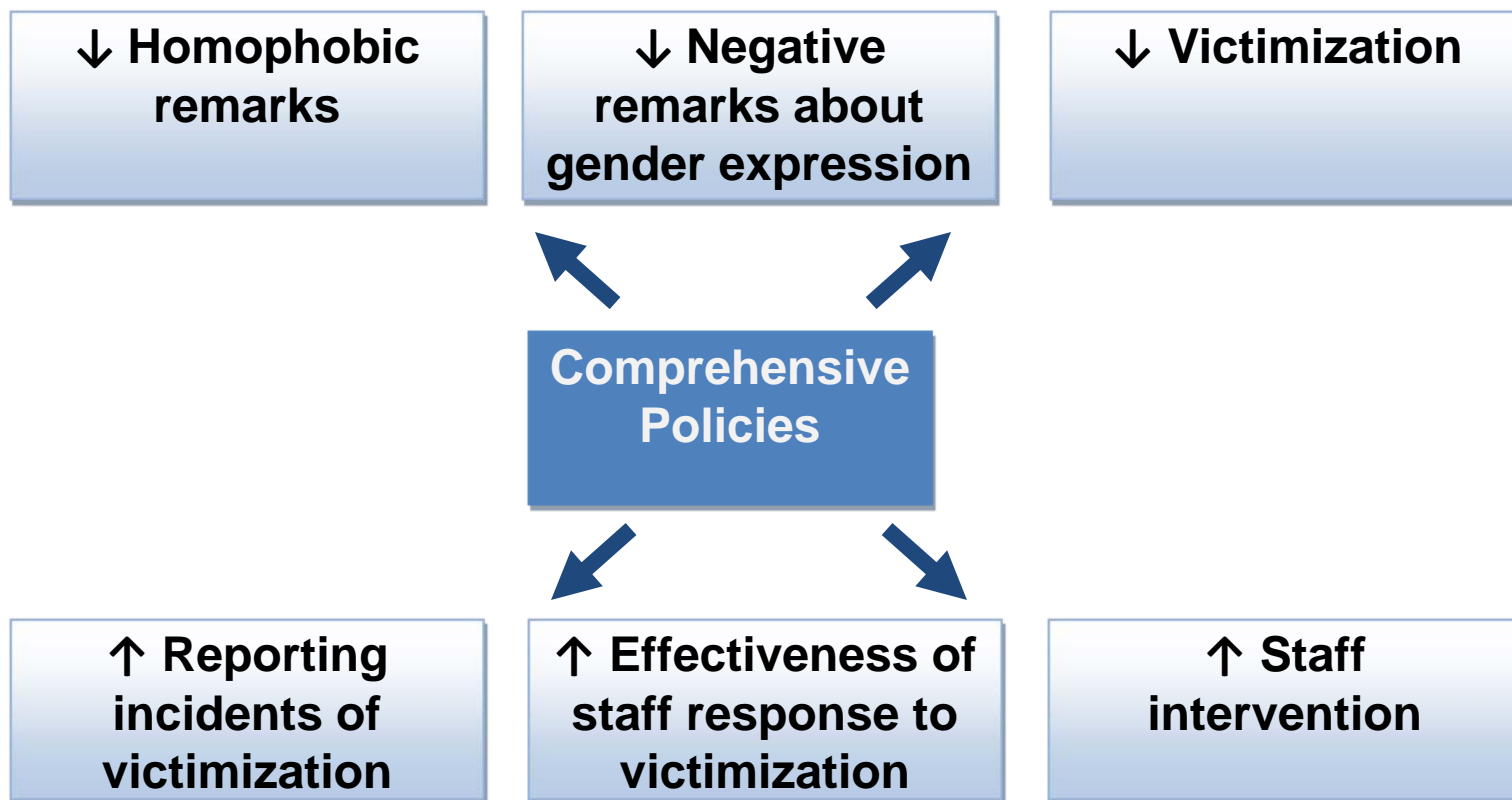
**No Name-Calling Week** resulted in more positive school experiences for students. After their schools participation in NNCW, students reported:

- ↓ Witnessing teasing, name-calling and bullying
- ↓ Being the victim of, or being the perpetrator of such events



# Comprehensive School Policies

Schools with comprehensive policies are safer for LGBT students (i.e., include specific protections based on sexual orientation and/or gender expression)



# Comprehensive School Policies

**Fewer than 1 in 5 students (18.2%) attended schools with a comprehensive policy.**



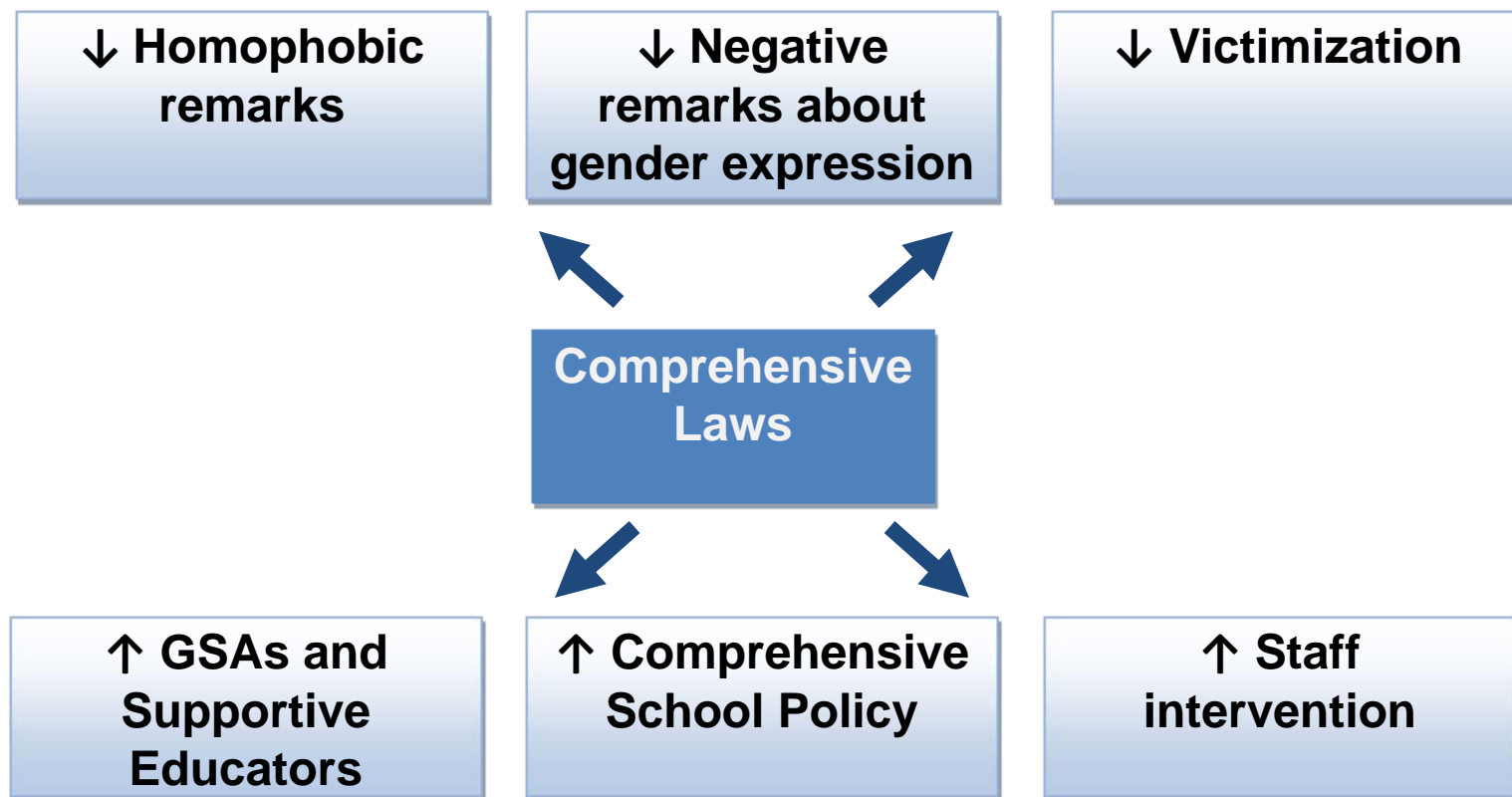
# Comprehensive Policies

GLSEN has tools for developing and implementing a safe schools campaign:

- School Model Policy
- Model District Policy
- Enumeration: A Tool for Advocates

# Comprehensive State Laws

LGBT students in states with comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment laws report safer school climates.



# Comprehensive State Laws

**16 states and the District of Columbia have education laws explicitly providing protection related to sexual orientation and/or gender identity.**

# Comprehensive Federal Legislation

GLSEN works to advance **enumerated and comprehensive** anti-bullying legislation:

- Safe Schools Improvement Act
- Student Non-Discrimination Act



# Recommendations

- Support student leadership and organizing
- Advocate for training for school staff
- Advocate for comprehensive policies and laws
- Advocate for LGBT-inclusive curricular resources
- Implement anti-bullying programs that address bias-based bullying and that incorporate LGBT student issues
- Include sexual orientation and gender identity questions when assessing school climate
- Challenge discriminatory school policies and practices

## Contact

Joseph G. Kosciw, PhD

[jkosciw@glsen.org](mailto:jkosciw@glsen.org)

[www.glsen.org/research](http://www.glsen.org/research)