A PLACE AT THE BLACKBOARD

LGBTIQ

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We know from history that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people have always existed in society (Campos, 2003; Sullivan, 2003). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexed, and queer/questioning (LGBTIQ) individuals, collectively known as sexual minorities, represent approximately 10% of the population. As many as nine students in every classroom of 30 are in some measure affected by sexual minority issues (e.g., having a gay or lesbian relative or being gay oneself) (AFSC Gay/Lesbian Youth Program, 1991). "Yet even with this substantial number, the code of silence in our nation's school systems concerning homosexuality remains" (Fontaine, 1997, pp. 101-102).

This silence and/or omission is characteristic of heterosexism, which is pervasive throughout the United States. It is apparent in the many institutions of society, including government, law, medicine, and education, among others. The fact remains that contemporary society is morally conservative overall, primarily homophobic, and heterosexism often appears to permeate school communities, permitting them to remain a zone of great vulnerability for the larger LGBTIQ movement (Blount, 2005; Campos, 2003; Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network [GLSEN], 2005; GLSEN, 2006).

High schools, the center of most adolescent life and culture, may be the most homophobic institutions in American society (Unks, 1995). Not only is high school culture not tolerant of sexual minorities, it is complicit in intolerance, violence, and murder, and coming out may be out-right dangerous. In fact, school culture is a reflection of society at large (Morris, 2005). As such, the content of curricula and extracurricular activities to which students are exposed in the education process reflect this heterosexist bias, reinforcing negative views and stereotypes of any sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

The resulting consequences not only impact those who do or will eventually identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexed, or queer/questioning, but heterosexual students, as well. Issues pertinent to sexual orientation, especially if it is "non-normative heterosexuality" (Lev, 2004, p. 87), are important because homophobia and/or heterosexism influence how public information is disseminated and how policy is formulated.

The voluntary implementation of inclusive curricula and extra curricular activities and providing a supportive environment for LGBTIQ students may be a luxury of the past. That is, the cause for equal rights for LGBTIQ students in public schools is turning to the nation's legal system to expedite its quest (Fontaine, 1997). For example, in the 1996 case of *Nabozny vs. Several Ashland Public School District Administrators*, the plaintiff, Jamie Nabozny, a gay student, was awarded $1 million in damages for the treatment he endured while a student in the school system. The suit cited continuing instances of physical abuse and verbal harassment for which school administrators took no action and were found liable for violating Nabozny's rights under the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

In yet another example, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) won a major victory on January 6, 2004, against the Morgan Hill, California, school district.

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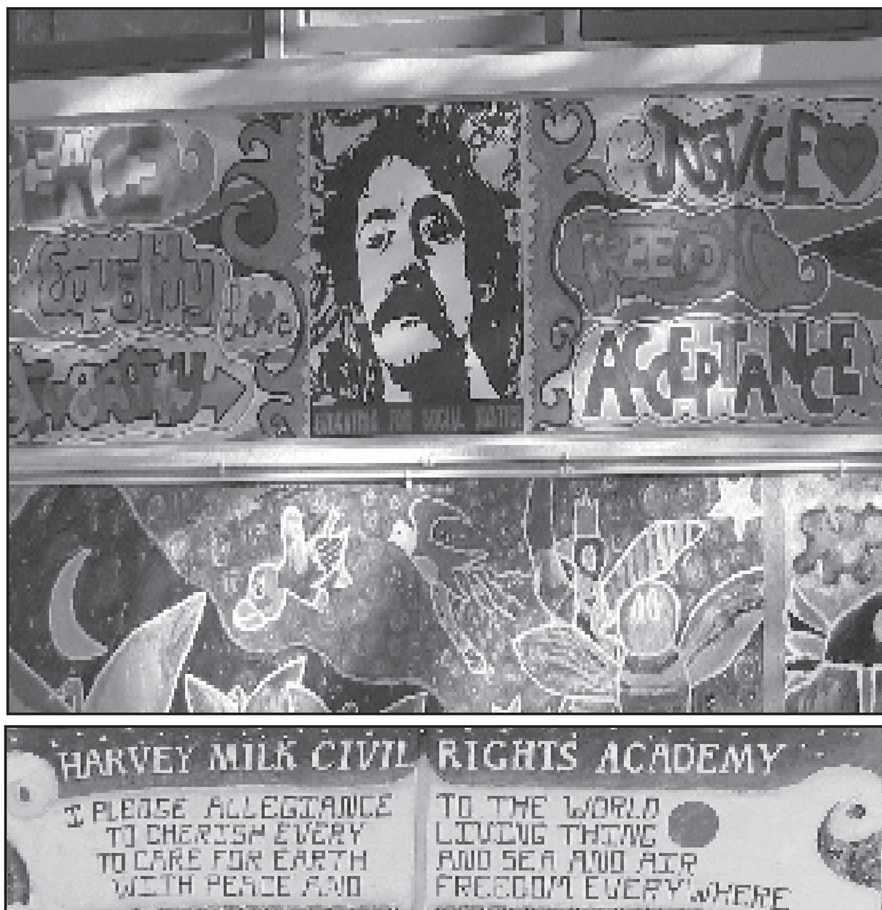
INCLUDING

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX, & QUEER/QUESTIONING

ISSUES IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS



The ACLU victory was a $1.1 million settlement in which the school district failed to protect six gay students from harassment in 1998. In addition to the $1.1 million settlement, the ACLU also won a requirement that all school district personnel take a pro-homosexual sensitivity training program (York, 2004).

The purpose of this article is to outline how heterosexist bias permeates the U.S. system of education and to present reasoning as to why LGBTIQ content should be included in the nation's public schools. To adapt a phrase coined by Bruce Bawer (1993) in his book about the incorporation of LGB persons in the society at-large, there is a place at the chalkboard for students of all sexual orientations, including LGBTIQ individuals.

Defining Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer/ Questioning Sexual Orientations

Defining sexual orientation is not as straightforward as one might anticipate it to be. While some disagree on the use of the term (see Baumrind, 1995), *sexual orientation* is commonly employed to indicate one's predominate, innate inclination for the gender of her or his romantic and/or sexual partner(s) (Hollander, 2000). It is viewed as the preferred reference term for lesbians and gay males because of its emphasis on sexuality being a natural part of an individual's identity, emanating from his or her inherent sense of being.

Such a definition stands in opposition to the notion of *sexual preference*, a political and moral term that connotes the exertion of a voluntary, conscious choice regarding one's sexuality (Harley, Hall, & Savage, 2000). *Homosexuality, heterosexuality,* and *bisexuality*, therefore, refer to categories of sexual orientation. Respectively, these terms are employed to describe one's psychosocial, emotional, spiritual, erotic, and sexual attraction and behaviors as being oriented toward a person of the same, opposite, or both sexes.

Notwithstanding the cultural bias embedded in these categories and terms, Kus (1990) noted that the term *homosexual* should be avoided when referring to a person of a non-heterosexual status because of the stigma associated with the history of the mental illness model (see Bayer, 1987) of homosexuality. The terms *lesbian*, *gay*, and *bisexual* are preferred, though it is best left with the individual to determine how she or he wishes to be identified. Though non-heterosexual sexual orientations are widely accepted as being universal throughout human history (Bullough, 1990), such an observation has most often been made from a late 20th century, Western vantage point.

Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, (1948) conceived sexuality as a position somewhere on a seven-point continuum between absolute heterosexuality (0) and absolute homosexuality (6). The results of their investigation revealed a varied distribution of participants along the continuum, rather than a strict bipolar distribution as conceived historically to that point. Another trend or theme that flowed from this research was the fluidity of the continuum model. A person's position on the continuum could change as her or his sexual behaviors changed throughout the lifespan. Thus, based upon this paradigm, the labels "heterosexual" and "homosexual" appear to be misleading and inadequate when taken at face value (McFarland, 1993). It is not our intent to provide a historical evolution of terminology.

For purposes of this article, LGBTIQ are defined operationally for ease of communication and to focus on meeting the needs, challenges, and concerns of these students in school settings. In addition, the use of the acronym LGBTIQ is inclusive of

all sexual minorities and raises awareness about what each of these letters stands for. It should be noted that the order of these letters used sometimes differ to reflect a political position (Macgillivrary, 2004). Each of these letters is defined below.

Macgillivrary (2004) explains that the *L*, *G*, *B*, and *Q* in LGBTIQ have to do with sexual orientation. Sexual orientation involves whom one is attracted to sexually, emotionally, and spiritually. *Lesbian* refers to women who are attracted to other women; *gay* to men who are attracted to men; and *bisexual* to people who are attracted to men and women (either simultaneously or sequentially). "*Questioning* allows an individual not to claim a sexual orientation identity, which is important in letting individuals come to their own understanding of who they are" (p. 10).

Queer is a term that is used positively by many LGBTIQ people and is considered an umbrella term, like LGBTIQ, which includes all non-heterosexual people. Many younger people prefer to use the term *queer* because it is empowering and removes the stigma attached to it. However, for some members of the LGBTIQ community the term queer carries too much of a negative connotation and should not be used.

Transgender has more to do with gender identity (e.g., man, woman, or somewhere in between) than with sexual orientation, and pertains to a person whose physical or genetic sex (male or female) does not correspond with their gender identity as a man, woman, or somewhere in between. *Transgender* is included with L, G, B, and Q because many of the issues facing *transgender* individuals are similar to those faced by LGB people. *Intersex* refers to variant sexual anatomy. In other words, *intersex* refers to individuals who were born with an anatomy not traditionally regarded as standard male or female (Macgillivray, 2004).

Heterosexism in Children and Adolescents

Informal observation of the language and behavior exhibited by children and adolescents in social settings provides insight into the power of the negative attitudes toward any sexual orientation other than heterosexual perpetuated by those persons in power (i.e., those who identify as heterosexual) in the broader society. Terms such as *fag*, *dyke*, *queer*, and *sissy* are used not only to inflict insult on individual students perceived to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual, but also in relatively benign situations of anger or jest with peers presumed to be heterosexual (Armstrong, 1994). The phrase, "That's so gay!," is often stated as a means of expressing one's dislike or disapproval of various objects, situations, or demands.

Research has confirmed the deleterious consequences of such insensitivity and verbal taunting experienced by students who identify as LGBTIQ, particularly adolescents, including possible isolation, social exclusion, suicidal ideation, truancy, substance abuse, and physical confrontation (Armstrong, 1994; McFarland, 1993; Morris, 2005; Remafedi, 1987a; Remafedi, Farrow, & Deisher, 1991; Robinson, 1994).

The amount of insight children and adolescents possess into their heterosexist actions, and their long-term internalization of associated attitudes, has yet to be rigorously investigated, though it seems young people are at least cognizant of the negative connotations implicit in heterosexist phraseology. Nonetheless, mindful that approximately 10% of the school-aged population in the United States (Besner & Spungin, 1995; Gonsiorek, 1988), or roughly seven million individuals, will eventually develop lesbian, gay, or bisexual identities, these negative attitudes can have profound influences on the social, physical, and mental health of their intended targets, affecting their ability to function adequately and successfully in a number of settings where children and adolescents conduct activities of daily living (Besner & Spungin, 1995; McFarland, 1993; Martin & Hetrick, 1988; Remafedi, 1987b). A fair and inclusive education is not possible for LGBTIQ students when their physical and emotional safety is routinely compromised (Stone, 2003).

Academic environments, constituting major loci in which children and adolescents spend a great deal of time, make students dealing with emerging non-heterosexual identities particularly vulnerable to the impact of heterosexist attitudes (Besner & Spungin, 1995). Ongoing exposure to such attitudes may cause many LGBTIQ youths to experience significant educational challenges (Besner & Spungin, 1995; Remafedi, 1987b). Interestingly, many of these challenges may be due to factors of the institution of education itself and not just the explicit expression of negative attitudes by participants in the educational process (Lasser & Tharinger, 1997).

Education as an institution reflects the values, beliefs, attitudes, and definitions of knowledge esteemed and transmitted by the culture in power in a society (Howard, 1999). Given the devalued and negative status of non-heterosexual sexual orientations in American society, in general (see Kite & Whitley, 1996), it is not surprising to find similar circumstances being played out in the nation's schools. For instance, curricula and school personnel tend to assume all students to be heterosexual or propagate negative beliefs and stereotypes about lesbian, gay, or bisexual persons (Sears, 1991).

Additionally, if school districts have not explicitly prohibited LGBTIQ sexual orientations from being addressed in the curriculum, the potential for perpetuating myths and misinformation about the topic exists (Morrow, 1993; Sears, 1991). This situation continues to remain true despite resolutions and position statements made by the National Association of School Psychologists (1993; 1999), the American Psychological Association (1993), and the National Education Association (1999), among others, advocating support of and nondiscrimination toward youths who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer/questioning.

Children and Adolescents with Emerging Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, or Queer/Questioning Identities

Traditionally, the attempt to define sexual orientation has been complicated by the effort to apply what was believed to be an "adult" issue to a specific subset of adolescents, specifically those identifying themselves as LGBTIQ. Secondary to the ever-growing amount of research into LGBTIQ issues, as well as the increased visibility individuals who identify as LGBTIQ have amassed since the mid-1990s, public awareness of issues related to non-heterosexual orientations continues to grow.

A consequence of this expanding awareness has been the heightened recognition of issues specific to children and adolescents with emerging LGBTIQ identities, particularly in the field of education. At its 1988 annual convention, the National Education Association drafted its first resolution affirming the rights of all students, regardless of sexual orientation, to receive equitable treatment and access to services within the nation's system of public education. The resolution even went as far as recommending every school district provide counseling for LGBTIQ students grappling with issues related to their sexual orientation (Armstrong, 1994).

This resolution was a landmark position by a major educational professional association, given that up to 10% of the student population may identify as LGBTIQ and, as such, face unique and significant challenges in their developmental ascension through biological, cognitive, and social changes characteristic of children and adolescents (Durby, 1994; Hetrick &

Martin, 1987). The impact of heterosexist attitudes can make these developmental stages all the more challenging for children and adolescents of a non-heterosexual sexual orientation to navigate.

LGBTIQ youth face many of the same developmental tasks encountered by preadolescents and adolescents, in general. LGBTIQ youth, however, seem to be at higher risk for suicidal ideation, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS, and school-related challenges for reasons other than the physical and emotional characteristics typical of their developmental cohort (Thompson & Johnston, 2003; Travers & Paoletti, 1999). Maylon (1981) reported a lack of evidence supporting the notion that heterosexual students and students who identify as LGBTIQ progress any differently through biological and cognitive changes associated with child and adolescent development.

The mediating factor was identified as a social climate characterized by hostile attitudes toward and treatment of LGBTIQ persons and issues, exerting significant pressure and stress on non-heterosexual students. Many LGBTIQ students commonly withdraw from typical peer group experiences as a result of pervasive heterosexism and out of the fear of being "discovered" (Gonsiorek, 1988).

Family Issues

Challenges at the level of the family constitute major obstacles for LGBTIQ youths. In contrast to persons considered, conventionally, to be of a "minority" status based on some physical, social, or cultural trait, LGBTIQ children and adolescents are unique in that they do not typically share the same sexual orientation as their parents or caretakers (Robinson, 1994). Family interactions can be considered both a risk and protective factor, depending on the family's response (Thompson & Johnston, 2003).

Even in instances where family members are cognizant and supportive of a child's emerging non-heterosexual sexual orientation, a lack of experience with issues associated with the unique needs of sexual minorities often interferes with their ability to respond effectively to their LGBTIQ children (Martin, 1982). Furthermore, families, overtly and covertly, intentionally and unintentionally, model and perpetuate heterosexist attitudes via such means as derogatory jokes, heterosexist comments, prejudicial statements, and discriminatory behaviors.

Young LGBTIQ individuals who absorb these attitudes and realize their emerging non-heterosexual orientations "become victims of their parents' homophobia" (Besner & Spungin, 1995, p. 47). The outcome of this type of heterosexism can lead to a lack of emotional intimacy and limited interactions with one's family, contributing to the isolation or sense of "otherness" described elsewhere in the present review.

School Issues

The experiences of invisibility and isolation with which LGBTIQ youngsters contend in their homes and in the community at-large extend to the school setting, as well. Reported to be actively ignored by educational professionals (Herr, 1997; Sears, 1992), LGBTIQ students are touted as being the most underserved population of youths in the schools (Uribe, 1994). As such, LGBTIQ teenagers encounter an increased potential for experiencing academic challenges. These challenges are brought about by aspects of the institution of education itself as well as of the social climate within the school. The lack of acceptance by their peers put LGBTIQ youth at greater risk for a variety of social, emotional, physical, and educational hardships (Roffman, 2000).

The institution of education, because of its location in society and its role in transmitting cultural values and beliefs, reinforces heterosexism through what Friend (1993) identifies as the systemic exclusion and systemic inclusion methods of silencing. *Systemic exclusion* entails excluding positive images, references, and information relevant to LGBTIQ individuals from scholarly endeavors, contributing to the invisibility of persons of a non-heterosexual sexual orientation. *Systemic inclusion* occurs through the consistent ascription of negative contexts to discussions of LGBTIQ orientations when they do occur in the learning environment. These strategies contribute to the feelings of loneliness expressed by LGBTIQ students (Herr, 1997).

Encountering heterosexism in the academic setting may contribute to LBTIQ youths becoming preoccupied with the social discomfort emanating from the devaluation of one aspect of their identity. Efforts at trying to fit in to the majority culture of the school can lead to difficulty with concentration and decreased participation in the classroom and extracurricular settings (Besner & Spungin, 1995). The school attendance of LGBTIQ teenagers frequently suffers, as Jennings (as reported in Macgillivray, 2004) cited they are over three times as likely to skip school and up to 28%-30% of LGB youth drop out from high school (Remafedi, 1987a). Herr (1997) found that gay and lesbian youth drop out of school in disproportionate numbers.

Violence

Given the greater visibility of persons who identify as LGBTIQ in society and the widespread negativity directed at them, Hunter and Schaecher (1987) identified violence as an increasingly normative experience for LGBTIQ individuals, including children and adolescents. Martin and Hetrick (1988), reporting on violence incurred by LGBTIQ adolescents receiving protective services, found 40% of their respondents had been attacked or harassed, 49% of whom were victimized within their families.

A survey conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (1987) revealed that of the 2,000 adult respondents, 20% of the females and 50% of the males reported having been harassed, threatened with bodily harm, or physically assaulted by other students in junior and/or senior high school as a result of being known as or perceived to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Youths on the Streets

Heterosexism and confusion regarding one's sexual orientation are the primary reasons some LGBTIQ teenagers run away from home. One in four LGBTIQ teens is forced to leave home due to disclosure of or conflicts over her or his sexual orientation (Remafedi, 1987b). Lacking other support networks, LGBTIQ adolescents who leave home commonly turn to the streets.

Up to 25% of all youths living on the streets in the United States are of a non-heterosexual sexual orientation and approximately one-half of the gay males forced to leave home engage in prostitution to support themselves (Besner & Spungin, 1995). A vicious cycle may be put into place in that, with a lack of formal education and job skills, prostitution becomes the only way to keep cash flowing and the person sustained. The effects can be devastating, though, by contributing to the further development of self-loathing and destruction.

Suicide

LGBTIQ youths are at heightened risk for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. Van Heeringen and Vincke (2000) found that LGBTIQ youth (37.7%) reported suicidal ideations more than their heterosexual counterparts (21.5%), as well as a higher history of suicidal behavior (17.2% vs. 5.6% respectfully). Suicide was the leading cause of death among those teens struggling with their sexual orientation according to reports published in 1989 by

the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Besner & Spungin, 1995).

Those reports also indicated teenage LGBTIQ individuals were two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers and accounted for up to 30% of all completed suicides for their age cohort. This statistic may be an underestimate of the actual number of suicides carried out by lesbian or gay adolescents given the underreporting or lack of disclosure of the victim's sexual orientation. Reducing heterosexism and the provision of the necessary support services required by youths with emerging lesbian or gay identities are two strategies generated as means of preventing suicide and suicide attempts in this population (Besner & Spungin, 1995).

Other Issues Facing LGBTIQ Youths

LGBTIQ children and adolescents face a number of other risks to their physical and mental health secondary to the attitudes expressed toward their sexual orientations. For instance, the literature documents the potential for youths of a non-heterosexual sexual orientation to develop eating disorders (e.g., Besner & Spungin, 1995), chemical dependency habits (e.g., Jordan, 2000), serious medical conditions such as sexually transmitted diseases, HIV infection, and AIDS (e.g., Cranston, 1991), and clinically significant psychiatric disorders (e.g., D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993).

Additionally, LGBTIQ children and adolescents may be at a heightened risk for sexual abuse, though further research is needed to confirm such an observation (Martin & Hetrick, 1988). Given the rate of anti-homosexual bullying in schools, often referred to as "endemic" (Burchfiel, 2006), policies banning all harassment in schools is not in itself effective in protecting sexual minority students.

Addressing LGBTIQ Issues in Schools

Besides providing the reader with some important background information and operational definitions, much of the material outlined above is intended to serve as justification as to why it is imperative to address LGBTIQ issues in schools. Becoming aware of the many issues and challenges, both personally and educationally, LGBTIQ individuals face in their lives sensitizes educators to the unique needs of this particular group of students; however, awareness is not enough. Specific action is needed to make schools safe, welcoming, respectful, and, perhaps, even valuing of LGBTIQ people, students, faculty, and families alike.

Such a task is not easily achievable, though, given the myriad of perspectives pertaining to non-heterosexual sexual orientations in U.S. society. This section delineates ways LGBTIQ issues can and should be addressed in schools, as well as strategies to finesse some of the opposition to doing so.

Non-Discrimination Policies

Including sexual orientation as a protected class in a school district's non-discrimination policy is the first step schools can take in guaranteeing the rights of LGBTIQ individuals to partake in and benefit from the educational opportunities associated with the public schooling process. However, once policies are in place it is vital that action plans be established to ensure the consistent adherence to an implementation of these policies (Fitzsimons-Lovett & Budzisi, 1996). When queried, most people acknowledge that no one should be discriminated against in schools, that everyone has a fundamental right to an education and to be safe while in school (Macgillivray, 2004).

Interestingly, when pressed further, Macgillivray found some people indicate sexual orientation should not be included in non-discrimination policies as doing so, in their opinion, constitutes granting special rights to LGBTIQ individuals, as well as trampling on the rights of morally conservative persons who are against non-heterosexual sexual orientations for various reasons, religious and otherwise. Macgillivray reports such individuals believe non-discrimination polices should be worded so that all students are free from being discriminated against, that people should be treated as human, not as different categories of people.

Furthermore, morally conservative people believe that by including sexual orientation in school policy, LGBTIQ content will make its way into the curriculum, leading students to believe "it is okay to be gay." This possibility stands in the face of what they are teaching their children in their homes and institutions of faith, leading morally conservative people to fear being labeled as bigots for such beliefs.

Fear is one of the three main obstacles to implementing changes in schools that would create safe and supportive environments for *all* students. Another obstacle includes a laissez-faire attitude, a situation associated with schools that refuse to recognize the existence of LGBTIQ youth and to acknowledge that many youth who are not LGBTIQ come from households where the parents are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. A final obstacle to meting the needs of LGBTIQ students in schools is the "here we go again" attitude held by parents, teachers, and the public at large in which LGBTIQ students are viewed as just another disenfranchised group who want their recognition (Fitzsimons-Lovett & Budzisz, 1996).

At first glance, the arguments outlined above may seem reasonable to many people; however, they are not sufficient in and of themselves to exclude sexual orientation from non-discrimination policies. The recent past is replete with examples of groups of people (e.g., persons of color, persons with disabilities) requiring specific delineation in such policies because of a history of discrimination and less than equitable access to educational opportunity. Including sexual orientation in non-discrimination policies is not granting special rights to LGBTIQ individuals; it is guaranteeing them the protection they need and deserve in a heterosexist system. And, having sexual orientation specified in non-discrimination policies provides justification for and protection of teachers and other educational professionals to deal with instances of discrimination based on sexual orientation as they arise in learning environments, including name-calling and harassment.

Lastly, a person's desire not to be perceived as bigoted does not supercede another's right to the same educational entitlements afforded to others in the public schools. People are free to impart their moral and religious beliefs to their children in their homes and places of worship. Education must reflect and address the diversity of needs and people of the larger community, morally conservative and otherwise. Given the presence of LGBTIQ families and students throughout the U.S., public schools must be sensitive to their needs and rights.

Curriculum

As noted above, some people fear that when sexual orientation is specified as a protected category in non-discrimination policies, LGBTIQ content will make its way into the curriculum. Though the present authors do not believe there is a widespread, explicit agenda to get LGBTIQ content into the classroom through the passage of non-discrimination policies, we do concede that a more LGBTIQ-friendly educational environment may make it possible for such content to emerge side-by-side with the heterosexual content that permeates the public schools at present.

We are also not advocating the teaching

of sexual behaviors and other inappropriate subject matter so often thought about when the notion of sexual orientation arises in relation to schools. What we mean by LGBTIQ content is that depictions of a variety of individuals and families, heterosexual and otherwise, are infused throughout the curricula, and that discussions and questions about sexual orientation can be fielded as appropriate against the content of the curriculum at-hand.

For instance, literature teachers could be more explicit about the sexual orientations of various authors students are reading and how an author's self-identification in this regard may have influenced her or his writing. Such potential could be extended to the assignments, required tasks, and discussions associated with math, science, social studies, music, physical education, health education, and so on, as well.

We want to be clear that the purpose here is not to promote or legitimize non-heterosexual sexual orientations over a heterosexual one, but merely to be more reflective of the diversity of the world at large—the world from which students come and into which they will be ultimately released. Students will get a more realistic experience with the diversity of the community around them, and those families and students who identify as LGBTIQ will find themselves reflected in the curriculum, which serves only to increase their self-esteem, feelings of affirmation, and academic success.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Students of non-heterosexual sexual orientations have always been present in schools and, therefore, have participated in the wide array of extracurricular offerings, including athletics, academically-oriented clubs, performance activities, and social clubs. Since the late 1980s, Gay/Straight Alliances, or GSAs, have provided another forum for students to come together with a common purpose. GSAs are intended to function as a space where students of all sexual orientations can interface in a safe and welcoming environment (Blumenfeld, 1995). They have as their goal increasing understanding about the various needs and challenges that arise from differences in sexual orientation, often taking on a tone of advocacy and social action to improve school climates for all students.

As such, GSAs reflect many of the democratic ideals consistent with the society at large and in line with the mission of public schools in this country. While many communities have challenged the establishment or presence of GSAs in schools, their numbers continue to increase, which should be seen as an indicator of the overall climate for LGB individuals in a school.

In addition to addressing safety issues, school need to decide *how* they will provide support for inclusive extra curricular activities for LGBTIQ students. Fitzsimons-Lovett and Budzisz (1996) offered the following recommendations:

- Sponsor gay-straight alliance support groups.
- Post advertisements pertaining to LGBTIQ youth clubs or other services in conspicuous places.
- Ensure easy access to an adequate supply of library books that provide accurate, current information on LGBTIQ issues.
- Acknowledge Gay Pride History month in June.
- Display the pink triangle or diversity flag in key locations around campus to denote a safe environment. Faculty may display the symbols to let students know they are supportive.

Each of these suggestions can be modified to apply to specific extra curricular activities such as sporting events, band, cultural events, and so forth.

Finessing Opposition

As has been expressed throughout this article, the debate over addressing non-heterosexual sexual orientations in the content and curricula of schools has been contentious, at times, and continues at the present moment. The multiple groups weighing in on the debate feel so strongly about their perspectives that they often respond defensively or undemocratically toward others with whom they disagree. Such responses lead to mistrust, distrust, and stalemates that do nothing but maintain the status quo, with students getting lost in the process.

While valid arguments exist in all camps, the needs of students should be the guiding principle in ensuring equity, access, and educational opportunity for everyone matriculating through the nation's system of public schools. In finessing the opposition that will arise as districts and schools seek to address LGBTIQ issues in policy and practice, several strategies are important to keep in mind. Successful development and implementation of non-discrimination policies require top-down and bottom-up support, meaning those in power who enforce the policies and those who must comply with them have to buy into the policy.

Including all stakeholders in this process is imperative and finding common ground can only be accomplished when each side believes its perspective is heard. Providing a forum for people to come together and allowing them to develop the rules of engagement can assist in this process. Making the process as transparent as possible can add to formation of trust, as well.

Ultimately, though, enacting policies, aligning curriculum, and ensuring equity, access, and educational opportunity for students who identify as LGBTIQ will require strength, conviction, and careful planning on the part of elected officials, administrators, teachers, and other educational professionals to forge ahead through much anticipated opposition. To do anything less than guarantee the rights and full inclusion of LGBTIQ persons in the schooling process is tantamount to institutionally-sanctioned discrimination and ascription of second-class citizenship.

Conclusion

Sexual orientation is a controversial topic about which many people hold passionate opinions and beliefs. When applied to the school setting, people become more impassioned and staunch about their particular perspectives, leading to much public debate, a situation that is apparent in the current political and cultural climate of the U.S. Fortunately, the democracy in which we live not only guarantees our ability to engage in this debate, it requires it. And, while disagreement exists as to the inclusion of LGBTIQ issues in schools, great strides have been made to ensure the needs and rights of persons of non-heterosexual sexual orientations are addressed in public schools.

When one group of students is vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion in the educational process, all students are vulnerable. Closing the gap between what we, as U.S. citizens, value in terms of democratic principles and what have been the experiences of LGBTIQ individuals in schools is imperative in eradicating the discrimination associated with a heterosexist system. Until teachers, parents, administrators, and policy makers have internalized an attitude of respect for differences in students, they cannot effectively transmit this respect to their students (Fitzsimons-Lovett & Budzisz, 1996). Only then will true freedom prevail.

In conclusion, insensitive educational policies serve only to disempower LGBTIQ students. There are several key points to remember to promote equal access of LGBTIQ students in extra-curricular activities and the curriculum:

◆ Homophobia/heterosexism hurts everyone, not just LGBTIQ students.

◆ Clear communication can help alleviate some of the fears of parents, school personnel, and school boards.

◆ LGBTIQ policy must be infused throughout existing policy as a routine part of the daily school experience.

◆ Incremental steps to introduce changes are necessary.

◆ Advocacy for the rights of LGBTIQ students is the individual and collective responsibility of people at all levels of society.

◆ Respect for individual differences is the basis of a democratic society.

◆ Individuality is the premise of uniqueness.

The chalkboard to inclusiveness of LGBTIQ students in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities is too infrequently written upon. Those in support of the civil liberties of all people must write boldly and clearly on the chalkboard, and those in opposition can write on their own chalkboard but cannot be allowed to erase the boards of others. Just as things get glossed over in rearticulating the silencing power of Whiteness in education (Haviland, 2008), so does the status quo of educational and social inequity of sexual minorities.

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Note

Photographs are of murals at the Harvey Milk Civil Rights Academy, San Francisco Unified School District, San Francisco, California.