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lessons that matter

The Impact of LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum on
Student Safety, Well-Being, and Achievement

gsanetwork

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The Impact of LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum on Student Safety, Well-Being, and Achievement

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Research has shown that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ)[1] youth and those perceived to be LGBTQ face hostile environments in schools. Research focused on improving school climate for LGBTQ youth has determined that the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive lessons in class promotes greater feelings of student safety, health, and well-being.

In an effort to expand our knowledge of the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive lessons on students and to learn more about the process of securing acceptance of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in schools, we conducted a multi-method research project to understand:

- young people's experience with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in high school
- barriers to LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation and strategies that support implementation efforts
- impacts of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on school climate
- lessons learned from previous efforts to implement other types of culturally relevant curriculum such as ethnic studies in California and Arizona.

LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum: Youth Voices

Focus groups conducted with high school students found that harassment and anti-LGBTQ slurs are common and contribute to unsafe school environments. Bullying is especially common in Physical Education (PE) class and in locker rooms where students are often unsupervised. Students describe schools as ill-equipped to deal with anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment. In particular, PE teachers often fail to intervene and support LGBTQ students, gender non-conforming students, and those perceived to be LGBTQ.

Given these unsafe environments, students believe that LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum has the potential to improve safety, engagement, learning, academic achievement, self-esteem, and success in school and beyond. However, according to students in this study, LGBTQ inclusion is rare and, if offered, is typically found in isolated lessons rather than integrated across the school curriculum. Students shared numerous examples of times when LGBTQ-inclusive lessons could have been included but were ignored or avoided in class.

> **Students believe that LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum has the potential to improve safety, engagement, learning, academic achievement, self-esteem, and success in school and beyond.**

Case Studies: Implementation Process Findings

The process of implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was studied at four high schools in California. Teachers described challenges to implementing LGBTQ-inclusive lessons without professional development, the provision of supplemental instructional materials, or updates to textbooks and standardized tests.

To best support and institutionalize implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, teachers need support from local and state elected officials, community-based organizations, and their state department of education, school district, and local school administration. These findings were true despite recent changes in California law. Specifically, the FAIR Education Act, which went into effect in January 2012, updated the California Education Code by requiring teachers to integrate age-appropriate, factual, and relevant information about the roles and contributions of LGBT Americans into history and social studies instruction. The change in law supported efforts to advocate for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, but we also found that the burden of compliance falls heavily on teachers.

Case Studies: School Climate Survey Findings

School climate surveys conducted in three schools where LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was implemented show that, while any type of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in any single subject increases perception of school safety and support for LGBTQ people and issues, a broad approach to implementation across the school institution likely has the greatest impact on school climate. For example, one school that participated in the project reported the most positive school climate results most likely because LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was incorporated into multiple subjects, used different teaching methods, reached a substantial portion of the school's population, and was supported by local school administrators, teachers, and students. The other schools incorporated LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in only one subject and faced more implementation challenges from state or district-level officials, local administration, or community members. Furthermore, in a fourth school, implementation plans were dropped altogether due to district-level interference.

Ethnic Studies: Stories from Key Informant Interviews

The inclusion of any type of culturally relevant curriculum has historically met multiple implementation barriers. A series of interviews conducted with key informants knowledgeable about the history of ethnic studies inclusion revealed that community pushback, funding, and lack of institutionalized support were the main barriers that interfered with implementation efforts.

To overcome these barriers, key informants cited the effectiveness of cross-community collaboration and the use of data to demonstrate the impact of inclusive curriculum on student well-being and success. These lessons may prove to be useful as schools continue efforts to implement other types of culturally relevant curriculum including LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.

Conclusion

LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation is a compelling strategy used to increase student safety, well-being, and achievement. This study reveals that a broad approach to implementation across the school institution likely has the greatest impact on school climate. However, there are many barriers that interfere with implementation efforts. Strategies to counter implementation barriers include:

- The production of data showing the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on student safety, well-being, and achievement

- A broad-based coalition of stakeholders working to make sure students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, have access to safe schools, and a positive learning environment

- The utilization of tools and resources that continue to surface in response to the FAIR Education Act in California.

Detailed recommendations are included for policymakers, school administrators, educators, students, and community members.

> **" A broad approach to implementation across the school institution likely has the greatest impact on school climate.**

introduction

School Climate Context

Research has shown that LGBTQ youth and those perceived to be LGBTQ face hostile environments in schools.[2] Harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression is pervasive and has dangerous consequences for students. Recent data shows that students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender are more likely to report:

- being in a fight at school
- being threatened or injured with a weapon at school
- missing school due to feeling unsafe at school
- lower grades
- smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol and using drugs including marijuana, inhalants, ecstasy, and methamphetamines
- feeling sad/depressed
- serious consideration of suicide
- having made a plan for suicide
- having attempted suicide
- having incurred injury from suicide attempt[3]

Improving School Climate

Research focused on improving school climate for LGBTQ youth has documented five specific steps that schools can take to promote greater feelings of student safety and/or reduce harassment in schools. Steps include:

- Establish and publicize an anti-harassment policy that specifically enumerates sexual orientation and gender identity
- Train teachers and staff to intervene when anti-LGBTQ slurs are used
- Support the establishment of a Gay-Straight Alliance or similar student club
- Ensure that students know where to go for information and support about sexual orientation and gender identity
- Teach curriculum that includes LGBT people and information about sexual orientation and gender identity[4]

LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum

Subsequent studies affirmed that LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum may be one of the strongest predictors of students' feelings of safety at school.[5] In one survey of school climate for LGBTQ youth, 67% of students in schools without LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation compared to 43% of students in schools with inclusive curriculum. Furthermore, LGBTQ students who attend schools that teach LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum were significantly less likely to miss school than students in other schools.[6]

> **Students in schools with inclusive curriculum hear fewer anti-LGBTQ remarks and negative comments about gender expression than students in schools without such curriculum.**

In addition, students in schools with inclusive curriculum hear fewer anti-LGBTQ remarks and negative comments about gender expression than students in schools without such curriculum. For example, a study of school climate surveys from 17 California schools showed differences between schools that were particularly hostile, schools that were particularly safe, and schools that were typical. Results showed that LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was one of three key school safety strategies linked to a decrease in the prevalence of LGBTQ slurs. This finding was true for all schools, regardless of how safe or hostile the school was rated on a series of other measures.[7]

Yet the practice of curriculum inclusion can involve many different approaches. It can involve explicit diversity/anti-bias training; LGBTQ-inclusive sexual health education; and inclusion of LGBTQ history, authors, other public figures or texts in the curriculum. Recent research explored the effectiveness of various strategies and their impact on students and school climate. A number of key findings were revealed:

- LGBTQ-inclusive classroom lessons are found in California schools, but not likely to be rated as "supportive" of LGBTQ people or issues.[8]

- Any mention of LGBTQ people or issues in class increases students' feelings of safety.[9]

- Students experience more positive school safety outcomes when LGBTQ-inclusive lessons are rated as "mostly supportive" compared to "neutral/mixed" or "mostly not supportive."

- LGBTQ-inclusive lessons that are rated as "mostly supportive" of LGBTQ people and issues positively affect individual students and school climate as a whole.[10]

New Research Questions

In the context of these prior studies, we had several important questions that still needed to be answered. First, we wanted to better understand what these results meant to students on a day-to-day level. We also wanted to understand the process of adopting culturally relevant curriculum so that we could understand potential barriers and strategies to counter these barriers. The following critical questions guided our research:

- What specific types of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum or lessons impact student safety and school climate?

- Are there specific classes and/or school contexts in which inclusive lessons have the most impact on student safety and school climate?

- What obstacles arise in the process of securing acceptance of inclusive curriculum and what solutions, if any, work to overcome those obstacles?

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To answer these questions we organized this research project into three parts. First, we conducted a series of youth focus groups with California high school students in which we asked students about their experience of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, its impact, and effectiveness.

Second, we identified four high schools in California where district-level officials, administrators, and/or teachers were interested in implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. Student climate surveys designed to assess the impact of inclusive curriculum on students and school climate were distributed in three of the four schools before and after implementation occurred. We also interviewed key informants who participated in this project (primarily teachers, administrators, and community advocates) in order to understand the process of incorporating LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in schools and associated changes in school climate. We documented the process of securing school buy-in, including barriers and strategies used to counter these barriers.

Finally, to add to our understanding of the implementation process, we also interviewed key informants in Tucson, Arizona, San Francisco, California and Oakland, California about the adoption of ethnic studies in schools. These interviews were designed to learn more about the process of advocating for and implementing other types of culturally relevant curriculum in schools.

RESEARCH GUIDELINES This research project focused on determining general implementation barriers and strategies to counter such barriers along with new insight about the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on school climate. Other factors that were not studied in this research project may also contribute to the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on school climate and the success of implementation efforts. Questions for future research are included in Appendix C.

LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM:
youth voices

YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS

- **The goal** of the youth focus groups was to gain insight about students' perspectives on LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum within their schools and its impact on their lives.

- **Participants** in the focus groups were asked about their perceptions of safety for students who are LGBTQ, perceived to be LGBTQ, or gender non-conforming. They were also asked to share their experience with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in schools and the impact of inclusion on school climate, student well-being, learning, and achievement.

Finding 1: Students perceive schools as generally safe despite frequent anti-LGBTQ slurs and harassment

Students generally feel that their schools are safe. However, they also report that verbal harassment and anti-LGBTQ slurs are common: "I guess it's safe. Nobody will physically harm anyone for coming out, but…someone could get hurt from someone using slurs." Another student said, "I'd say [LGBTQ students] feel pretty safe, I'd say that there is not much violence, but there is a large amount of slurs." Students think of school safety as a lack of physical violence and they downplay the impact of slurs or verbal harassment on school safety. Yet at the same time, slurs and verbal harassment clearly affect school safety:

> A friend of mine in freshman year was mercilessly bullied in his classes…and he ended up having to transfer and be home schooled…He didn't identify as homosexual, even though everyone thought he was, like he didn't feel comfortable going to a GSA [club], he thought that would just confirm everyone's suspicions. So I don't know…I would usually say my school would be pretty liberal and good about these things, but that one instance was really extreme, so I'm not really sure how I'd rank my school.

This student's statement is conflicting; because it happened to a friend the student is more aware, yet she still

> A friend of mine was mercilessly bullied in his classes…and he ended up having to transfer and be home schooled…

hesitates to say that her school is unsafe. While this example shows that "extreme" bullying happens even in "pretty liberal" settings, students may not recognize the connection between verbal harassment and school safety.

It is also possible that students experience harassment or hear slurs on such a regular basis that it becomes "normal."

> The majority of the student body probably does not consciously make an effort to accept everyone and to include—to think about everyone individually and so they don't [accept or include them]. It's not necessarily that they are trying to make it an unsafe place, it is the fact that they are unaware and the fact that they are uneducated about those things, so they don't realize what they say offends and hurts other people.

While students generally describe their school as "safe," nearly all shared numerous examples that illustrate the prevalence of harassment, slurs, and exclusion as though it is a normal, expected part of their everyday school experience.

Finding 2: Students report widespread safety concerns in PE classes

When asked about specific classes, most students agreed that PE, in particular, was unsafe for LGBTQ students, students who are gender non-conforming, and students perceived to be LGBTQ. One student, who identifies as a queer transgender male, explained how difficult PE was for him:

After being outed, I couldn't change anywhere, I couldn't be with…female-identified people because they were all "oh you're gonna check me out, oh, you're gonna look at me," and I'm like, "no—just because I identify a certain way doesn't mean I'm all attracted to you." And like, they didn't understand that, and then I would get a failing grade because I would refuse to change, because that sucked, being ridiculed and what not.

This student experienced discrimination based both on gender identity and assumptions about his sexual orientation. In this case the student refused to change into PE clothes and subsequently was punished with a failing grade.

Several other students reported similar incidents of discrimination in PE due to actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

There's this one lesbian couple who wait just outside of the gym, and as soon as they get to the locker room, they separate. They have lockers near each other, but they don't make any physical contact while in PE until everyone's fully clothed and outside of the locker room… and [the other students] were saying that they were taking off their clothes, and making out, and all this stuff, and their teacher turned in a report because she's very anti-gay, and this started this big hoo-ha about it, and me and my GSA advisor had to go and talk to this teacher and the principal because of it, and they were forced to move to different ends of the locker room.

This quotation provides another example of harassment and lack of safety within the locker room. Instead of protecting students, the PE teacher reported them to the principal and they were eventually forced to "move to different ends of the locker room." Another student adds,

I've heard the football team make fun of a couple of really out, really flamboyant [students], and [the football team] like[s] to make fun of them, and be macho, and call them "homos" and stuff, which is terrible. We need to train the coaches because the football coaches are really

intolerant at our school too…in terms of really intolerant, [PE is] one of the worst classes in school to be in.

These stories show that student safety is particularly compromised in PE. Students noted that PE teachers often fail to intervene and support LGBTQ students, gender nonconforming students, and those perceived to be LGBTQ. The problem is complicated by gender segregation, gender expectations, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia from both students and school faculty alike.

Finding 3: LGBTQ-inclusive lessons are isolated, disparaging, and/or missing

Students in the focus groups perceive that LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum is not common and, when offered, is typically limited to a few isolated lessons in history, government, or English classes. Students also say that inclusive curriculum is often teacher-driven rather than a school-wide effort.

For me, it's a little bit different because my history teacher is the director of our GSA club at our school, so I think he would kind of bring it into our history [lessons], like this year we covered the civil rights movement. So he brought up a lot of people who did fight for that, who are gay, like Harvey Milk and stuff like that. But in previous years, I really hadn't had any lesson plans, or really not anything about it, never had it come up in history [lessons] before. So I think this year, because I did have this specific teacher, I learned about it, but if I hadn't, I don't think I would have ever learned about those types of topics or openly discussed them…our school's pretty closed-minded about it.

In this example a history teacher took the initiative to include LGBTQ topics in history lessons. Another student noted that LGBTQ issues were discussed in history class, but it was brief and seemed to portray LGBTQ people in a negative light: "It has come up once in my history class, because it was mentioned that some old king was accused of homosexual relationships with a random advisor." The

> You're sitting in class, you hear people make these comments and you're like, 'no one's doing anything,' and well, we kind [of] take it into our own hands to make sure that it gets mentioned and it gets [brought up]... I think kids do it mostly just because teachers aren't.

student elaborated, "everybody was laughing and making interesting jokes and it took my teacher…forever to get order back to the class and then we kind of moved on." Because the teacher does not adequately address the disruption and was not immediately able to bring the class back to order, it is clear that the teacher did not have the necessary tools to satisfactorily respond to homophobia in the classroom. In addition, because this king was "accused" of having a same-sex relationship, it implies same-sex attraction is wrong and should be met with suspicion. This kind of LGBTQ-inclusive lesson further reinforces homophobia and creates a hostile classroom environment for students.

Students are more likely than teachers to bring up LGBTQ subjects in class, particularly when LGBTQ issues are obviously missing or when teachers do not respond to slurs or verbal harassment.

> You're sitting in class, you hear people make these comments and you're like, "no one's doing anything," and well, we kind [of] take it into our own hands to make sure that it gets mentioned and it gets [brought up]… I think kids do it mostly just because teachers aren't.

Another student adds, "…I generally force it to come up if I can, or I hear derogatory slurs. That's most of the time it comes up." Another student explained how she has taken the initiative to educate her peers about LGBTQ people and issues because her teacher failed to do so.

> In my health class, my health teacher, he's a definite jock and I would constantly be trying to bring up the fact that most of the stuff he was teaching was for heterosexual people and that he should either try to get a speaker to talk about homosexuals, or someone who identifies as a different gender to come in. He goes out and looks for guest speakers all the time about stuff he doesn't feel comfortable talking about… [but] he didn't bring anyone about LGBTQ [issues], even though I asked him about it… he just didn't do it at all. So whenever he'd have us do a project, I would usually pick something where I could get into the [LGBTQ] thing so people could be educated.

Most students agree there are many times when LGBTQ subjects should be included but are not. Students feel that social studies/history (including civil rights movements, the Holocaust, and art history) and health (including sex education and healthy relationships) are subjects where LGBTQ topics should be included. "In my AP Art History class… there was a [chapter] about [LGBTQ art history]…and we didn't cover it at all during class which really surprised me because…my AP Art History teacher is my GSA advisor." Another student shared a similar experience, "In my history classes, when we're talking about the different civil rights movements…I was kind of hoping that my teacher was going to bring it up…he covered the black civil rights movement and the women's rights movement, but he didn't cover the LGBTQ rights movement." In both instances, the teacher failed to include LGBTQ information even though the opportunity to do so was clearly present.

Finding 4: LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum positively impacts students' safety, well-being, achievement, and future aspirations

According to students in the focus groups, LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum positively affects students' safety, well-being, and achievement, and can offer hope for a successful future.

> I think the only way you can really achieve in high school is if you feel comfortable with yourself, and you feel confident, and you feel that you can approach your teachers, and you can say things in class. So if you weren't comfortable, you know, and school's not a safe environment, you're obviously not going to want to try hard, or work hard, or really achieve good grades… I know a few [people] that don't feel comfortable or safe in school sometimes and that could really be a distraction in the classroom, so I think it can get in the way and I think it has with a few of our students.

This student links school safety with school engagement, work ethic, ability to focus, and success at school. Another student explains how lack of safety can affect school engagement, attendance, and even graduation.

You don't feel safe if you think that you're going to be ridiculed or even, if like, someone's like, "oh, I'm gonna kill you because you're gay," you're not gonna want to go to class. It's like with my partner, in her computer class, there are four boys who keep making lesbian jokes and they ridicule her to an extent where she can hear but the teacher can't. They know it hurts and she doesn't want to go to that class anymore and she might not graduate because she can't focus, she can't do her work even [when she sits] next to the teacher, it doesn't work because she can still hear them. She probably won't graduate because [of] these kids.

In this case, not only is the student's ability to focus, complete assignments, and attend class compromised, but also she ultimately faces the possibility of a failing grade and/or inability to graduate.

In contrast, when schools are able to provide inclusive curriculum, student well-being and success improve.

I actually had a conversation about this with my Government teacher, and I told him about the FAIR Education Act… we were both saying that including [LGBTQ] curriculum into our [lessons] at school would help because there are so many kids who kind of give up on their dreams because they don't know that there are people like them who made it into this profession. One of my friends wanted to become a politician, and hold government office, but then thought, "oh wait, I'm gay, they're going to bash me for that and nobody's going to elect me into office,"…I met a transgender male-to-female at my school, and she kind of started giving up on her dream of becoming

" There are four boys who keep making lesbian jokes and they ridicule her to an extent where she can hear but the teacher can't. They know it hurts, and she doesn't want to go to that class anymore and she might not graduate because she can't focus, she can't do her work.

herself, because she didn't think she would be able to get the kind of job she wanted. So I took the time to research for her, and show her how many successful trans women [there] are out there, and that helped her so much. She hugged me and said, "I love you." It was really cool.

This student provides examples of both a gay and transgender classmate whose lack of knowledge about the roles and contributions of successful LGBTQ people affected their ability to dream about their own future. Students report that LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum would provide examples of successful LGBTQ leaders in various professions and historical contexts and could inspire all students to pursue their dreams. Furthermore, students who are provided with relevant curriculum that connects to their personal experience are likely to be engaged and develop a greater understanding of the material, as in the case of this student:

FAIR

ACCURATE

INCLUSIVE

RESPECTFUL

The FAIR Education Act

The Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act, which became law on January 1, 2012, updates the California Education Code to require the inclusion of age-appropriate, factual, and relevant information about the roles and contributions of LGBT Americans into history and social studies instruction.

> **❝** I think the only way you can really achieve in high school is if you feel comfortable with yourself... and you feel that you can approach your teachers, and you can say things in class. So if you weren't comfortable...and school's not a safe environment, you're obviously not going to want to try hard, or work hard, or really achieve good grades.

I gave a speech on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act [which] was something I really care about and I really focused on and I did really well on [it]. I think that if there were passionate kids and stuff they were interested in, they'll be more likely to focus and try to, you know, achieve.

According to these students, LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum has the potential to substantially improve safety, engagement, learning, academic achievement, self-esteem, and success in high school and beyond.

Learning from Youth Voices

Among students in our study, school safety for LGBTQ students is an ongoing concern. Students report that their schools are generally free from physical violence directed towards people who are LGBTQ, perceived to be LGBTQ, or gender non-conforming. Yet, there are clear signs that harassment and bullying are still problems and that many students do not feel safe at school. For example, students shared multiple stories about how school was not safe for specific students or in specific spaces or places; PE classes and spaces such as the locker room, where students are often unsupervised, are of particular concern.

In general, teachers and schools seem to be ill-equipped to deal with anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment. It is notable that in spite of stories of harassment and discrimination, youth generally described their schools as safe. Because harassment and discrimination are part of the regular every-day school experience, there may be lower-than-normal expectations regarding school safety for students who are LGBTQ, perceived to be LGBTQ, or gender non-conforming.

Students rarely experience LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. Typically such lessons are isolated and teacher or student driven, rather than institutionalized across a school. In some cases, LGBTQ people were discussed in disparaging ways. Students gave numerous examples of times when LGBTQ-inclusive lessons could have been included but were ignored or avoided in class. Ignoring and avoiding discussion of LGBTQ people may be due to homophobia, a lack of training, ignorance, or even fear of how others (parents, students or the school administration) may react. One student explained that she knows "a lot of teachers are afraid of retribution from the school board and the community."

Avoidance of LGBTQ-inclusive lessons may send a message to students that LGBTQ issues are shameful and should not be addressed. Intentional avoidance and exclusion may hinder school safety, discourage learning, and further ostra-cize students who are already vulnerable to harassment and bullying.

Students believe that LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum improves school safety and offers hope to LGBTQ and gender non-conforming students. Students explain that inclusive curriculum is connected to a positive learning environment in school, including academic achievement, school engagement, work ethic, and ability to focus and engage in learning. Curriculum that is culturally relevant inspires students to pursue their dreams, offers hope for a successful future, and boosts self-esteem.

LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM:
case studies

Using existing data along with findings from the focus groups, we identified promising practices and selected **four California high schools** that were interested in implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.

- Each school differed demographically and taught various types of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in numerous subjects including history, foreign language, humanities, and health education.

- In three schools, school climate surveys were distributed before and after implementation occurred so that we could study possible impacts of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on student safety.

- We also tracked barriers to implementation and strategies that supported implementation efforts.

- This section is organized into case studies that describe each school, what curriculum was implemented, implementation process findings, and school climate survey findings.

IN THIS SECTION:

CASE STUDY
SCHOOL
A

SCHOOL A: STATS

- **Demographics:** School A is an urban, four-year high school with over 850 students enrolled. Located in the San Francisco Bay Area, School A has a diverse student body with Latino/a, Asian and Pacific Islander, and African-American students constituting the three largest racial/ethnic groups. Almost 60% of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price meal program.

- **LGBTQ-inclusive lessons** were taught in 10th and 11th grade history classes, reaching approximately 95 students. In addition, a number of LGBTQ-inclusive school events took place throughout the year.

- **School climate surveys** designed to asses the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on students and school climate were distributed at the beginning and end of the year.[11]

Implementation Process Findings

GSA Network conducted a professional development training on school climate and LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum for teachers in the social studies department in School A. The presentation highlighted the challenges that LGBTQ youth and youth perceived to be LGBTQ face in school. The presentation also highlighted updates to the education code resulting from the FAIR Education Act[12] and shared tools and resources to help teachers comply with the new law.

Subsequently, four teachers expressed interest in participating in this project. However, only one of the four teachers accomplished implementation and survey distribution for this project. Key informant interviews conducted with a number of teachers at the end of the year reveal barriers that interfered with implementation efforts.

Finding 1: Lack of state and district-level institutional support undermines efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

Teachers from School A explained that while the FAIR Education Act has elevated the discussion about LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in their school, there are still significant barriers to fully implementing such curriculum changes. One teacher explained, "...what the [FAIR Education Act] has

done is pushed the conversation inside schools...we have a core group of teachers who are committed to [the integration of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum]." In order to successfully implement such curriculum there needs to "be professional development for teachers across the district, model lessons developed...curricular [web]sites that teachers can go to... you have to help teachers do it." Another teacher elaborated on the need for professional development:

There should be paid professional development that is meaningful and appropriate and carved out for teachers to participate in as part of their contract or part of their faculty meeting. Because if it's just something that's thrown in and suggested and you give a book to a teacher, it's not going to be very effective.

According to one teacher, professional development is needed because many teachers may not know anything about LGBTQ history or people.

There are teachers that just don't know [LGBTQ] history, that just don't know what to teach. They're not trained in it, they didn't have it in their history courses themselves...It wasn't a part of their education [or] their teacher education curriculum [for] history [and] social science.

This is especially true considering that there is little to no information about LGBTQ people or historical events in history textbooks.

There's nothing in the history textbooks at all. Pure and simple...there's a paragraph on [the 1969] Stonewall

[riots], maybe a mention of Harvey Milk, maybe, if you're lucky. The textbooks are terrible about this. And that means teachers have to go beyond the textbooks.

Given the lack of resources and tools for implementation one teacher created LGBTQ-inclusive lessons on her own time. However, when she shared them with other teachers in her department she was met with apathy.

I brought stuff to the [social studies] department meetings and people have been, like "that's great, that's awesome," and none of them have done it…I've experimented with it this year and if they do it next year then great…I've brought the curriculum that I've been doing. I don't know if it'll be followed through or not.

When asked why her attempt to share LGBTQ-inclusive lesson plans with other teachers did not result in departmental implementation she explained that "…[LGBTQ curricular inclusion] was mandated, but not really [enforced]." Another teacher echoed this argument:
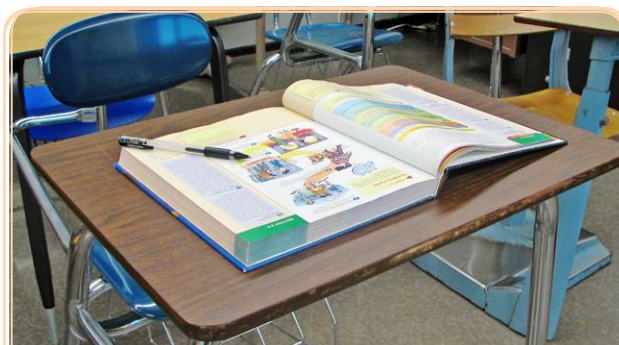
It's going to take a lot of leadership and…cognizant, strategic and intentional…commitment…There would… need to be an ongoing training facilitated by someone… [and] time carved out where…our department could learn about how to create…a more inclusive classroom.

An emphasis on "teaching to the test" exacerbates the lack of professional development, instructional materials, and overall implementation leadership. One educator explained, "…the big thing is testing, testing, testing, testing" and "they don't test on [LGBTQ-related subjects]."

District-level support for implementation is also essential. One teacher noted that while School A's district has a program serving LGBTQ youth, he does not generally feel that implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum is supported by the district:

They might say "we support LGBTQ students," but there is nothing backing that up and…what does it really mean?…I'm not feeling [support] from higher up, from the district but I am feeling it from my own school.

While many teachers at School A are highly motivated to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive lessons in the classroom, the lack of institutional support for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, even after the passage of supportive legislation such as the FAIR Education Act, makes implementation difficult. Successful implementation requires an institutionalized approach that includes professional development,

" There's nothing in the history textbooks at all. Pure and simple… there's a paragraph on [the 1969] Stonewall [riots], maybe a mention of Harvey Milk, *maybe*, if you're lucky. The textbooks are terrible about this. And that means teachers have to go beyond the textbooks.

instructional materials, the addition of LGBTQ-related questions on standardized tests, and support from the state and district level.

Finding 2: Community pushback hinders efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

Teachers anticipate facing pushback from students or parents if they implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. Others fear having to address anti-LGBTQ remarks in the classroom as a result of implementing LGBTQ-inclusive lessons.

Teachers are scared to do it…Sometimes they're scared of the parents, you know? They're scared about religion… and then they're scared that they're not going to be able to handle what comes back at them from the students… that they're not going to be able to handle, let's say, a discussion…that brings up homophobia and then how do you deal with that [in the classroom]? …what I'm saying is that teachers need serious work on this…

In addition, few teachers report having received proper training to handle anti-LGBTQ comments or slurs in the classroom. They fear that implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum could backfire.

I know one teacher [who taught] a lesson about LGBTQ history in a social studies class. And I think it was

done in a way where it actually exacerbated homophobia in the sense that, you know, students were allowed to say certain things that were homophobic and then the teacher didn't do enough to counteract that…there weren't ground rules…Just because you talk about [LGBTQ people or issues] doesn't mean students are automatically going to be accepting, more tolerant.

One teacher expressed concern about the level of preparedness teachers and administration have to respond to homophobia. This teacher explained that teachers need cultural competency training on how to work with LGBTQ youth along with training on how to appropriately respond to anti-LGBTQ harassment or discrimination. For example, while teachers and administration at School A are described as generally supportive of LGBTQ students, there are still implementation barriers as noted by this teacher:

I don't think teachers, and even the principal…are adequately equipped to deal with homophobia. Like, what do you say? How do you talk to a student who's [making] homophobic remarks and doesn't realize it? Or how do you talk to a student who is coming out to you? In various ways it could be explicit, it could be implicit…and how do you talk to adults who are…being heteronormative or homophobic? I don't think there are a great number of adults on campus who are equipped to deal with that or to deal with those situations, even though they are accepting [of LGBTQ people]…actually doing something takes more training and takes more…conscientious effort.

Despite these barriers, one history teacher from School A was able to incorporate inclusive curriculum in class and school climate survey results demonstrate improvements in perceptions of school safety and support for LGBTQ people and issues.
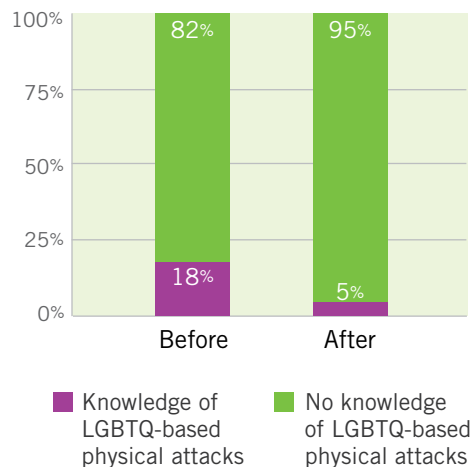
% School Climate Survey Findings

School climate surveys show an increase in the perception of support for LGBTQ people and issues across various school contexts along with an increase in the perception of LGBTQ student safety.

Finding 1: Students report a decrease in physical attacks against LGBTQ students and those perceived to be LGBTQ

School climate surveys asked students to indicate knowledge "of any physical attacks occurring against students because people think they are LGBTQ." At the end of the year, after LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation, only 5% of students reported knowledge of attacks against students based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression **(see Figure 1)** compared to 18% at the beginning of the year. Lessons about LGBTQ people and historical events may have increased students' understanding of LGBTQ people as valued members of society, thereby reducing the actual number of physical attacks based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Figure 1: Students report a decrease in physical attacks against LGBTQ students and those perceived to be LGBTQ

Before: 82% / 18%
After: 95% / 5%

■ Knowledge of LGBTQ-based physical attacks   ■ No knowledge of LGBTQ-based physical attacks

Finding 2: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in school assemblies, audio/visual announcements, and school clubs

School climate surveys asked students to rate how support-ive ("mostly supportive," "neutral/mixed," or "mostly not supportive") lessons were of LGBTQ people and issues in various school settings and contexts. At the end of the year, after LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum had been implemented, students reported an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in school assemblies, audio/visual announce-ments,[13] and school clubs. For example, before implemen-tation, 33% of students rated school clubs as "mostly not supportive" of LGBTQ people and issues whereas at the end of the year, the percentage decreased to 0% **(see Figure 2)**. Similarly, the number of students who rated audio/visual announcements as "mostly supportive" of LGBTQ people and issues increased from 57% to 79%, and students rating school assemblies as "mostly supportive" jumped from 63% to 80%.

Events and activities such as the school's annual drag show, which was organized by over 30 teachers, staff, and administrators and attended by the majority of the student body, may increase perceptions of support for LGBTQ people and issues, as indicated by survey results regarding school assemblies. Similarly, the increase in perception of support

for LGBTQ people and issues in audio/visual announcements may also be correlated with the drag show, which may have been announced over the intercom and/or advertised through posters. It is also possible that LGBTQ-inclusive curricu-lum creates the perception of a safer school environment for LGBTQ students, thereby increasing their participation in school assemblies, audio/visual announcements, and school clubs. Alternatively, LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum may educate all students about the value of LGBTQ people and subsequently influence the inclusion of LGBTQ people and issues and/or the way LGBTQ people and issues are por-trayed in school assemblies, audio/visual announcements, and school clubs.

Finding 3: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in history/social studies classes

Efforts to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in School A were focused primarily on history lessons offered by the history/social studies department. School climate survey results show that when history classes presented LGBTQ-inclusive lessons, students rated history/social studies classes as more supportive of LGBTQ people and issues compared to other classes. In contrast, students did not per-ceive major differences in health/life skills, as these classes already scored high with regard to supportiveness both at the beginning and at the end of the school year **(see Figure 3)**.

Figure 2: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in school assemblies, audio/visual announcements, and school clubs
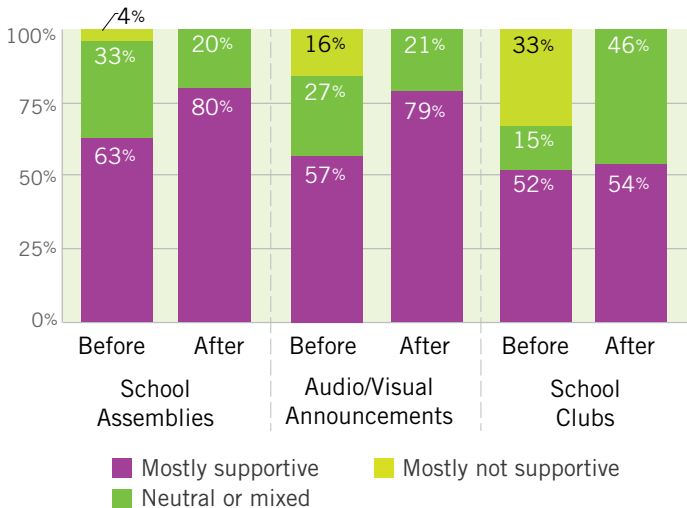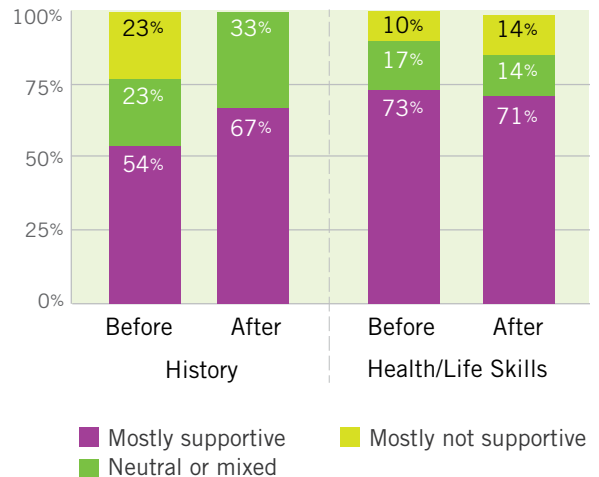

Figure 3: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in history/social studies classes

CASE STUDY
SCHOOL
B

- **Demographics**: School B is a suburban, four-year high school with over 550 students enrolled. Located in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, School B has a diverse student body comprised primarily of Asian, Filipino/a, Latino/a, and white students. About 30% of the student body is eligible for the free or reduced-price meal program.

- **LGBTQ-inclusive lessons** were taught in five health classes, reaching approximately 170 students in grades 9-12. LGBTQ-inclusive lessons were also implemented in two 11th grade humanities classes that include history lessons, reaching 64 students.

- **School climate surveys** designed to asses the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on students and school climate were distributed at the beginning and end of the year.[14]

Implementation Process Findings

GSA Network staff offered a series of professional development trainings for teachers in School A. Trainings included demographic data about LGBTQ youth in schools from a nearby school district, along with data about school safety and the potential impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. Trainings also included information about the FAIR Education Act, namely the legal obligations schools have to incorporate information on the roles and contributions of LGBT people into social studies and history lessons, along with tools and resources to help make compliance easier.[15]

Both teachers implemented different types of LGBTQ-inclusive lessons in class. However, the humanities teacher faced some challenges in her effort to implement LGBTQ-inclusive lessons in the capacity that she initially planned. Despite this setback, the process of implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was mostly successful. Key informant interviews conducted with both teachers at the end of the year reveal strategies for implementation along with barriers that interfered with implementation efforts.

Finding 1: Lack of state and district-level institutional support undermines efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

In an effort to comply with the education guidelines updated by the FAIR Education Act, the humanities teacher planned to incorporate lessons on the 1969 Stonewall riots and the birth of the struggle for LGBTQ equal rights into her civil rights unit. However, LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources, sample lessons, or supplemental instructional materials were not readily available.

> *I haven't received any curriculum…and no one from our district office has said "hey this is a great website…here's information about the FAIR [Education] Act. You should include this in your curriculum."*

The humanities teacher searched for relevant instructional materials on her own time but in order to successfully incorporate lessons about the LGBTQ equal rights movement she also felt the need for professional development.

> *I'm not schooled in this—on gay rights…it's new to me. [Without professional development] I felt like I [would be teaching] something that I had no ownership over. And so that's why I contacted [GSA Network] and asked for help.*

In addition to a lack of LGBTQ-inclusive curricular materials and professional development the humanities teacher explained that most educators face pressures to "teach to the test." Teachers "teach to the test…because they need to bring up their API [Academic Performance Index][16] scores… instead of teaching them the content we teach them how to take tests." Because LGBTQ-related questions are not included in standardized tests, teachers found it difficult to include LGBTQ-related content in their lessons.

Ultimately, pressures to "teach to the test," compounded by the lack of instructional materials and professional development, made the implementation of lessons about the LGBTQ equal rights movement impossible at School B. Instead, the humanities teacher incorporated a number of smaller LGBTQ-inclusive lessons whenever possible. The challenges faced by the humanities teacher exemplify the lack of state and district-level institutional support for the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. Broad-based institutional support from the California Department of Education, along with clear district and school policies would have made it possible for the humanities teacher to follow through with her original plans.

Finding 2: Funding and budget cuts limit efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

California's budget crisis and recent severe funding cuts to schools only exacerbate the problems of implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. The health teacher explained, "There's not really funding for anything in California any-more." Schools are administering furlough days because of economic conditions that make it difficult to pay teachers and staff. Furlough days reduce class time and consequently affect teachers' ability to include all of their planned les-sons. "With schools having furlough days, there's no way to cover [everything] without dropping [something else]," explained the humanities teacher.

Finding 3: Supportive school leadership and school culture enable implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

Teachers at School B consistently referenced their support-ive local administration: "I don't have administrators coming to my door telling me what I have to teach. It's very free, you teach what you want," explained the humanities teacher. Even though the lack of institutional support interfered with her plan to incorporate the struggle for LGBTQ equal rights into her civil rights unit, her ability to "teach what [she] wants" made it possible for her to initially plan for an LGBTQ-inclusive lesson. Plus, while she was forced to aban-don her original plan, she was still able to incorporate other LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into her classes.

In addition, when students and parents have pushed back against LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, teachers felt support-ed by their local administration to continue teaching. The health teacher shared:

> **"** I'm not schooled in this—on gay rights…it's new to me. [Without professional development] I felt like I [would be teaching] something that I had no ownership over. And so that's why I contacted [GSA Network] and asked for help. – **TEACHER FROM SCHOOL B**

I've had a couple of conservative students who have been kind of offended by [LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum] and some super conservative parents have been offended by it but basically the administration backs me up on it so…if they're super uncomfortable I can excuse them but I never let them stop me from teaching the lesson.

The humanities teacher explained that efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum are supported because "it's part of the culture." The school's response to anti-LGBTQ name-calling exemplifies this point.

> *There was one incident a couple of years ago where…a cou-ple of the freshman called somebody a "fag" and I mean it probably would've not even been bothered with in another school but actually our school organized a mediation team to talk to some of the freshmen and make sure they were educated on what's appropriate. So it's definitely a culture.*

Other teachers and students echo this kind of school culture response as well. The health teacher explained: "If one of the kids in class says something inappropriate…everyone else will gasp and look at me…all feel that putdowns of LGBTQ [people] are inappropriate and they notice when it happens." The same teacher added, "…you know, we've got a really caring staff and we're always questioning ourselves and trying to do better—trying to improve the culture and [we] worry about the safety of the kids. And that's a big issue…safety of the kids."

Supportive leadership and school culture made it possible for teachers to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. They felt supported by other teachers, by school staff, and by the administration. Students also helped create an inclusive environment that embraced LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.

School Climate Survey Findings

School climate surveys show an increase in the perception of support for LGBTQ people and issues across various school contexts along with an increase in the perception of LGBTQ student safety.

Finding 1: Students report an improvement in overall school safety

School climate survey comparisons from the beginning and end of the year revealed a number of improvements for LGBTQ safety and school climate. For example, by the end of the school year nearly two-thirds of students or 64%, perceive their school to be safe for LGBTQ students, teachers, and staff compared to less than half, or 45%, at the start of the school year **(see Figure 4)**. In addition, when specifically asked about safety for gender non-conforming students, data also showed a significant improvement. For example, the number of students agreeing with the statement "my school is safe for girls who are not as 'feminine' as other girls" increased from 43% to 57%, while students agreeing that "my school is safe for guys who are not as 'masculine' as other guys" jumped from 29% to 49% **(see Figure 5)**. Furthermore, after implementation, students heard less

anti-LGBTQ language such as "no homo," "faggot," "dyke," or "that's so gay" at school **(see Figure 6)** and reported an increase in the frequency of student intervention when anti-LGBTQ language was heard **(see Figure 7)**.
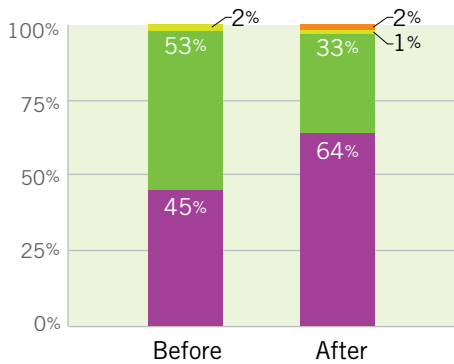
Finding 2: More students report knowing of teachers and staff who openly identify as LGBTQ

After the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, 13% more students reported knowing of "out" LGBTQ teachers and staff at school **(see Figure 8)**. This finding may indicate that teachers also felt an increase in overall school safety and were therefore more likely to be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Alternatively, the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum may have provided an appropriate context for teachers to refer to their own identities as they taught about LGBTQ people, issues, or historical events.

Finding 3: More students report knowing where to find support or information about sexual orientation and gender identity

After the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, the number of students reporting knowledge of where to find support or information about sexual orientation and gender identity increased from 54% to 71% **(see Figure 9)**.
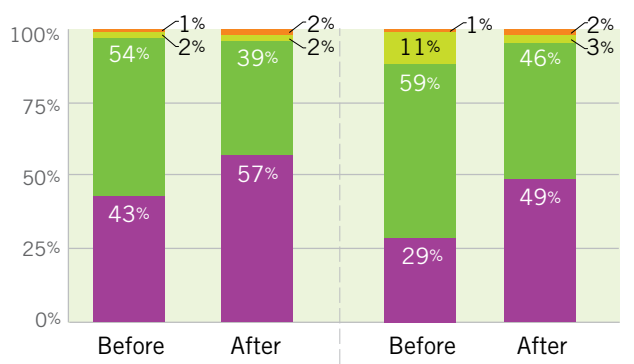
Figure 4: Students report an increase in school safety for LGBTQ people

My school is safe for students, teachers, and staff who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning.

- ■ Strongly Agree
- ■ Agree
- ■ Disagree
- ■ Strongly Disagree

Figure 5: Students report an increase in school safety for gender non-conforming youth
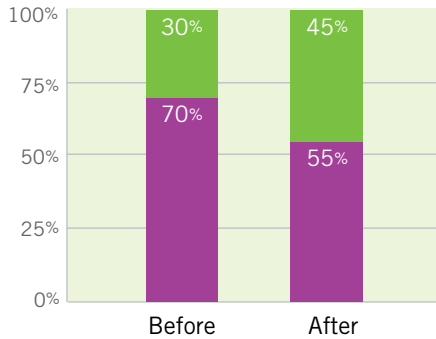
My school is safe for girls who are not as "feminine" as other girls.

My school is safe for boys who are not as "masculine" as other boys.

- ■ Strongly Agree
- ■ Agree
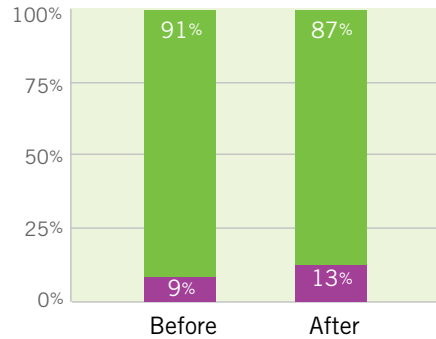- ■ Disagree
- ■ Strongly Disagree

Figure 6: Students report a decrease of anti-LGBTQ slurs

How often do you hear people use language such as "no homo," "faggot," "dyke," or "that's so gay"?

- Heard slurs once a day or several times a day
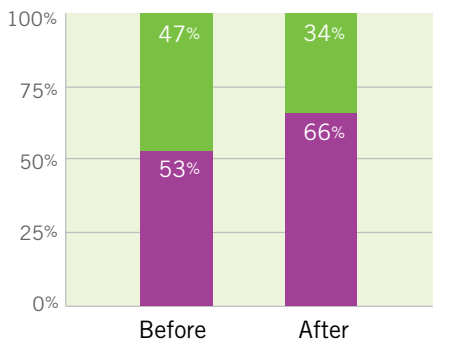- Heard slurs every few weeks or never

Figure 7: Students report an increase in response to anti-LGBTQ slurs

Do students step in if they hear language such as "no homo," "faggot," "dyke," or "that's so gay"?

- Students step in often or always
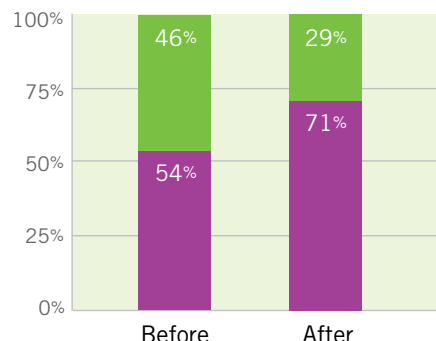- Students step in sometimes or never

Figure 8: Students report an increase in knowledge of out LGBTQ teachers and staff

Knowledge of LGBTQ teachers and staff

- Knowledge
- No Knowledge

Figure 9: Students report an increase in knowledge of where to find support or information about sexual orientation or gender identity at school

Knowledge of where to find support or information about sexual orientation or gender identity at school

- Knowledge
- No Knowledge

> " ...you know, we've got a really caring staff and we're always questioning ourselves and trying to do better—trying to improve the culture and [we] worry about the safety of the kids. And that's a big issue...safety of the kids.
> **– TEACHER FROM SCHOOL B**

This is not surprising considering health lessons included information about sexual orientation and gender identity. Because of the inclusive lessons in health and humanities classes, it is possible that students identified health or humanities/history teachers as resources for support and information about sexual orientation and gender identity. However, the increased visibility of LGBTQ teachers and staff may also be correlated with the increase in student knowledge about where to find support or information about sexual orientation and gender identity, since students might choose to seek support and information from "out" teachers and staff.

Finding 4: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues from teachers and staff, in library materials, and in school sports

After implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, the number of students reporting support for LGBTQ people and issues from "a teacher, administrator, school counselor, or staff outside of class" increased from 65% to 81%. Similarly, the perception of support through "library materials" doubled from 20% to 41% and more than tripled in "school sports" from 11% to 38% **(see Figure 10)**. Given reports of an increase in overall school safety, it is not surprising that students' perception of support for LGBTQ people and issues increased across multiple school contexts.

Finding 5: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in history/social studies, health/life skills, and sexuality education classes

Efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum focused on humanities (which includes history lessons) and health classes. At the end of the year, students were more likely to rate history, health/life skills, and sexuality education as "mostly supportive" of "LGBTQ people/issues" as opposed to "neutral/mixed" or "mostly not supportive." For example, only 60% of students reported sexuality education as "mostly supportive" of LGBTQ people and issues but that number increases substantially to 81% by the end of the year **(see Figure 11)**. The results demonstrate that when health and humanities classes present LGBTQ-inclusive lessons, students' perceptions about the supportiveness of health, sexuality education, and history classes in their school improves.

Figure 10: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in several school contexts
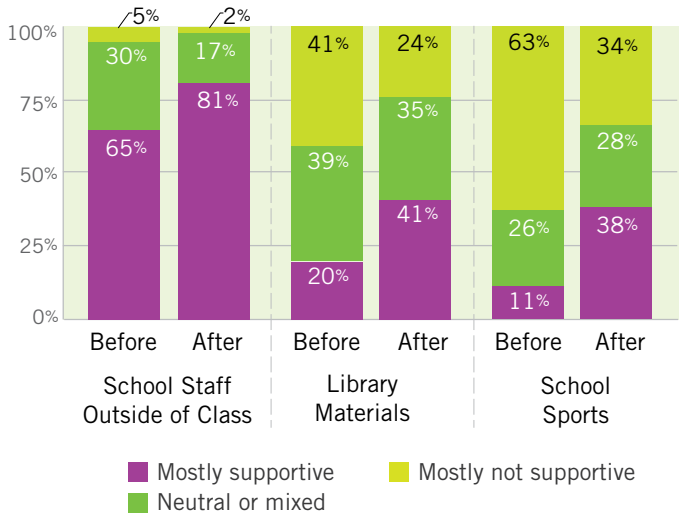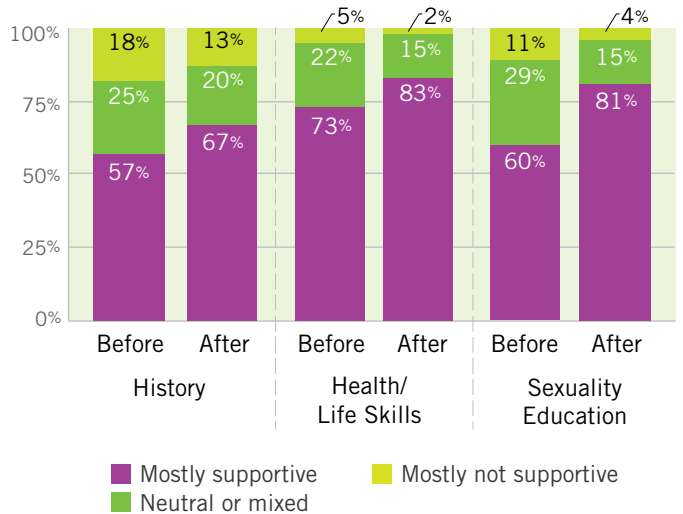

Figure 11: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in history/social studies, health/life skills, and sexuality education classes

SCHOOL C: STATS

- **Demographics:** School C is an urban four-year high school with 2,500 students enrolled. Located in the greater San Diego area, School C has a diverse student body comprised of more than 20 racial/ethnic groups, with the majority including white, Latino/a, and African-American.

- A guest speaker from a community-based organization taught anti-bias **LGBTQ-inclusive lessons** in Spanish and French classes over a two-day period. Lessons reached approximately 160 students in grades 9–12.

- **School climate surveys** designed to asses the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on students and school climate were distributed a week apart, directly before and after implementing LGBTQ-inclusive lessons.[17]

Implementation Process Findings

In the district where School C is located, sexual health education curriculum was edited by GSA Network to be inclusive of LGBTQ people and issues. However, funding cuts interfered with plans to distribute the curriculum to every school in that district. Instead a stand-alone[18] LGBTQ-inclusive lesson was taught in foreign language classes in School C.

Finding 1: Budget and funding cuts limit efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

> ❝…there's no funding, everything is being done…with no money. People [are] just doing it on their own time.

The school district where School C is located planned to use funds from a government grant to purchase an educational LGBTQ-inclusive film for each school in the district. Unfortunately, the grant was substantially cut mid-year and copies of the film could not be purchased. Some of the LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum updates made to the health education lessons were retained; however, the majority of the changes were omitted since they were dependent upon clips from the film. Cuts in the district's government grant were compounded by a lack of state and district-level educational funding.

There's no funding from the state, there's no funding at the district level. We just currently laid off 1,500 teachers, we're going into our 3rd year of furlough days so… there's no funding, everything is being done…with no money. People [are] just doing it on their own time.

Districts with access to government grants may be able to purchase supplemental educational materials to update existing lessons. While the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum is not dependent on funding or on the ability to purchase supplemental educational materials, it can support teachers and district-level officials in their efforts to make lessons more LGBTQ-inclusive. In this case, when grant funding was no longer available, there was no state or district-level funding to cover the costs of the supplemental education materials.

Finding 2: Cross-community collaboration supports efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

The loss of funding forced the district to retool its plans for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation. Ultimately, a French and Spanish language teacher from School C welcomed the opportunity to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in her classes, though she lacked the time or resources to update her own lessons. As a result, a guest speaker from a community-based organization was invited to present a two-day LGBTQ-inclusive workshop. While there was noteworthy support for the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in School C, collaboration with a community-based organization offering LGBTQ-inclusive lessons for free made implementation possible.

School Climate Survey Findings

School climate surveys show an increase in feelings of personal safety along with an increase in the perception of support for LGBTQ people and issues in one context and a decrease in another,

Finding 1: Students report an increase in feelings of personal safety

Students report an increase in feelings of personal safety after the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum **(see Figure 12)**. LGBTQ-inclusive lessons at School C directly addressed how homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and heterosexism negatively affect individual students and the entire school climate as a whole. Students were presented with statistics about the severe consequences for students who face anti-LGBTQ harassment, bullying, and discrimination. Despite these sobering statistics, the lessons were organized around the notion that students have the ability to make their school safer through self-reflection on their own participation in anti-LGBTQ harassment along with the participation of their friends and the larger school community. Finally, students were asked to craft a personal and/or community action plan outlining how they plan to improve

the climate at their school. The lessons also gave students opportunities to connect their understanding of anti-LGBTQ harassment and discrimination with their awareness of other forms of discrimination such as racism and sexism. When negative effects of homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and racism are acknowledged and students are encouraged to create change in their school, it is likely that feelings of personal safety may increase.

Finding 2: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in a classroom lesson or presentation

Not surprisingly, after implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum at School C, the percentage of students perceiving a classroom lesson or presentation as supportive of LGBTQ people increased from 57% to 77% **(see Figure 13)**. When a particular effort is made to present LGBTQ-inclusive lessons, albeit stand-alone lessons, students notice and rate them as more supportive of LGBTQ people and issues accordingly.

Finding 3: Students report a decrease in support for LGBTQ people and issues in audio/visual announcements

Interestingly, students reported a decrease in their perception of support for LGBTQ people and issues in public announcements, posters, or other visual materials following the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

Figure 12: Students report an increase in feelings of personal safety

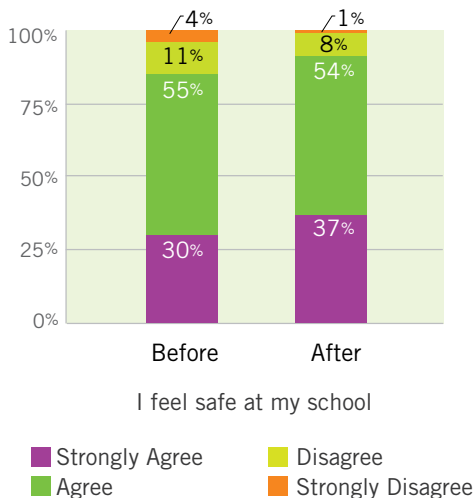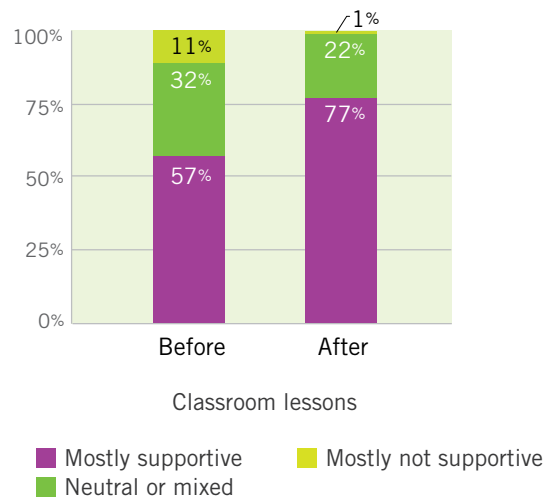I feel safe at my school

- ■ Strongly Agree
- ■ Agree
- ■ Disagree
- ■ Strongly Disagree

Figure 13: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in a classroom lesson or presentation

Classroom lessons

- ■ Mostly supportive
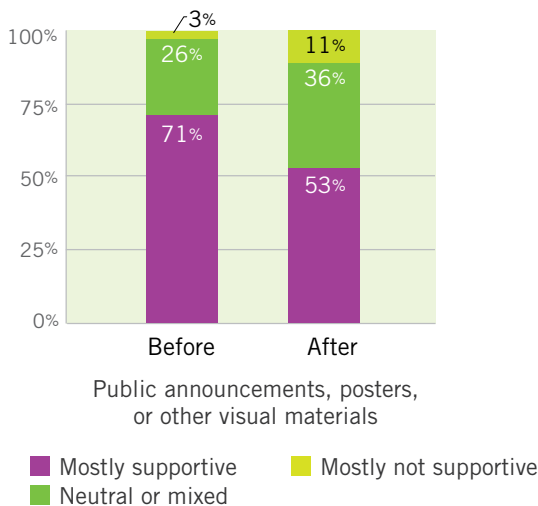- ■ Neutral or mixed
- ■ Mostly not supportive

(see Figure 14). Given that the pre and post school climate surveys were distributed only seven days apart, it is unlikely that there was an actual decrease in support for LGBTQ people and issues in audio/visual announcements. Instead, this finding suggests that students increased their awareness or gained a more nuanced understanding of homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and heterosexism from the two-day anti-bias training, leading them to become more sensitive to the exclusion and/or negative portrayal of LGBTQ people and issues in audio/visual announcements.

Further analyses revealed that straight students' perceptions of support for LGBTQ people and issues in audio/visual announcements declined more than LGBTQ students' perception of support. Thus it appears that while the anti-bias curriculum raised all students' awareness of homophobia and transphobia in their school, the influence was stronger for straight students. It may be that LGBTQ students were already aware of the exclusion and/or negative portrayal of LGBTQ people in audio/visual announcements, and thus their perception of support for LGBTQ people and issues did not decrease as much as it did for their straight peers. The findings from straight students, who may have initially been less sensitized to the exclusion and/or negative portrayal of LGBTQ people, may actually indicate an increase in awareness of the lack of support for LGBTQ people and issues, as opposed to a decrease of actual support for LGBTQ people and issues.

% After LGBTQ-inclusive lessons were implemented at School C, the percentage of students perceiving a classroom lesson or presentation as supportive of LGBTQ people increased from 57% to 77%.

Figure 14: Students report a decrease in support for LGBTQ people and issues in audio/visual announcements

Before: 71% Mostly supportive, 26% Neutral or mixed, 3%

After: 53% Mostly supportive, 36% Neutral or mixed, 11% Mostly not supportive

Public announcements, posters, or other visual materials

■ Mostly supportive
■ Neutral or mixed
■ Mostly not supportive

SCHOOL D: STATS

Demographics: School D is a four-year, arts-based high school located in the greater Los Angeles area, with nearly 400 students enrolled. The student body is 98% Latino/a and almost 85% qualify for the free or reduced-price meal program.

Implementation Process Findings

Despite tremendous effort from multiple parties, the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in School D did not come to fruition. Initially GSA Network staff approached district-level officials and asked to be connected with teachers or school administrators who might want to participate in this research project. An incentive was the promise of receiving valuable school safety data specific to the district about the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. One district-level official expressed interest and met with GSA Network staff to discuss the possibility on multiple occasions, but this did not result in support from other district-level officials.

Eventually, GSA Network staff was introduced to the principal from School D who, along with two teachers, was motivated and excited about the possibility of participating in this research project. One of the teachers shared:

I think it's necessary to include [LGBTQ history], it's as necessary as civil rights, it's as necessary as the suffrage movement, it's just another portion of the population that…needs to be acknowledged… you can't talk about history and not include gay rights.

The principal and teachers explained that they had a large number of LGBTQ students and felt that, while they already implemented some LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, there was still significant room for improvement. A plan was subsequently outlined where GSA Network staff would provide professional development training to the entire staff and then follow up with two teachers to help craft LGBTQ-inclusive lessons relevant for their classes. In addition, the principal drafted a letter to parents in Spanish and English informing them of the school's intention to distribute school climate surveys to students and offering the ability to opt-out.

Finding 1: Lack of district-level support undermines efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum

District-level officials learned of the LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation plans for School D and conveyed that they would like to have more control over what lessons were taught. One district-level official argued that other efforts to provide LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, particularly in their health classes, already covered the necessary bases.

The same district-level official added that this district was "one of the most progressive school districts in the country…when it comes to LGBT rights." He explained:

We have California laws that pertain to LGBT students…we have district policy, we have resolutions, we have all these things in place… and we've been doing a lot of what people in the FAIR Education Act say we should be doing. We're already doing that.

As a result of the district official's perception that additional LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was unnecessary, GSA Network completed the professional development for teachers at School D but LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation stalled and school climate surveys were not distributed.

> School administrators and teachers were eager to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into their classes and collect school-specific school climate data.

Thus, while local school administrators and teachers were eager to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into their classes and collect school-specific school climate data, the district stymied their participation in this project. It is unclear if the district resistance was a result of discomfort with the distribution of surveys, lack of support for the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, or both. For these reasons, it is not clear whether this finding would be applicable to another school site or district.

CASE STUDY
COMPARISONS

Schools differed demographically in the ways they implemented LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. For these reasons we cannot draw conclusions or make generalizations about one approach being more effective than any other. However, there are several consistent findings across participating schools.

Finding 1: Any type of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum increases school safety and support for LGBTQ people and issues

School climate survey findings from Schools A, B, and C show an increase in perceptions of school safety and an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues across different school contexts. Therefore, data from this research project supports previous data showing that the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum promotes greater feelings of student safety, health, and well-being. While there may be different degrees of impact on student safety, it is clear that any type of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum positively impacts students' perceptions of school safety and support for LGBTQ people and issues.

Finding 2: The perception of school safety and support for LGBTQ people and issues may be most positively impacted when support for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum is institutionalized

Curricula at School B appear to have had a greater impact both on school safety measures and on perceptions of support for LGBTQ people and issues compared to efforts in other schools. For example, in both School A and C, only one school safety measure was impacted while in School B six school safety measures were impacted.[19] Similarly, implementation efforts in School B had impacts on six measures of perceptions of support for LGBTQ people and issues in various school contexts as opposed to only four such measures in School A and none in School C.[20]

The implementation and impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in School B was likely more successful for a few reasons. First, when compared with other schools, School B's implementation efforts reached the largest number of students in class. School B's LGBTQ-inclusive lessons reached 234 students, constituting nearly one-third of the school's population, whereas School C reached 160 students, comprising just 6% of the school's population and

> **"** I think [LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum] leads [students] to a philosophy of a safe school, a philosophy of being respectful and responsible citizens, a philosophy of being open to anyone. And if not open, that you're being respectful... and then be able to practice what it means to be a part of a community with all different kinds of people.
>
> **– TEACHER FROM SCHOOL B**

School A reached only 95 students, approximately 11% of the school's population. School B was also the only school able to integrate LGBTQ-inclusive lessons in two different subjects (health and humanities) as opposed to only one. In addition, School B implemented two types of inclusive curriculum: anti-bias and subject-specific, meaning lessons where LGBTQ people and issues were integrated into a specific curricular subject (e.g. history).

In contrast, School A only implemented subject-specific inclusive curriculum and School C only implemented anti-bias inclusive curriculum. Finally, unlike Schools A and C, School B's implementation efforts took place in a context where teachers felt especially supported by the local

administration, teachers, and students. Key informants explained that the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was supported because "it's part of the culture." While there were individual teachers and administrators from both School A and C that supported LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation, School B was the only school that reported school-wide support.

This finding suggests that when LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum is incorporated into multiple subjects, uses different teaching methods, reaches a substantial portion of the school's population, and is supported by local school administration, teachers, and students, it will have the greatest impact on school safety and perceptions of support for LGBTQ people and issues. In this case, institutionalized support for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation seemed to impact both individual students' perception of safety and support for LGBTQ people and issues and perceptions of safety and support across the entire school.

Finding 3: There is a difference between LGBTQ-inclusive lessons that are integrated into specific subjects compared to stand-alone lessons

In Schools A and B, LGBTQ-inclusive lessons were integrated into history, humanities, or health classes, whereas in School C, LGBTQ-inclusive lessons were presented in a two-day workshop that was separate and unrelated to the regular Spanish or French curriculum in those classes. Subsequently, in Schools A and B, students reported an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in the specific subjects in which LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was incorporated: history/social studies; health/life skills; and sexuality education. In School C, however, students reported an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in a "classroom lesson or presentation." It is possible that this finding may be related to previous findings suggesting that one classroom lesson or presentation may not demonstrate institutionalized support for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and is subsequently understood by students as a supportive stand-alone "lesson" instead of a supportive "class" or "subject." In other words, stand-alone lessons may have less of an overall impact on school climate and students' perceptions of support of LGBTQ people and issues. This theory is supported by school climate surveys which show an increase of only two measures of school safety or support for LGBTQ people and issues in School C, as opposed to five and 12 in Schools A and B, respectively.

" So if you're just told that you should accept LGBTQ students… because that's the right thing to do, I don't think that's going to resonate or create a paradigm shift as meaningful as if you're critically thinking about why society views LGBTQ people the way that they do, why you yourself view them the way that you do, and put it in some sort of context, [help make] some sort of meaning. And I think that's the power of doing it through a classroom and learning it through the curriculum—that it engages the critical thinking and reasoning piece that I think is much more likely to produce a paradigm shift and produce changes in people's beliefs about LGBTQ people and the community than it otherwise would [if it were] done outside of context and outside of true learning.

– TEACHER FROM SCHOOL A

ethnic studies:
STORIES FROM KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The inclusion of culturally relevant curriculum, such as ethnic studies, has historically met multiple barriers. Educators and activists have utilized a variety of strategies to counter the barriers that prevent and stall the implementation of ethnic studies. The process to incorporate LGBTQ issues into the curriculum may be informed by others who have worked to include marginalized voices in school curriculum through ethnic studies. For this reason we conducted a series of interviews with key informants (i.e., school board members, school administrators, teachers, and advocates from community-based organizations) from Arizona and California to learn more about the process of implementing ethnic studies curriculum. Key informants spoke about the barriers to implementation and sustainability of ethnic studies and shared strategies they utilized to counter such barriers.

Implementation Barriers

Finding 1: Community pushback hinders efforts to include ethnic studies

In Arizona, key informants noted that integrating ethnic studies into standard courses can be a challenge.

> We are working on multicultural English, but it's not running yet. We want to create vertical alignments with the K-12 curriculum. It's difficult in our community. There's pressure from the community to do a "classic curriculum," which avoids multicultural issues.

Efforts to incorporate ethnic studies curriculum are met with a variety of barriers beyond preference for the "classic curriculum." Similarly, one informant currently trying to get buy-in for an ethnic studies course at a new high school noted the power of community pushback: "…the community is very socially conservative. We got negative vibes from district parents. Many of the kids watch Fox News, and there's a very heavy right wing push in this community." Another Arizona informant reflected on how ethnic studies' pedagogical approach can be viewed as a threat. "We do it

in a critical pedagogy, youth-empowered, anti-racist, critical consciousness, culturally responsive way, and those all can feel like threats to certain communities." However, according to another Arizona informant, community pushback is nothing new.

> Looking at historical trends and patterns—like what happened during the Great Depression—we tend to blame the most marginalized and voiceless populations, and right now there's a huge anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican sentiment, which is reflected in the legislation being passed—SB 1070—and we're caught up in that context.

Concerns about community pushback were also central in discussions about ethnic studies inclusion in California.

> People see ethnic studies as not affirming white students…but we only have 10% of white kids in our district…there was a little bit of pushback from them. People say they love to live in San Francisco because it's so diverse, but once you start something like this people are like "whoa, now wait a minute."

Despite the progressive reputation of San Francisco, "pushback" from the "10% of white kids" is a reminder of the heterogeneity within communities, progressive and conservative alike. This heterogeneity can be difficult for ethnic studies proponents who find themselves on the defense

> Students who take the classes tend to have better attendance; they tend to feel very connected and engaged. I've seen students just do a turnaround where all of a sudden they saw themselves as an academic being, not just here to play around and hang with their friends, they actually realize they have a voice and that they are capable of doing good quality work…in several cases, students have decided to go on to school and university. That's pretty exciting.

when advocating for inclusion. For example, one informant explained, "We are not trying to stir up controversy…people may not want to touch [ethnic studies] because of the political controversy. Ultimately we are doing the work for the students." Several participants echoed this sentiment and suggested that inclusive curriculum is in the best interest of all students because it allows all students to see themselves and their histories as meaningful and relevant.

Finding 2: Funding and budget cuts limit efforts to implement, sustain, or expand ethnic studies

Similar to LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation findings, budget and funding limitations were identified as barriers in the adoption and sustainability of ethnic studies. Key informants from California, even from highly supported ethnic studies programs, explained that, "budget…was and is a problem. 'Are we going to fund this?' If we had more of a budget, we would be able to get more schools to do it." In this example, an established ethnic studies program is unable to grow because of budget constraints. A similar problem was described by another California informant in a different district: "The biggest barrier is the funding because if we do not get funding kicked down by the state or anything to tap into, then the program is only going to go so far." While districts may be limited in expanding existing

ethnic studies programs due to fiscal limitations, lack of funds for professional development may also hinder growth. One informant explained, "…people are busy and they need to get paid for the work; it adds incentive." Funding and budget limitations are a real and relevant concern for those who aim to teach culturally relevant curriculum. As with the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, funding is needed to train teachers and to develop and distribute curriculum. Any attempt to advocate for the implementation of culturally relevant curriculum will be more successful if strategies are developed to counter budget and funding barriers.

Finding 3: Lack of state, district, or local school-level institutional support undermines efforts to implement and sustain ethnic studies

Key informants in both Arizona and California also noted that without supportive leadership to oversee ethnic studies, the program may be difficult to sustain.

> The issue is that [ethnic studies] is something new and it is not a polished system, so there are going to be bumps in the road. But we will learn through trial and error. Infrastructures are being created and the class is being taught at the same time. There are potential issues on both ends that can cause lack of coordination and lack of communication.

Another informant from California echoed this concern:

> Any new program you implement is not going to run perfectly. Many teachers and schools wanted ethnic studies but don't have the capacity to implement it. Yes, we want ethnic studies taught, but we want it taught well. Even though the vote [to adopt an ethnic studies program][21] was a win, it doesn't mean the implementation is a win.

This informant suggests that without supportive leadership not only may the quality of ethnic studies classes or programs suffer, but also standards to ensure ethnic studies classes are "taught well" may not exist.

The barriers that may negate the adoption of ethnic studies are plentiful. Because ethnic studies has become politicized, schools face concerns about whether their program will be continued, or in the case of those proposing new ethnic studies programs, whether they can secure buy-in from stakeholders. Once ethnic studies courses or programs are approved, budget constraints may limit their expansion. A supportive, broad approach is needed to ensure that ethnic studies is successfully implemented and sustained.

Implementation Strategies

Finding 4: Collaboration with stakeholders moves ethnic studies forward

Similar to the implementation findings for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, students, teachers, district-level officials, community groups, and collaborative efforts were deemed central to the promotion of ethnic studies in both Arizona and California. In Arizona, one informant worked in conjunction with students to train staff about the needs and experiences of ethnic and sexual minority students:

I developed professional staff training where, for six weeks on a Friday, we had different groups come in and present to our staff. We had the Asian American Studies, African American Studies, Native American Studies, the Raza Studies, and we brought in LGBT kids.

A similar collaborative effort was described by informants from California:

[The superintendent] had all of these meetings in Oakland; there was a meeting with 400-500 teachers. Youth spoke up about the need for ethnic studies and 14 taskforces were created, one of which was an ethnic studies task-force. This led to an ethnic studies organizing committee, and then eventually a pilot program. AYPAL[22] advocated for ethnic studies too, and this buzz from ethnic studies conversations led to the course being created.

The creation of ethnic studies in Oakland was an example of several stakeholders working in concert. Another California informant also noted the importance of stakeholder initiative, and discussed the way in which ethnic studies gained legitimacy in his district:

A group of teachers had interest in ethnic studies, as well as students and community groups. A school board member submitted the resolution and it passed. In California, we have "A-G courses," which represent fields of study. The "G" stands for electives. Completing the "A-G" course load is required for admission into the UC and Cal State schools. We got ethnic studies to be considered as a "G" course for UC schools. This is important, because if classes don't fit into "A-G," it's hard to get students to sign up for them, and they often fall to the wayside.

Stakeholder support appears to be crucial in both present-day initiatives for ethnic studies and previous initiatives driven by earlier struggles for civil rights and equity in education. If ethnic studies courses can also be considered part of core curriculum necessary for college admittance (as in the case of one California district), this lends further credibility and stakeholder support that extends beyond the K-12 education system. However, if multiple stakeholders do not support inclusion, efforts to implement and sustain ethnic studies may not succeed.

Finding 5: Using data helps make the case for ethnic studies

Data showing the potential impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on school climate was used to recruit California schools to participate in this project as described in the case studies. Data has been used in similar ways to support the implementation of ethnic studies. Whether schools are looking for evidence to initiate or to sustain ethnic studies, data that demonstrates the impact of ethnic

> " The curriculum is not inclusive. I don't care what anybody says. If you look at an American History book, there are exactly 3 pages that refer to Native Americans, and this is what this country was before the white people came here, and yet we give them very little acknowledgment in our education. I believe we need to understand what we did to Native Americans, because if we are going to look at the issue of genocide and racism, we started right here, and it wasn't with the African slaves—that came later. I think these pieces are important parts of our history, and when we only look at it from a white perspective, we are really limiting our kids in terms of learning and understanding the dynamics of our history here.

studies on student safety, well-being, and achievement is considered essential. One California informant explained that his district utilized previously conducted research to support their efforts for inclusion:

We try to use as much research base as we can. We used a recent publication by Christine Sleeter,[23] who looks at the impact of programs that support young people to learn about history. She finds these programs show improvement in engagement, motivation, and performance in school. She did a thorough overview of studies over the last 15-20 years. We, as the task force, used these as a research case.

One key informant collected his own data through the distribution of surveys before and after ethnic studies and was able to track the movement of students' views from stereotypes to understanding.

Some of the data we've collected on interracial perspectives and relationships…[is] really based on distrust and myths and stereotypes. The post surveys show a whole new perspective on their peers and the community. The Chicanos come out with a new understanding of white people. It's really a bridge of historical and social understanding.

Such data has been used to reinforce the efforts of ethnic studies teachers who were struggling to get district buy-in; "Evidence was really helpful. It opened the door a crack for us to get our foot in, and then we could do what we wanted to do."

In addition to quantitative data, the collection of personal stories can also be utilized to combat barriers to ethnic studies inclusion. In California, one teacher explained that after students attended a cultural history workshop their "personal storytelling spread the word that [ethnic studies] is a solution to some of the issues that people are facing." Whether data is collected through qualitative or quantitative methods, the documentation of benefits associated with ethnic studies can be used to counter some of the obstacles interfering with ethnic studies inclusion.

Finding 6: Demonstrating successful academic outcomes for students quells opposition to ethnic studies

Other informants mentioned a variety of additional strategies and messages they used in the face of similar barriers. For example, one Arizona informant felt that his performance as a teacher could counter the opposition to ethnic studies inclusion.

"…the content within ethnic studies gives [students] a healthy dose of having their points of views and ideas challenged by people… and being able to not just create that polarizing "us versus them" mentality, but to consider your own viewpoints and perspectives [just] as legitimate as the viewpoints from another culture or another group.

To be honest, you deal with those barriers by doing your job well. Do it better than anyone else, and rigorously, and with love. The "doing it well" insulated us from, "We just don't like what you're teaching. Yeah, but you like the test score. You like the graduates. You like the scholarships."

By "doing it well," this informant was able to demonstrate student success, which helped him defend against critics.

In both Arizona and California, key informants explained that it was critical to link ethnic studies to academic outcomes for students, whether that was test scores, graduation rates, or college readiness. In California, for example, "The most important strategy was that [ethnic studies] was going to be an 'A-G' course…" and the completion of 'A-G' courses are required for graduation. Another informant echoed this strategy saying, "We promoted the idea that this class was accepted for college credit." By elevating ethnic studies to requirement or college credit status, opposition efforts are less likely to succeed.

conclusion

Impact of LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum

Students interviewed for this research project describe harassment and anti-LGBTQ slurs as commonplace in schools. Bullying is especially common in PE class, where teachers often fail to intervene, including in locker rooms where students may be unsupervised. Students describe schools as ill-equipped to deal with anti-LGBTQ bullying and harassment. This data is consistent with other research showing that students who are LGBTQ, perceived to be LGBTQ, or gender non-conforming face hostile environments in schools.[24]

LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was identified by students as one strategy that could substantially improve safety, engagement, learning, academic achievement, self-esteem, and success in school and beyond. School climate surveys conducted in schools where LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was implemented show an increase in feelings of safety and perceptions of support for LGBTQ people. For example, students reported a decrease of LGBTQ-related physical attacks and anti-LGBTQ slurs and an increase in feelings of personal safety after the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. Students also reported an increase of support for LGBTQ people and issues in various school contexts including: health/life skills classes, sexuality education classes, history/social studies classes, school assemblies, audio/visual announcements, library materials, after-school sports, and from teachers and staff.

However, students explained that LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum is rare and, if offered, is typically found in isolated lessons rather than integrated across the school curriculum. As a result, students often take it upon themselves to address LGBTQ subjects in class, particularly when LGBTQ issues are avoided or when teachers do not respond to slurs or verbal harassment. In addition, teachers and school officials were faced with a number of barriers that obstructed efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum including lack of state and district-level institutional support, fear of community pushback from students and parents, and budget and funding cuts. Key informants knowledgeable about efforts to implement ethnic studies echoed these barriers.

Cultural and Political Shifts

Since we began this research project, there have also been substantial cultural and political shifts, both progressive and regressive, that have impacted implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and ethnic studies. For example, in California, the FAIR Education Act, which requires the

BROAD-BASED IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH YIELDS BEST RESULTS

School climate surveys show that while any type of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in any single subject improves school climate, the institutionalization of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum as evidenced by a broad, integrated approach to implementation across the school likely has the greatest impact on school climate.

For example, one school that participated in this project reported the most positive school climate results most likely because LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was incorporated into multiple subjects, utilized different teaching methods, and was supported by the local administration, other teachers, and students. In the other two schools LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was incorporated into only one subject, used only one type of teaching method, and faced multiple implementation challenges. While school climate results improved at these schools as well, the impacts were not as significant as in the school that institutionalized LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.

> **"** Despite the efforts of advocates and educators working for the inclusion of ethnic studies in schools for over 60 years, they continue to face implementation challenges...

inclusion of age-appropriate, factual, and relevant information about the roles and contributions of LGBT Americans into history and social studies instruction, went into effect in January 2012. In contrast, in December 2010, HB 2281[25] was passed in Arizona, which banned ethnic studies from Tucson Unified School District (TUSD). In protest, hundreds of TUSD students walked out of their schools. Recent reports also suggest that the surge in Latino/a voter registration from 2008 to 2012 is in direct response to legislation like HB 2281 and other legislation perceived as targeting specific racial or ethnic groups.[26]

While these political and cultural developments will undoubtedly impact efforts to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and ethnic studies, much work remains to be done to ensure that students feel safe at school, feel a sense of school belonging, and are able to succeed. For example, despite the passage of the FAIR Education Act in California, implementation has been a real challenge; without state and district-level support for implementation, the burden of compliance falls heavily on teachers. Teachers expressed a need for professional development training on how to teach LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and how to handle anti-LGBTQ harassment in the classroom. They also expressed a need

for LGBTQ-inclusive supplemental instructional materials, updated textbooks that include the roles and contributions of LGBTQ people in US history, and inclusion of questions about LGBTQ people and history on standardized tests. If implementation has been a struggle in California, then other states without supportive legislation such as the FAIR Education Act are likely to face implementation barriers.

Overcoming Barriers

A number of strategies to overcome implementation barriers were identified by key informants. First, the production of qualitative and quantitative data that shows the impact of culturally relevant lessons on student safety, well-being, and achievement can be used to combat arguments against such curricula. Data can also be used to mobilize support for teachers from local administration, district, and state-level officials, community-based organizations, and from the community at large.

Second, a broad-based coalition of stakeholders needs to work together to support LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation. Because proponents of both ethnic studies and LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum face many of the same challenges, enormous potential exists for working together to ensure that all students see themselves reflected in their curriculum and that they have access to quality education, safe schools, and a positive learning environment.

Finally, while educational funding surfaced as one of the main implementation barriers, it is worth noting that there is such a strong interest in implementing culturally relevant curriculum that some teachers have been implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and ethnic studies for years without dedicated funding streams. Community advocates and community-based organizations have been essential to such efforts, particularly when curricular resources are scant. New LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources continue to be developed,[27] especially in California where schools are required to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in social studies and history instruction; collaboration with community-based organizations will only contribute to this growing resource bank.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
take action

ABOUT OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research project support a number of recommendations for state policymakers, state education administrators, local school district officials, teachers, students, parents, community members and community-based organizations. Detailed recommendations are listed here and a recommendations quick guide follows.

State Policymakers:

1. Pass anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected categories.

2. Assess if your state has existing education code requiring the inclusion of historically underrepresented groups in history and social studies instruction; if so, introduce and support legislation to add LGBTQ people to the list of groups included and, ideally, include funding for corresponding implementation efforts such as professional development training.

3. Promote resources at www.faireducationact.org or www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons to school officials and constituents in your district.

4. Pass policies to mandate training for all school staff (especially physical education teachers) on creating safer school climates by stopping bias-motivated harassment, including harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

5. Approve budgets that provide adequate funding for schools, including funding that enables schools to effectively implement non-discrimination policies and improve school climates for LGBTQ youth.

6. Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity on standardized tests.

State Education Administrators:

1. Implement state anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies by providing model enumerated policies and providing resources to train local school administrators and all school staff on creating safer school climates; school staff should be trained to stop bias-motivated harassment, including harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

2. Implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum legislation, if applicable, by providing local school districts with access to LGBTQ-inclusive supplemental instructional materials such as those listed on www.faireducationact.org or www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons.

3. Implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum legislation, if applicable, by offering professional development training to local school district personnel on how to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into their curriculum.

4. Work with the state board of education, curriculum committees or commissions, and other stakeholders to ensure LGBTQ-inclusivity in state-level curriculum frameworks, curriculum standards, textbooks, supplemental instructional materials, and standardized tests.

5. Ensure the state department of education allocates resources to monitor and support compliance with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum requirements and school safety policies.

California State Education Administrators:

The FAIR Education Act, which went into effect on January 1, 2012, updated the California Education Code by requiring the inclusion of age-appropriate, factual, and relevant information about the roles and contributions of LGBT Americans into history and social studies instruction. Accordingly, California state education administrators should:
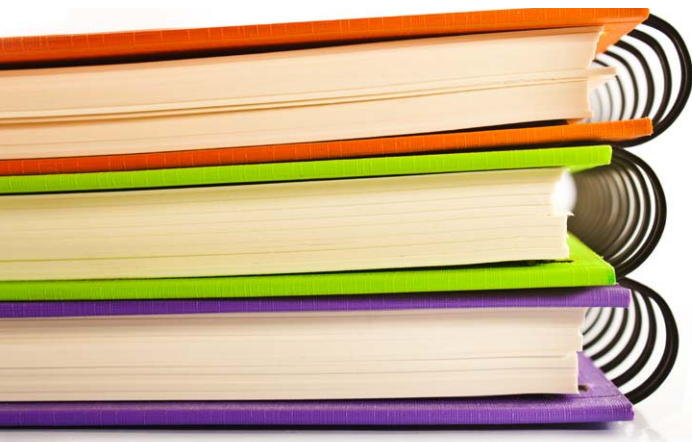
1. Designate and train specific California Department of Education staff to provide technical assistance to school districts working to implement the FAIR Education Act.

2. Ensure that the California Department of Education allocates resources to monitor and support FAIR Education Act compliance.

3. Incorporate the roles and contributions of LGBTQ Americans into upcoming revisions to the state's history curriculum frameworks and curriculum standards.

4. Implement the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act by offering training to all school staff on bias-motivated harassment, including harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Local School District Officials:

1. Adopt anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected categories.

2. Ensure that anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies are clearly and regularly publicized to all school staff, students, and parents including in student handbooks and on school district websites.

3. Adopt resolutions in support of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and ensure such support is clearly publicized to all school staff.

4. Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity in textbooks and the development of LGBTQ-inclusive supplemental instructional materials and on standardized tests.

5. Provide information to teachers about where they can access LGBTQ-inclusive supplemental instructional materials, such as www.faireducationact.org and www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons.

6. Provide professional development training for all school staff on creating safer school climates by stopping bias-motivated harassment, including harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

7. Provide professional development training for teachers on how to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into their curriculum.

8. Collaborate with community-based organizations experienced with both LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and/or ethnic studies that may be able to provide valuable data, support, or insight regarding school safety, student well-being, and achievement in schools.

9. Allocate funding for acquisition of LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources.

10. Allocate funding for professional development training on creating safer school climates and implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. If funds are limited, identify opportunities to incorporate these types of trainings into already existing professional development trainings and/or partner with community-based organizations that can offer free or low-cost trainings.

California Local School District Officials:

In addition to the suggestions above, California local school district officials should distribute a memo to all school site administrators and teachers explaining the requirements under the FAIR Education Act to incorporate the roles and contributions of LGBT Americans into history and social studies instruction, and expressing district expectations for compliance with these requirements.

Teachers:

1. Advocate for the adoption of anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies at the state and local level that enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected categories.

2. Advocate for the adoption of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum policies at the state and local level.

3. Intervene when you hear bias-related comments or witness harassment. Use each comment as an opportunity to provide education and reaffirm school policy.

4. Work to elect school board members who are culturally sensitive and who support the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination policies and LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.

5. Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity in textbooks and the development of LGBTQ-inclusive supplemental instructional materials.

6. Access LGBTQ-inclusive supplemental curricular materials by visiting www.faireducationact.org or www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons.

7. Ask your administration to provide training for all school staff on creating safer school climates by stopping bias-motivated harassment, including harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

8. Ask your administration to provide training for teachers on how to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into their curriculum.

9. Collaborate with community-based organizations experienced with both LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and/or ethnic studies that may be able to provide valuable data, support, or insight regarding school safety, student well-being, and achievement in schools.

10. Create a department sub-committee or develop partnerships with teachers to develop LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources for the subject matter you teach.

11. Train colleagues on stopping bias-motivated harassment and incorporating LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into your curriculum.

12. Prioritize LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum despite pressures to "teach to the test" and advocate for standardized testing that is LGBTQ-inclusive.

13. Advocate for adequate funding for schools.

14. Publicize the findings in *Implementing Lessons that Matter: Impacts of LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum of Student Safety, Well-Being, and Achievement* to bolster support for incorporating LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into the curriculum at your school.

California Teachers:

1. Educate teachers, administrators, and parents about the requirements under FAIR Education Act.

2. Request a copy of your district's curriculum-related resolutions, policies, and/or curriculum guidelines to confirm if they reflect requirements under the FAIR Education Act.

Students:

1. Advocate for the adoption of anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies at the state and local level that enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected categories.

2. Advocate for the adoption of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum policies at the state and local level.

3. Intervene when you hear bias-related comments and slurs.

4. File a complaint with school administrators if you experience or witness discrimination or harassment.

5. Partner with community-based organizations that can provide information about how to file a complaint, monitor your school's compliance with the FAIR Education Act or similar legislation, and provide LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources for teachers.

6. Work to elect school board members who are culturally sensitive and who support the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination policies and LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.

7. Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity in textbooks and the development of LGBTQ-inclusive supplemental instructional materials.

8. Show your teachers where they can access LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources: www.faireducationact.org and www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons.

9. Ask your administration to provide training for all school staff on creating safer school climates by stopping bias-motivated harassment, including harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

10. Ask your administration to provide training for teachers on how to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into their curriculum.

11. Advocate for including the roles and contributions of LGBTQ Americans in state curriculum frameworks, curriculum standards, textbooks, supplemental instructional materials, and standardized tests.

12. Collect stories from your peers about your experience in school and the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, and present this data to your teachers, administrators, school board members, state education administrators, and policymakers when advocating for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.

13. Talk to parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members about the importance of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, and share the findings in *Implementing Lessons that Matter: Impacts of LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum of Student Safety, Well-Being, and Achievement* to bolster support for incorporating LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into the curriculum at your school.

California Students:

1. Monitor which classes are complying with the FAIR Education Act and report your experience on GSA Network's FAIR/unFAIR survey: www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/survey.

2. Educate teachers, administrators, peers, and parents about the requirements under FAIR Education Act.

3. Request a copy of your district's curriculum-related resolutions, policies, and/or curriculum guidelines to confirm if they reflect requirements under the FAIR Education Act.

Parents, Community Members, and Community-Based Organizations:

1. Advocate for the adoption of anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies at the state and local level that enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected categories.

2. Advocate for the adoption of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum policies at the state and local level.

3. Work to elect school board members who are culturally sensitive and who support the implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination policies and LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.

4. Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity in textbooks and the development of inclusive LGBTQ-inclusive supplemental instructional materials.

5. Develop and/or provide teachers with access to LGBTQ-inclusive supplemental instructional materials such as those listed on www.faireducationact.org and www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons.

6. Ask school administrators to provide training for all school staff on creating safer school climates by stopping bias-motivated harassment, including harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

7. Ask school administrators to provide training for teachers on how to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into their curriculum.

8. Advocate for including the roles and contributions of LGBTQ Americans in state curriculum frameworks, curriculum standards, textbooks, supplemental instructional materials, and standardized tests.

9. Advocate in state and district budgeting processes for adequate education funding that will enable schools to effectively implement non-discrimination policies and improve school climates for LGBTQ youth.

10. Develop partnerships between advocates for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and proponents of ethnic studies to support each other's advocacy efforts.

11. Talk to parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members about the importance of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, and share the findings in *Implementing Lessons that Matter: Impacts of LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum of Student Safety, Well-Being, and Achievement* to bolster support for incorporating LGBTQ-inclusive lessons into the curriculum at your school.

Recommendations Quick Reference Guide

	Anti-bullying & non-discrimination policies	LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum policy	LGBTQ-inclusive curricular resources	Professional development training	LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation	Standardized testing	School funding
State Policymakers	Pass enumerated non-discrimination policies.	If precedent for curriculum-related legislation exists, pass LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum legislation like CA's FAIR Education Act.	Promote resources at www.faireducationact.org or www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons to school officials and constituents in your district.	Pass policies to mandate training on bias-related harassment.	Ensure LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum legislation, if applicable, includes funding to support implementation and compliance.	Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity on standardized tests.	Approve budgets with adequate funding for schools.
State Education Administrators	Implement enumerated non-discrimination policies.	Implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum legislation by providing access to supplemental instructional materials and professional development.	• Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity in textbooks and supplemental instructional materials. • Provide local school districts with access to sample curricula.	Implement training on bias-related harassment and how to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.	• Ensure LGBTQ inclusivity in state curriculum frameworks and standards. • In CA, monitor FAIR Education Act compliance at the local level.	Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity on standardized tests.	Allocate resources to monitor compliance with LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum requirements and school safety policies.
Local School District Officials	Adopt and publicize enumerated non-discrimination policies.	• Adopt and publicize LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum policies/ resolutions. • In CA, notify school personnel of requirements in the FAIR Education Act.	• Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity in textbooks and supplemental instructional materials. • Provide teachers with access to sample curricula.	Provide professional development training on bias-related harassment and how to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.	• Adopt LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum policies/resolutions and ensure implementation. • Collaborate with community-based organizations.	Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity on standardized tests.	Allocate funding to acquire LGBTQ-inclusive curricular materials and provide professional development training.
Teachers	• Advocate for and publicize enumerated non-discrimination policies; help elect supportive school board members. • Intervene in bias-motivated harassment and train colleagues to do so.	• Advocate for the adoption of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum; help elect school board members supportive of such policies. • In CA, educate others about the FAIR Education Act.	• Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity in textbooks and supplemental instructional materials. • Get resources at www.faireducationact.org or www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons • Partner with other teachers to develop LGBTQ-inclusive lessons.	• Ask administrators to provide training on bias-related harassment and how to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. • Partner with community-based organizations.	• Teach LGBTQ-inclusive lessons and train colleagues how to do the same. • Talk to school constituencies about LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. • Partner with community-based organizations.	Prioritize LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum despite pressures to "teach to the test" and advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity on standardized tests.	Advocate for adequate funding for schools.
Students	• Advocate for and ensure your district publicizes enumerated non-discrimination policies; help elect supportive school board members. • Intervene in harassment incidents. • File a complaint if you experience or witness harassment.	• Advocate for the adoption of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum policies. • Help elect school board members who support LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. • In CA, educate others about the FAIR Education Act.	• Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity in textbooks and supplemental instructional materials. • Show your teachers resources at www.faireducationact.org or www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons.	Ask administrators to provide training on bias-related harassment and how to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.	• Collect peer stories about school experiences and LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. • Talk to school constituencies about LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. • In CA, monitor if history and social studies teachers are complying with the FAIR Education Act.	Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity on standardized tests.	Advocate for adequate funding for schools.
Parents, Community Members, and Community-Based Organizations	Advocate for enumerated non-discrimination policies; ensure your district publicizes such policies; help elect school board members supportive of such policies.	• Advocate for the adoption of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum policies. • Help elect school board members who support LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.	• Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity in textbooks and supplemental instructional materials. • Promote resources at www.faireducationact.org or www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons. • Partner with teachers and community-based organizations to develop LGBTQ-inclusive lessons and ethnic studies curriculum.	Ask administrators to provide training on bias-related harassment and how to implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.	• Build partnerships between advocates for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and ethnic studies. • Talk to school constituencies about LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.	Advocate for LGBTQ inclusivity on standardized tests.	Advocate for adequate funding for schools.

appendices

METHODOLOGY, FIELD NOTES, AND QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Appendix A: Methodology

Youth Voices

Focus group participants were recruited based on their responses from a larger survey on LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum conducted by GSA Network. California students who indicated they had experienced LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in their school were invited via email to participate in focus groups. Seven focus groups (two in person; five via phone conference) were conducted from April-June 2011 with a total of 26 youth. Participants in each focus group were asked a series of 8-10 open-ended questions on their perceptions of school safety, students' experience of LGBTQ curriculum in schools, and the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on school climate, well-being, and achievement. All focus groups were voice recorded, and participants were remunerated with a $15 gift card.

Youth focus group participants were high school aged students and represented diverse geographic regions including both rural and urban areas throughout California. Nine participants identified as white, nine as biracial or multi-racial, six as Latino/a, one as African-American, and one as Asian-American. The majority of participants (n=14) were female-identified, eight identified as transgender, genderqueer or gender questioning, and four were male-identified participants. Most (n=8) identified as queer and/or pansexual, six as lesbian or gay, four as bisexual, three as questioning, two as straight/heterosexual, one as straight and questioning, one as panromantic asexual, and one transgender person indicated being "attracted to girls."

Utilizing qualitative methods,[28] three coders read the transcriptions, noted consistent responses, and organized quotes based on those responses. Results represent consistent responses across participants, as well as perspectives that were unique.

Selecting School Sites

Drawing on recent Preventing School Harassment survey data[33] and subsequent focus groups with California high school students, we identified several approaches to promising curriculum inclusion and worked with teachers, administrators, and district officials in four different California school districts to implement these different approaches. The recruitment of potential school sites transpired during the Spring, Summer, and Fall of 2011 and actual implementation of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum took place during the 2011-2012 school year.

Teachers from three of the four schools attended a series of professional development trainings on LGBTQ school safety, well-being, and achievement. The trainings also emphasized the importance of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and provided tools and resources to help teachers implement LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum into their classes. Three of the four schools integrated different types of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in different subjects such as history, humanities, health, and foreign language. School climate surveys were distributed before and after LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum was implemented to assess its impact on school climate. The four schools were located in the San Francisco Bay Area, the greater San Diego area, and the greater Los Angeles area.

The FAIR Education Act

The passage of the FAIR Education Act significantly informed our project recruitment efforts. Originally, we planned to recruit teachers by presenting school climate data showing high-levels of LGBTQ-related harassment and its impacts on student safety, achievement, and well-being. This information would be followed by data showing how LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum can be a powerful strategy for

safer schools.[29] Another incentive would be the promise of sharing valuable LGBTQ school safety data specific to the participating district. We used all these recruitment tactics, however, the passage of the FAIR Education Act allowed us to also argue that the integration of age-appropriate, factual information about the roles and contributions of LGBT Americans into history and social studies classes was not only a promising strategy for addressing student safety on campus, but also was now a requirement.

While the FAIR Education Act updated the education code specifically relating to social studies and history instruction, we included information about the FAIR Education Act even when recruiting teachers from other disciplines since the education code updates helped to legitimize institutional support for curriculum inclusion in any subject. As a method of recruitment we offered resources and tools to schools working towards FAIR Education Act compliance. However, the tactic of sharing resources and tools would have been used even without the passage of the FAIR Education Act, as was demonstrated through recruitment of health and foreign language teachers that participated in this research project.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were designed to understand the process, challenges, and strategies associated with implementing ethnic studies and LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. Key informants included adults who were school board members, school administrators, teachers, and advocates from community-based organizations.

Informants were recruited via email to participate in a study about the "adoption of LGBTQ or ethnic studies curriculum into [their] school's general curriculum." Fifteen informants participated in 1-2 hour-long phone interviews, which were conducted from October 2011-February 2012. Nine informants were from Southern Arizona and six from Northern California. Key informants were asked 12 open-ended questions about the barriers to and support for ethnic studies and LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum within their school or district. Then, from May-June 2012, eight educators and school officials from the four California schools that participated in the LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation part of this study were interviewed via phone about the process of incorporating LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in their schools. Qualitative coding methods[30] were used to interpret the quotes and organize them into themes. Unless otherwise stated, the key themes reported represent the consistent view across participants.

School Climate Survey

The one-page survey was designed to asses the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on student safety and school climate. The survey asked where students learned about LGBTQ people and issues (e.g. school assembly, specific subjects, classroom lesson or presentation, etc.) and asked students to rate the supportiveness of the lessons in each context. Students were also asked about school safety including: whether or not they were harassed or bullied at school because they are or are perceived to be LGBTQ; how often people use anti-LGBTQ slurs; how often teachers or students step in when anti-LGBTQ slurs are used; and whether or not their school is safe for gender non-conforming students or LGBTQ students, teachers, and staff.

The surveys were distributed before and after implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, which in most cases was at the beginning and end of the year. For one school surveys were distributed approximately one week apart, directly before and after implementation. The students who took the survey at the beginning of the year may or may not have been the same students who took the survey at the end of the year. All school climate survey results reported are statistically significant.

Appendix B: Field Notes

School A

GSA Network staff was invited to conduct a professional development presentation on LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum for the social studies department at School A. The purpose of the presentation was to communicate the impact LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum has on school climate. The presentation was also an opportunity to share information about the recent passage of the FAIR Education Act, and the legal obligation schools have to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive information into lessons.

The presentation included demographic data about LGBTQ youth in the school district along with data about school safety, well-being, and achievement. For example, 11% of high school students (over 2,000) in that district identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning and 1.6% of high school students identify as transgender. Almost 90% of all students reported hearing anti-gay name-calling and slurs

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY
YOUR ANSWERS HELP US LEARN MORE ABOUT SCHOOL SAFETY. YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

Sexual Orientation: describes whether a person is romantically and/or physically attracted to members of the same sex (gay or lesbian), to members of the opposite sex (heterosexual), or to members of both sexes (bisexual).
Gender Identity: describes a person's understanding, definition or experience of their own gender regardless of biological sex.
Transgender: describes a person who doesn't fit and/or identify with the gender roles assigned by society based on their biological sex.

1. I have learned about LGBTQ people/issues at school. If you did not learn about this, go to question 3.

If yes, where/how? (check all that apply)	How supportive was it of LGBTQ people/issues?		
	Mostly Supportive	Neutral/Mixed	Mostly Not Supportive
☐School assembly	☐	☐	☐
☐Classroom lesson or presentation	☐	☐	☐
☐From a teacher, administrator, school counselor, or staff outside of class	☐	☐	☐
☐Discussion with students outside of the classroom	☐	☐	☐
☐Through library materials	☐	☐	☐
☐Through public announcements, posters, or other visual materials	☐	☐	☐
☐Student newspaper	☐	☐	☐
☐Through the internet at school	☐	☐	☐
☐After-school sports	☐	☐	☐
☐After-school clubs	☐	☐	☐

2. I have learned about LGBTQ people/issues as part of a lesson IN CLASS. If you did not learn about this, skip this question.

If yes, which class? (check all that apply)	How supportive was it of LGBTQ people/issues?		
	Mostly Supportive	Neutral/Mixed	Mostly Not Supportive
☐English/Language Arts	☐	☐	☐
☐Science	☐	☐	☐
☐ Math	☐	☐	☐
☐History/Social Studies	☐	☐	☐
☐Physical Education (PE)	☐	☐	☐
☐Music/Art/Drama	☐	☐	☐
☐Health/Life Skills	☐	☐	☐
☐Sexuality Education	☐	☐	☐

3. Circle the answer that best describes your experience or opinion.

During the last 12 months, how many times on school property were you harassed or bullied because you are LGBTQ, or someone thought you were?	4 or more times	2 or 3 times	1 time	Never
How often do you hear people use language such as "no homo," "faggot," "dyke," or "that's so gay"?	Several times a day	Once a day	Every few weeks	Never
Do teachers step in if they hear language such as "no homo," "faggot," "dyke," or "that's so gay"?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Do students step in if they hear language such as "no homo," "faggot," "dyke," or "that's so gay"?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Do you step in if you hear language such as "no homo," "faggot," "dyke," or "that's so gay"?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
My school is safe for girls who are not as "feminine" as other girls.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My school is safe for guys who are not as "masculine" as other guys.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My school is safe for students, teachers, and staff who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ).	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel safe at my school.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

4. Do you know of any vandalism/graffiti directed against students because people think they are LGBTQ? ☐Yes ☐No ☐I don't know
5. Do you know of any physical attacks occurring against students because people think they are LGBTQ? ☐Yes ☐No ☐I don't know
6. Do you know of other students who openly identify as LGBTQ? ☐Yes ☐No ☐I don't know
7. Do you know of any teachers or staff who openly identify as LGBTQ? ☐Yes ☐No ☐I don't know
8. Do you know where to find support/information about sexual orientation or gender identity at school? ☐Yes ☐No ☐I don't know

Grade	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Race	
☐9	☐Female	☐Gay/Lesbian	☐American Indian or Alaska Native	☐Latino/Hispanic
☐10	☐Male	☐Bisexual	☐Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	☐White/Caucasian
☐11	☐Transgender	☐Straight/Heterosexual	☐Asian	☐Other:_____
☐12	☐Questioning	☐Questioning	☐Black or African American	

11. Is there anything your school could do to make it safer for LGBTQ students, teachers, and staff? Please comment on the back of this page.

Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this survey to your teacher. Your help is very valuable to us in making your school safe for all students, teachers, and staff.

Should you have any further questions or concerns about this survey, please ask your teacher who is administering this survey.

but when asked how often students hear teachers or staff intervene, only 10% reported "always" while 37% said "never" and 25% said "rarely." Furthermore, LGBT students are more likely than straight or cisgender students to report that in the past year they have been:

- bullied at school

- in a fight at school

- threatened or injured with a weapon at school

Understandably, LGBT students in this district are significantly more likely to:

- miss school because they feel unsafe at school

- have a lower GPA

- use substances such as cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, inhalants, ecstasy, and meth

- be sad or depressed

- seriously consider suicide, make a plan for suicide, attempt suicide, and/or incur an injury from attempted suicide[31]

The presentation highlighted the challenges LGBTQ youth and youth perceived to be LGBTQ face in school and revealed a number of steps schools can take to increase school safety, including the integration of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum into classrooms.[32] The FAIR Education Act was also included along with resources and tools for teachers to revise their lessons to comply with the updates to the California Education Code. The presentation sparked a lively discussion among participating teachers and solidified the participation of School A in this research project.

In the subjects of U.S. History and Modern World History, LGBTQ-inclusive lessons reached a combined total of approximately 95 students in three separate classes. A number of LGBTQ-related topics were covered including:

- Bayard Rustin, a gay civil rights leader credited with organizing the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, where Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech

- Oscar Wilde, an author from the Victorian Era who was imprisoned for being gay

- Oral history research project of local community members' life stories. A number of students focused their research and presentations on people whose life stories touched on LGBTQ-related topics

STRAIGHTLACED

Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up is a film that unearths how popular pressures around gender and sexuality confine American teens. Their stories reflect a diversity of experiences, demonstrating how gender role expectations, homophobia, and transphobia are interwoven, and illustrating the different ways that these expectations connect with culture, race, and class.

This film highlights the many ways that gender messages shape young people's daily decisions, and the toll that deeply held stereotypes and rigid gender expectations have on all our lives. Learn more at www.groundspark.org/straightlaced.

School A offered several other ongoing events and activities throughout the school year that expressed support for LGBTQ youth, including an annual drag show and weekly opportunities for staff and students to wear LGBTQ-supportive t-shirts. Approximately 30 teachers, staff, and administrators helped produce the drag show and the majority of the student body attended the event. Each week, approximately 80 students and staff typically participated in wearing LGBTQ-supportive t-shirts.

School B

School climate data from a nearby school district was used in a series of professional development presentations to illustrate the need for climate change and to show the potential impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum.[33] Information about the FAIR Education Act was also shared, along with resources such as the educational film *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up.* Presentations were shared with the humanities teacher and the health teacher.

Lessons in health class were primarily anti-bias focused and included:

- The film *Bullied: A Student, a School and a Case that Made History*, a documentary about a young gay man who took a stand against bullying in his school district.

Students participated in classroom discussions after the film was viewed.[34]

- The film *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up. Straightlaced* was used to generate classroom discussion about how gender role expectations, homophobia and transphobia shape young people's daily experiences. The film was shown in an extended session during two class periods. Students were assigned a reflective writing assignment from the *Straightlaced* Curriculum and Resource Guide and participated in classroom discussions about key themes.

- A guest speaker from a local youth health center who facilitated discussions about LGBTQ-related subjects such as the difference between "gender" and "sex."

Lessons in humanities classes were incorporated into already existing lessons. In two 11th grade humanities classes, students were assigned a five-page research paper, an oral presentation, and a poster presentation during an evening fair for parents and other community members. Students chose from 34 research topics, a number of which were LGBTQ-related. A total of three students presented LGBTQ-related topics to their classmates and community members. Students also read personal narratives, some of which were LGBTQ-inclusive, during the first fifteen minutes of class. Subjects included:

- The treatment of LGBTQ people during the McCarthy Era

- Post 9/11 from a queer perspective

- Immigration from an undocumented and queer perspective

School C

A guest speaker from GSA Network engaged students in a presentation and discussion on: gender, sexuality, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, racism, dominant culture, power, and oppression. The presentation included school climate data showing high levels of harassment directed towards LGBTQ youth and those perceived to be LGBTQ and asked students to reflect on their own perception of school climate, their friends' behavior, and their own behavior regarding homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and heterosexism. The speaker used a power point presentation and clips from an anti-bias film to illustrate these points and to generate discussion and reflection. Students were required to write reflections on gender and sexuality, participate in discussions, and craft a personal and/or community action plan outlining how they plan to improve the climate at their school.

Appendix C: Questions for Future Research

Researchers can learn more about LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum by adding to the pool of knowledge about the impact of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on student safety, well-being, and achievement, along with implementation barriers and strategies to counter these barriers.

Additional research questions include:

1. What other factors may impact LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum implementation efforts? For example, are there differences between schools such as school size, school location (urban/rural), teacher-student ratios, academic performance measures, graduation rates, socio-economic status of the student population, or racial and ethnic make-up of a school that have an impact on LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum efforts or account for differences in the effects of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum on school climate?

2. What kinds of LGBTQ-inclusive curricula in Physical Education classes have the greatest impact on school safety?

3. What are the best strategies to train teachers and staff on how to respond appropriately to slurs/harassment and teach LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum?

4. What are the best strategies to secure buy-in, funding, and support for LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in states that do not have progressive legislation?

5. How can we bridge partnerships between schools and community-based organizations so that teachers feel supported in their efforts to be inclusive of LGBTQ people/issues?

6. How can we bridge partnerships between proponents of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and ethnic studies or other types of culturally relevant curriculum?

7. How does the implementation of both LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and ethnic studies impact school safety, well-being, and achievement for LGBTQ youth of color, specifically?

8. What is the relationship between LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, or the lack thereof, with student graduation rates, attendance, and school dropout rates for LGBTQ youth, and especially LGBTQ youth of color?

1 The use of the "LGBTQ" acronym in this publication varies depending upon the context. For example, in some cases legislation or data may only refer to certain sub-groups. In these cases we use "LGB" or "LGBT."

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6 Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J. Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N.A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

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8 Burdge, H., Sinclair, K., Laub, C., Russell, S. T. (2012). *Lessons That Matter: LGBTQ Inclusivity and School Safety.* (Gay-Straight Alliance Network and California Safe Schools Coalition Research Brief No. 14). San Francisco: Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

9 The 2008 Preventing School Harassment Survey asks students if they "have learned about LGBTQ people or issues as part of a lesson in [their] classes at school," or "at school [outside of the classroom setting]." Students who answer "yes" are asked to rate "how supportive [the lessons are] of LGBTQ people/issues" by choosing one of the following options: "Mostly supportive; Neutral/mixed; Mostly non-supportive."

10 A notable exception is physical education (PE). PE is the only type of class in which LGBTQ-inclusive lessons that are rated as "neutral/mixed" have negative effects on individual students' feelings of safety, as opposed to a positive effect or no impact at all.

11 For more information about lessons, the School Climate Survey or teacher professional development trainings, see the Appendices.

12 For more information about the FAIR Education Act, see page 9; also, see Appendix A: Methodology on page 39.

13 Audio/visual announcements include public announcements, posters, and other visual materials.

14 For more information about lessons, the School Climate Survey or teacher professional development trainings, see the Appendices.

15 For more information about the FAIR Education Act, see page 9; also, see Appendix A: Methodology on page 39.

16 The Academic Performance Index (API) from the California Department of Education measures the performance and growth of schools on a variety of academic measures.

17 For more information about lessons or the School Climate Survey, see the Appendices.

18 Stand-alone lessons seem to produce different results than those that are subject-specific and incorporated into larger lessons. See Case Study Comparisons Finding 3 on page 26.

19 School A: Decrease in LGBTQ-related physical attacks; School C: Increase in feelings of personal safety; School B: Increase in safety for gender non-conforming students and LGBTQ students, teachers, and staff, decrease in prevalence of slurs, increase in response to slurs, increased knowledge of "out" LGBTQ teachers and staff, and increased knowledge of where to go for support and information about sexuality or gender identity.

20 School A: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues in school assemblies, audio/visual announcements, schools clubs and history/social studies classes; School B: Students report an increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues from teachers and staff, library materials, schools sports, history/social studies classes, health/life skills classes and sexuality education classes; School C: Students did not perceive any increase in support for LGBTQ people and issues.

21 This informant is referring to Resolution No. 101-26A1 in Support of an ethnic studies Program in the SFUSD; see www.sfusd.edu/assets/sfusd-staff/board-archive/memberreso/KIM%20Ethnics%20Studies%201%2026%202010.pdf.

22 Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership

23 Sleeter's work that addresses Ethnic Studies: www.nea.org/assets/docs/NBI-2010-3-value-of-ethnic-studies.pdf.

24 See Introduction.

25 HB2281 bans Tucson schools from teaching ethnic studies classes or those "designed for pupils of a particular ethnic group," or that "advocate ethnic solidarity." Other legislation perceived as targeting specific racial or ethnic groups include SB 1070, which makes the lack of documentation a state misdemeanor and requires state law enforcement officers to determine a person's immigration status during a "lawful stop, detention or arrest," or during a "lawful contact" when there is reasonable suspicion that the person is undocumented.

26 Crawford, Amanda (2012-09-11). "Democrats See Arizona Gain as Backlash Drives Hispanic Voters." Bloomberg. www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-09-12/democrats-see-arizona-gain-as-backlash-drives-hispanic-voters.html.

27 See www.faireducationact.org or www.gsanetwork.org/FAIR/lessons.

28 LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999). Designing and conducting ethnographic research. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

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31 San Francisco Unified School District LGBTQ Support Services. (2011). *Keeping Our LGBTQ Youth Safe and in School: 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results.* San Francisco: Retrieved from www.healthiersf.org/LGBTQ/GetTheFacts/health.html.

32 Russell, S. T., McGuire, J. K., Laub, C., & Manke, E. (2006). *LGBT Student Safety: Steps Schools Can Take.* (California Safe Schools Coalition Research Brief No. 3). San Francisco: California Safe Schools Coalition.

33 San Francisco Unified School District LGBTQ Support Services. (2011). *Keeping Our LGBTQ Youth Safe and in School: 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results.* San Francisco: Retrieved from www.healthiersf.org/LGBTQ/GetTheFacts/health.html.

34 Available at www.tolerance.org/bullied.

gsanetwork

Gay-Straight Alliance Network is a national youth leadership organization that empowers youth activists to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools by training student leaders and supporting student-led Gay-Straight Alliance clubs.