



## **Micro Workshop 7**

# ***Building Awareness of Sexual-Orientation and Gender-Identity Issues in Schools: Exploring Definitions***

### **Focus**

This micro workshop provides an opportunity for school staffs to develop an awareness of sexual-orientation issues. Schools, classrooms and communities should be models of diversity, where all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential. All students need to feel valued, welcomed and safe, regardless of their sexual orientation.

### **Objectives**

1. Identify statistics and connections with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) persons in our lives
2. Recognize that being aware of LGBT issues creates a safe and caring school environment
3. Understand and become aware of language, both respectful and demeaning, that may be used to identify LGBT persons
4. Provide resources for further inquiry

### **Introduction**

Ask participants to stand up or raise their hand if they know someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered.

If a majority raise their hands, participants may realize that many of them already have a connection with LGBT persons.

If only a few people raise their hands, talk about why so few people know LGBT persons. Point out that LGBT persons often remain invisible; unlike other minorities, LGBT persons cannot be identified based on language, culture or appearance.

Throughout history, LGBT persons have been present in every culture, race and community. Most research suggests that one in 10 people is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (Heron 1993; Jennings 1994; Lipkin 1999; Ryan and Futterman 1998). So, a class of 30 students, on average, three students may be non heterosexual.

### **Discussion**

- Cut out cards and shuffle (See Discussion Handout)
- Make extra copies of uncut sheets for group to check their answers.
- Have participants form groups of three to six.
- Deal cards to groups.

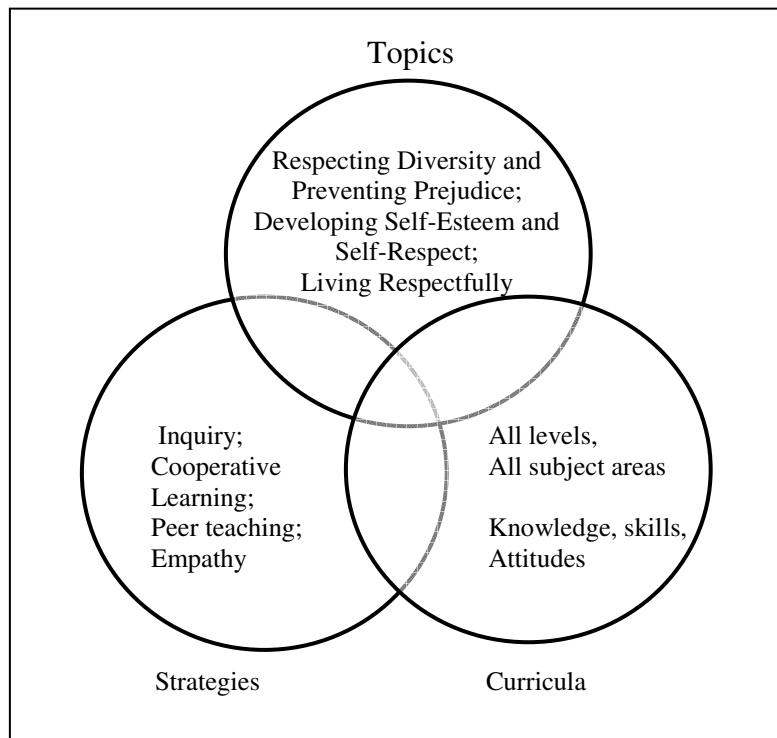
- Ask groups to arrange the terms in rows, then deal out the definitions
- Have each member read a definition and reach a consensus as to which term best matches the definition.
- Give groups five minutes to complete the exercise.
- As each group finishes, distribute the definition sheet to check answers.
- Pass out the booklet *Lesbian and Gay Youth* and advise participants that copies are available through the SACSC office.

### Personal Reflection and Issues for Inquiry

Once all the groups have completed the discussion and checked their answers, ask participants the following question:

- Did they find any terms or definitions surprising or confusing?
- Which terms have they heard students use in their schools? (e.g., gay, queer).
- How were these terms used? (e.g., positively, in a demeaning way)
- How did students and teachers react to these terms?
- Which terms do students and teachers deem to be the worst? Why?

### SACS Principles



### Conclusion

Discuss how understanding LGBT students reflects safe and caring school principles and reduces bullying, name calling, harassment and exclusion. It also increases the self-esteem of LGBT students.

## ***Resources***

- Barnard, I. 1993 "Anti-Homophobic Pedagogy: Some Suggestions for Teachers." *Feminist Teacher*, no 3. pp.50–52.
- Friend, R. A. 1993 "Choices, Not Closets: Heterosexism and Homophobia in Schools." In L. Weis and M. Fine, Eds, *Beyond Silenced Voices: Class, Race, Gender in the United States*. New York: State University of New York Press. pp. 209–235.
- Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth.1993 "Making Schools Safe for Gay and Lesbian Youth: *Breaking the Silence in Schools and in Families*. Boston, State House
- Griffin, C., M. J. Wirth, and A. Wirth. 1996 *Beyond Acceptance: Parents of Lesbians and Gays Talk about Their Experiences*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Heron, A., 1993 *Two Teenagers in Twenty*. Boston: Alyson.
- Jennings, K., ed. 1994 *One Teacher in Ten: Gay and Lesbian Educators Tell their Stories*. Boston: Alyson.
- Lipkin, A. 1999 *Understanding Homosexuality, Changing Schools: A Text for Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators*. Boulder, Colorado. Westview Press.
- Pharr, S. 1998 *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*. Little Rock, Ark.: Chardon Press.
- Ryan C. and D. Futterman 1998 *Lesbian and Gay Students: Care and Counseling*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Schneider, M. S., 1997 *Pride and Prejudice: Working with Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth*. Toronto: Central Toronto Youth Services.
- Woog, D. 1995 *School's Out: The Impact of Gay and Lesbian Issues on America's Schools*. Boston: Alyson.

## **Web Resources**

The Advocate Magazine  
[www.advocate.com](http://www.advocate.com)

Diversity Conferences of Alberta Society  
[www.ualberta.ca/~cbidwell/eses/dcas.html](http://www.ualberta.ca/~cbidwell/eses/dcas.html)

Equality for Gay's and Lesbian's Everywhere (EGALE) Canada  
[www.egale.ca](http://www.egale.ca)

Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Edmonton  
[www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/glccc/](http://www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/glccc/)

Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia  
[www.galebc.org](http://www.galebc.org)

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network  
[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

Matthew Shepard Organization  
[www.matthewsplace.com](http://www.matthewsplace.com)

Safe Schools Coalition of Washington  
[www.safeschools-wa.org](http://www.safeschools-wa.org)

Youth Quest: A Resource Booklet  
[www.members.tripod.com/~twood/guide.html](http://www.members.tripod.com/~twood/guide.html)

## **Book Stores**

Edmonton's LGBT and Feminist  
Book store:

1. Audreys Books Ltd (Ask for Orlando Corners)  
10702 Jasper Avenue  
Edmonton AB T6E 1Z5  
(780) 423-3487  
E-mail: [audrey@audreysbooks.com](mailto:audrey@audreysbooks.com)

[www.lsisisters.com](http://www.lsisisters.com)

Canada's largest selection of GLBT books:

2. Little Sisters  
1238 Davie Street  
Vancouver BC V6E 1N4  
1-800-567-1662

## Discussion Handout

bisexual	someone who is sexually and emotionally attracted to people of both the same and opposite sexes
gay	someone who is sexually and emotionally attracted to people of the same sex; includes both males and females, but more commonly males only
LGBT	an acronym for: Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered/ transsexual/two-spirited

heterosexual	someone who is sexually and emotionally attracted to people of the opposite sex
homosexual	someone who is sexually and emotionally attracted to people of the same sex
lesbian	a woman who is sexually and emotionally attracted to other women

queer	historically, a negative term for homosexuality; more recently reclaimed by the LGBT movement as a self-identifier
transgendered	a person whose gender, identity, outward appearance, expression and/or anatomy do not fit conventional male or female characteristics
transsexual	a transgendered person who has had surgery or hormone therapy to alter the sex of his or her body

two-spirited	some aboriginal people identify themselves as two-spirited, not lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or transsexual
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