

## Summary of LGBT Bulling Stories:

### **Non-heterosexual teens bullied more**

Both cyberbullying and school bullying victimization are higher among non-heterosexually identified U.S. youths, researchers say. In fall 2008, researchers surveyed 20,406 high school students in Boston's MetroWest region to assess their bullying victimization and psychological distress, including depressive symptoms, self-injury and tendency toward suicide. The study, published online ahead of the January print issue of the American Journal of Public Health, found 15.8 percent of students reported cyberbullying and 25.9 percent reported school bullying in the past 12 months. Reports of cyberbullying were higher among girls than among boys, whereas reports of school bullying were similar by gender, but cyberbullying and school bullying were higher among non-heterosexually identified teens. Victims of bullying reported lower school performance and school attachment as well as elevated levels of depressive symptoms and suicide attempts, the study said. "Our study provides a better understanding of cyberbullying and its relationship to school bullying, which is critical to informing school-based prevention efforts and engaging parents and other community members in combating this significant public health issue."

[http://www.upi.com/Health\\_News/2011/11/23/Non-heterosexual-teens-bullied-more/UPI-31191322079578](http://www.upi.com/Health_News/2011/11/23/Non-heterosexual-teens-bullied-more/UPI-31191322079578)

---

### **Women's colleges examine transgender policies**

At single-sex institutions, compounding the transgender-related issues that tend to pop up fairly regularly on all campuses - participation in athletics, demand for gender-neutral housing and bathrooms, and gender indications on college applications -- are questions of admissions, institutional history and employee and student attitudes. There are myriad implications to consider: in the classroom (say, a professor won't call a student by the name she prefers), in the dorms or student union (where bullying or hate crimes could occur), and in the bathrooms and health center (which may need some degree of restructuring). These are questions with which women's colleges are grappling. Some have more straightforward answers than others. Under [Title IX](#) of the Education Amendments of 1972, the federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and is most often invoked in conversations about sexual assault or athletic opportunities, men's and women's colleges may admit only students whose legal documentation shows they are of the gender that a particular institution serves. So a student who was biologically male at birth and fully transitioned to female some time before college could only be admitted to a place like Mount Holyoke if the transition is reflected on, say, a driver's license. While it is becoming more common for some transgender people to fully transition from one gender to another, that is difficult to accomplish by the time one is 18 and a typical college applicant. However, it is increasingly common for some high school students to identify as transgender, even without any physical changes. (The term "transgender" encompasses people with a range of attitudes on making changes to their bodies.) Policies generally follow the Title IX rule. At Hobart and William Smith, it also applies to students who transition while enrolled, said Robert S. Flowers, who, as vice president for student affairs, began exploring these issues with Banks before she left. Of course at Hobart and William Smith, men and women live and study together, even though separate colleges exist. At Mount Holyoke, only women are enrolled. Banks said that in the past four years or so students have begun the transitioning

process while enrolled, but none have had full surgery. She added that some students have asked to be considered gender-neutral, and "we have made sure that our language and practice reflected our value that they be allowed to express their gender identity freely." Flowers declined to specify whether any students have transitioned while enrolled, citing privacy concerns, but he did say, "Like every college campus that is committed to diversity and inclusive excellence, we work to create an environment that supports all students as they consider issues of identity. In the course of this work, we have benefited from the guidance of our policies."

[http://www.usatoday.com/ads/interstitial/2008/page/interstitial\\_new.htm?http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2011-08-01-womens-college-transgender\\_n.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/ads/interstitial/2008/page/interstitial_new.htm?http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2011-08-01-womens-college-transgender_n.htm)

---

### **LGBTQ youth at higher risk of suicide**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth are at greater risk than others of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts, U.S. researchers say. Joseph Robinson and Dorothy Espelage, both educational psychologists in the College of Education at the University of Illinois, found LGBTQ youth were bullied more by their peers and were at higher risk of truancy than straight youth. The study was based on anonymous online surveys of more than 13,000 middle- and high-school students in Dane County, Wis. The survey included a set of eight questions with low-probability responses that were used to screen out mischievous responders, the researchers said. More than 7 percent of straight youth reported thinking about suicide during the prior 30 day period, vs. 33 percent of LGBTQ students, the study said. Bisexual youth were at especially high risk at 44 percent, as were questioning youth at 32 percent. Bisexual youth were at elevated risk of suicide attempts, with more than 21 percent reporting they had made at least one attempt during the prior year, Robinson and Espelage said. The study, published in the journal *Educational Researcher*, found nearly twice as many LGBTQ students as straight students -- 39 percent vs. 20 percent -- reported having been bullied, threatened or harassed over the Internet. Bisexual youth reported the highest levels of victimization, 49 percent, among sexual minority youth.

[http://www.upi.com/Health\\_News/2011/10/15/LGBTQ-youth-at-higher-risk-of-suicide/UPI-97811318658276/](http://www.upi.com/Health_News/2011/10/15/LGBTQ-youth-at-higher-risk-of-suicide/UPI-97811318658276/)

---

### **In Suburb, Battle Goes Public on Bullying of Gay Students**

ANOKA, Minn. — This sprawling suburban school system, much of it within Michele Bachmann's Congressional district, is caught in the eye of one of the country's hottest culture wars — how homosexuality should be discussed in the schools. After years of harsh conflict between advocates for gay students and Christian conservatives, the issue was already highly charged here. Then in July, six students brought a lawsuit contending that school officials have failed to stop relentless antigay bullying and that a district policy requiring teachers to remain "neutral" on issues of sexual orientation has fostered oppressive silence and a corrosive stigma. Also this summer, parents and students here learned that the federal Department of Justice was deep into a civil rights investigation into complaints about unchecked harassment of gay students in the district. The inquiry is still under way. Adding an extra incendiary element, the school district has suffered eight student suicides in the last two years, leading state officials to declare a "suicide contagion." Whether antigay bullying contributed to any of these deaths is sharply disputed; some friends and teachers say four of the students were struggling with issues of sexual

identity. In many larger cities, lessons in tolerance of sexual diversity are now routine parts of health education and antibully training. But in the suburbs the battle rages on, perhaps nowhere more bitterly than here in the Anoka-Hennepin School District, just north of Minneapolis. With 38,000 students, it is Minnesota's largest school system.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/13/us/13bully.html>

---

## **Bullying**

Long after students leave school, the effect of bullying or even casual negative references to being gay can affect their mental and physical health.

<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu/>

---

## **Burnaby's policy on homophobic bullying meets opposition from parents**

Tired of the taunts and afraid of the ever-increasing shoves, Kaitlin Burnett considered giving up on school after her Burnaby classmates learned she was a lesbian. Ms. Burnett went on to receive her diploma, but only after switching schools because of the incessant bullying. Now 25 and preparing for graduate studies, the community activist said the high school experience appears to be somewhat easier for today's youth. So it was all the more surprising when a policy by the Burnaby School District to address homophobic bullying by giving teachers material that would allow them to instruct students on its impact met opposition from a parents group that said it smacks of indoctrination. "All it will do is teach tolerance and acceptance and help students to understand that LGBTQ people are part of their community and are not to be feared," Ms. Burnett said of the proposal, known as Policy 5.45. "You can't teach someone to be gay any more than you can teach someone to be straight." The policy, which is still in the draft stage, was developed over a two-year period. The goal as stated in the document is "to ensure that all members of the school community learn to work together in an atmosphere of respect and safety, free from homophobia." But a group called Parents' Voice has spoken strongly against the policy and launched numerous protests, the latest of which was scheduled for Tuesday evening. In a news release, Parents' Voice blasted the school board for what it called a "hidden political agenda." Parents' Voice has objected to some of the wording in the draft policy. It defines "heterosexism" as "the mistaken assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior and the norm by which all other sexual orientation and gender identities are measured." The document goes on to say "heterosexism perpetuates negative stereotypes and is dangerous to individuals and communities." Larry Hayes, in his third term as a trustee and the board's chair, said some of the wording still has to be revised but that's what draft versions are for. Mr. Hayes laughed off any suggestion that a hidden political agenda is at work. "We're looking for a change of attitude in the district, we're not changing curriculum. We may make more LGBTQ-friendly material available to teachers in an age-appropriate way, but it's still all curriculum that's approved by the Ministry of Education. We're not doing anything dramatic as far as what's going to happen in the classroom." Twelve school districts in B.C. have already established similar LGBTQ policies.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/british-columbia/burnabys-policy-on-homophobic-bullying-meets-opposition-from-parents/article2033726/?cmpid=nl-news1>

---

## **Support May Help Curb Suicide Among Gay Youths**

Gay youths are much less likely to attempt suicide when they live in communities where they feel they have some support, either through gay/lesbian groups at school or simply because more same-sex couples live in the area, new research has found. According to a report published online April 18 in *Pediatrics*, lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) youths who live in a nonsupportive social environment are five times more likely than their "straight" peers to try to kill themselves. "While there are a small number of prior studies that have demonstrated that school climate makes a difference for LGB students, this study is important because it extends our understanding to the broader surroundings of the community in which students and schools are situated," said Stephen T. Russell, a professor and director of the Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth and Families at the University of Arizona in Tucson. "The study shows that the population density of same-sex couples ... is a strong and stable measure of the community/school climate and that this has a direct influence on the well-being of LGB youth," added Russell, who was not involved in the study. According to the study's author, Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation scholar at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health in New York City, "previous studies showed that gay youth are more likely to attempt suicide." Real-life experience has backed up that statement. In a one-month period last fall, the media reported on four incidents in which LGB youth committed suicide after being bullied because of their sexual orientation. In addition, a survey conducted by the New York-based Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network found that nearly nine of every 10 gay, lesbian bisexual or transgendered middle and high school students said they were physically or verbally bullied in 2009. Hatzenbuehler's study was "one of the first to examine the role of environment" in bullying and suicides, instead of focusing on such individual risk factors as depression, which previous studies had done, he said. The study also did not rely on the teens' own perceptions of their social environment but instead developed a set of five more objective factors to characterize the environment. They were:

1. The proportion of same-sex couples living in the county
2. The proportion of registered Democrats living in the county. Hatzenbuehler said that earlier studies had indicated that political ideology was associated with attitudes toward sexuality.
3. Whether the school had a gay-straight alliance
4. Whether the student handbook specified anti-bullying policies
5. Whether the handbook included anti-discrimination policies based on sexual orientation

Hatzenbuehler surveyed almost 32,000 11th-grade students in 34 counties in Oregon, 4.4 percent of whom were LGB. He found that almost 22 percent of LGB youth had attempted suicide in the past year, compared with only 4.2 percent in the heterosexual population. But living in a more supportive environment reduced that risk by 20 percent. A supportive environment was also linked with a 9 percent lower risk for attempted suicide among heterosexual teens. "This is a road map for how we can begin to reduce suicide attempts among LGB youth," Hatzenbuehler said. "There are three relatively straightforward things we can do. If we allow gay/lesbian alliances in schools and include anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies in student handbooks, we can really reduce suicide attempts." "Attempting suicide is not something inherent to being gay," he said.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=651994>

---

