

WELCOME Dr Daniel Marshall

Promoting positive
relationships for safer
school communities



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Celebrating Students' Sexual and Gender Diversity.

*Dr Daniel Marshall, Policy and Research Unit
Student Wellbeing Branch.*

The Department's Anti-Bullying Strategy



safe schools are
effective schools

Students' Sexual and Gender Diversity

- Policy: All students, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex students, have a right to full and safe participation in a schooling experience which addresses their diverse needs.
- Reality: Homophobic and gender-based bullying is systemic, diffuse and entrenched.



Bridging reality and policy?

Overview of presentation:

- Sexual and gender diversity at your school
- Definitions
- What does the research tell us?
- What can we do to celebrate diversity?
- What resources can we use?



Sexual and gender diversity at your school

Sexuality and Gender Stereotype Brainstorm

- What words or phrases do people at your school use to talk about gay, lesbian and bisexual people?

- What about heterosexual people?



The A-Z of LGBTIQ

Gender-based bullying

- Bullying based on gender stereotypes.

Heterosexism

- The belief and assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual and that other types of sexuality are unhealthy, unnatural and a threat to society.

Homophobia

- Negative, differential treatment directed at a person because of his or her real or perceived homosexual identity, behaviours or characteristics, or because of his or her relationship to someone who is perceived to be homosexual.
- This treatment can range from revulsion to “tolerance.” Homophobic actions can include ignorance, prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and violence. Homophobia can be active and passive.



The A-Z of LGBTIQ

Intersex

- A biological condition where a person is born with physical characteristics and/or sex chromosomes that are not exclusively male or female. An earlier term for intersex was 'hermaphrodite'.

LGBTIQ (etc)

- There are many umbrella acronyms like this. The letters stand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer.

Queer

- An umbrella term that includes a range of non-heterosexual gender and sexual identities.



The A-Z of LGBTIQ

Same Sex Attracted/ Same Sex Attracted Young people (SSAY)

- Those who are attracted to people of their own sex. The term has been used in the context of young people whose sense of sexual identity is not fixed, but who experience sexual feelings toward people of their own sex.

Transgender or Transsexual or Trans

- People who are born anatomically male or female but have a profound identification with the opposite gender.
- Some trans people feel bi-gendered or neither-gendered.

Adapted from Celebrating Diversity CD-ROM



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

What the research tells us

Early National Data on Same-Sex Attracted Youth

Study	No of Young People	% SSAY
Hillier, Warr & Haste (1996)	1200 rural students (Tas, Vic and Qld)	11
Lindsay, Smith & Rosenthal (1997)	3500 senior students (all States and Territories)	8–9
Hillier, Matthews & Dempsey (1997)	850 homeless youth (Vic and Qld)	14

Writing Themselves In (1998)

Characteristics of the respondents

- 750 same-sex attracted young people
- aged 14–21 years (average 18 years)
- from every State and Territory of Australia
- 25% from non-metropolitan areas
- 87% were born in Australia, 65% of parents who had been born in Australia

Hillier, L, Dempsey, D, Harrison, L, Beal, L, Matthews, L & Rosenthal DA 1998, *Writing Themselves In*.

Writing Themselves In

Sexual experience

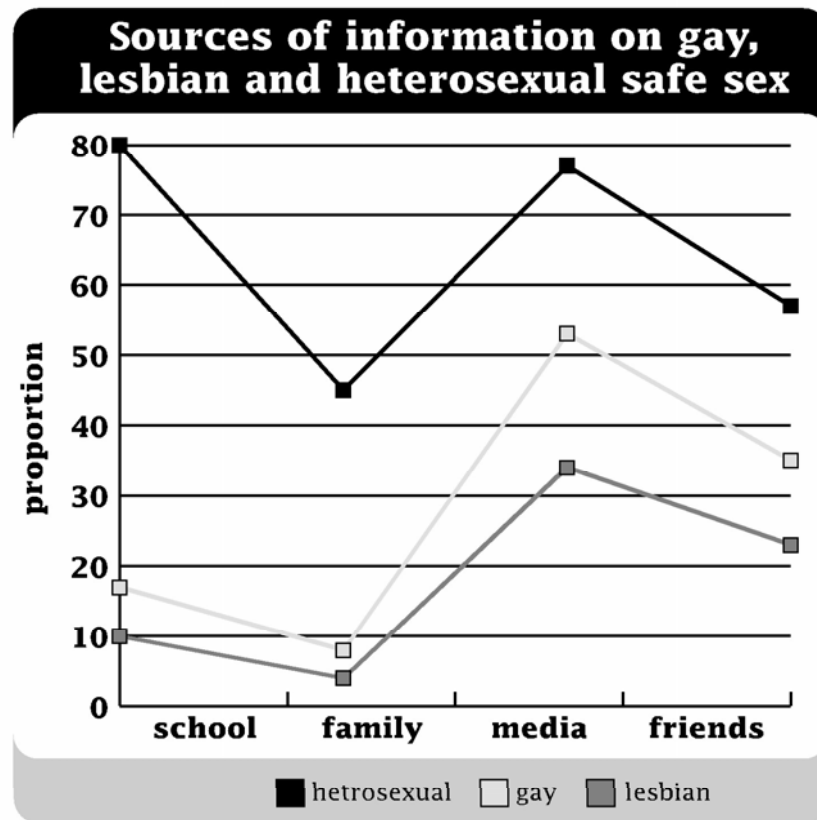
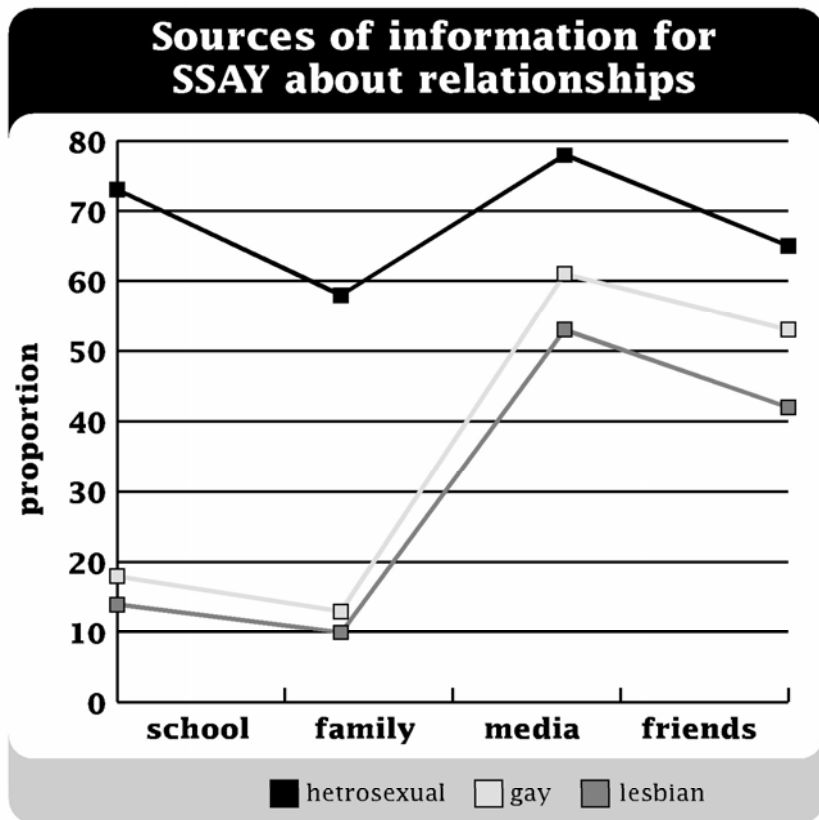
- 64% of SSAY are sexually active
- These young people are often having sex with both sexes.
- Protection levels are lower than those for other sex attracted youth

SSAY exposed to extreme levels of verbal/physical abuse

- 69% of the abuse happened at school

Hillier, L, Dempsey, D, Harrison, L, Beal, L, Matthews, L & Rosenthal DA 1998, *Writing Themselves In*.

Writing Themselves In - Sources of Information



Hillier, L, Dempsey, D, Harrison, L, Beale, L, Matthews, L & Rosenthal DA 1998, *Writing Themselves In*.

MODULE 1 ACTIVITY 2 NATIONAL DATA ON SAME-SEX ATTRACTED YOUNG PEOPLE

Hillier, L, Dempsey, D, Harrison, L, Beal, L, Matthews, L & Rosenthal DA 1998, *Writing Themselves In*.

Writing Themselves In

Drug Use

- 7% of young men and 14% of young women (SSAY) have injected drugs; 15% once a week or more
- 33% had shared injecting equipment: 15% weekly
- 5% drank alcohol daily: 46% weekly
- 27% had used party drugs; 7% weekly
- 8% had smoked dope daily; 21% weekly
- 7% had used heroin

Hillier, L, Dempsey, D, Harrison, L, Beal, L, Matthews, L & Rosenthal DA 1998, *Writing Themselves In*.

Writing Themselves In Again - 6 Years On

The 2nd national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same-sex attracted young Australians

- Follow up to 'Writing Themselves In'
- 1749 respondents aged between 14 - 21

Writing Themselves In Again

Homophobia and discrimination

- 38% had experienced unfair treatment on the basis of their sexuality
- 44% reported verbal abuse and 16% reported physical assault - figures largely unchanged from 1998
- As in 1998, school remains the most dangerous place for SSA young people with 74% of abuse happening there

Writing Themselves In Again

Homophobia and discrimination

- Young people who had been abused fared worse on every indicator of health and wellbeing than those who had not.
- Felt less safe at school, home, social occasions and sporting events
- More likely to self harm, report an STI and use legal and illegal drugs (e.g. double no. SSAY have injected drugs).

Writing Themselves In Again

Multiple layers of identity

SSAY Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

- Less likely to have disclosed to parents and feel safe at home than anglo peers

Religion

- Issue of young people being forced to choose between their sexuality and religion. In many cases the rejection of their sexuality and the embracing of their religion resulting in young people hating and harming themselves.

Rural areas

- Less safe at social occasions than their urban peers
- More difficulty accessing information through gay media

Same-Sex Attracted Youth Suicide

Why are we still talking about it?

Suicide Prevention Australia, National conference, Sydney, April 2001,
Study by Jonathan Nicholas and John Howard

- 528 young adults –up to 30yrs (m=21yrs)
- Heterosexual – 94 males, 192 females
- SSA – 123 males, 119 females
- Includes people from non-urban areas

Same-Sex Attracted Youth Suicide

Why are we still talking about it?

Suicide Attempts

- Gay male 20.8%
- Heterosexual male 5.4%
- Bisexual/undecided male 29.4%
- Lesbian female 28%
- Heterosexual female 8.3%
- Bisexual/undecided female 34.9%

Same-Sex Attracted Youth Suicide

Why are we still talking about it?

Lesbians' first suicide attempts on average

- 1.9 years **after** becoming sexually interested in women,
- 0.2 years **after** self-identifying as SSA, and
- 0.8 years **before** another person found out they were lesbian,
- 2 years **before** they had their first same–gender sexual experience

Same-Sex Attracted Youth Suicide

Why are we still talking about it?

Gay males' first suicide attempts on average

- 5.7 years **after** becoming sexually interested in men,
- 3.5 years **after** self-identifying as gay, and
- 0.4 years **before** another person found out they were gay,
- 0.3 years **before** they had their first same-gender sexual experience

Adapted from Celebrating Diversity CD-ROM

The Way Forward

- Preventable bullying is predisposing young people to unacceptable health risks including drug use, self harm and suicide.
- Schools are the most dangerous places for same sex attracted young people and therefore have an obligation to act.
- As educational centres, schools are well-placed to address these issues because:
 - They can provide information where there is fear and myth;
 - They can provide a comprehensive preparatory education for young people by incorporating and reflecting the diversity of the community; and
 - They are the only “universal platform” for young people in terms of youth and health services.

Celebrating Students' Gender and Sexual Diversity

- The celebration of sexual and gender diversity requires the incorporation of preventative approaches to homophobic and gender-based bullying at the whole-school level in line with the Department's *Safe Schools* strategy.



Safe schools are
effective schools

Celebrating Students' Gender and Sexual Diversity

Professional Leadership

- All school staff should exhibit inclusive behaviours.
- Principals, Assistant Principals and School Leadership teams need to:
 - be pro-active and public in identifying and responding to the issue;
 - implement long-term, whole-school efforts;
 - release staff for PD and training; and
 - Ensure that the school and all school staff are meeting their obligations under the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995* which makes it unlawful to discriminate in education on the grounds of:
 - A student's actual or assumed sexual orientation;
 - A student's gender identity; and
 - The sexual orientation or gender identity of a student's parents, friends or family members.



Celebrating Students' Gender and Sexual Diversity

Shared Vision and Goals / High expectations of all learners

- All school policies and planning and implementation work conducted as part of the *School Accountability and Improvement Framework* should be inclusive of the needs of same sex attracted students.
- These policies will include: code of conduct, anti-bullying policy, sexual harassment policy and equal opportunity policy.
- Classrooms should develop shared agreements about positive ways of talking about gender and sexuality as part of a broader process of developing shared classroom expectations.



Celebrating Students' Gender and Sexual Diversity

Focus on teaching and learning / Purposeful teaching

- Inclusive curriculum and pedagogical practice.
- The Victorian Essential Learning Standards provides a platform for inclusive education, especially in these domains:
 - English;
 - The Humanities;
 - The Arts;
 - Civics and Citizenship; and
 - Health and Physical Education.
- Topics for study include: different families, human rights, political struggles of minority groups and texts inclusive of same-sex attracted characters.



Celebrating Students' Gender and Sexual Diversity

Stimulating and secure learning environment

- Inclusive curriculum = student-centred schooling = stimulation
- Inclusive teachers and leadership staff + inclusive policies that are implemented consistently and effectively + access to inclusive student wellbeing services = student security.



Celebrating Students' Gender and Sexual Diversity

Learning Communities

- Partner with parents/carers
 - Acknowledge diversity of families
 - Be upfront about Departmental requirements, legal obligations and public health risks of inaction
 - Incorporate or “mainstream” inclusive approaches in the curriculum etc.
 - When schools take a planned, long-term approach this maximises the positive involvement of parents/carers.
- Partner with gay and lesbian groups in the development and delivery of curriculum (e.g. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays or the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives).



Celebrating Students' Gender and Sexual Diversity *Accountability*

- Incorporate a projected figure of 10% of your school population as same sex attracted in your School Community Profile statement.
- Include measures to promote sexual and gender diversity in the school's strategic plan and annual implementation plan (in the “student engagement and wellbeing” area).
- Conduct confidential surveys, audits and reviews to ensure the school is complying with its obligations under Equal opportunity legislation.
- Report on the school's efforts in the annual report to the school community.



Intervening in Incidents of Homophobic and Gender-Based Bullying, or “That’s So Gay”

- Homophobic and gender-based bullying should be dealt with in the same way as any bullying situation, including racist bullying.
- It is important, however, to acknowledge that the behaviour is homophobic or gender-based, and respond to it accordingly.
- The “NAC” Approach

N: name the problem – for example: “Homophobic insults have no place in this classroom.”

A: refer to the agreement – for example: “our ground rules/policies say no put downs.”

C: give consequences – support positive behaviours and always intervene in inappropriate ones – for example: “If you use a put-down again you will have to do X.”

Adapted from Felicity Martin, SSA Project Worker, Nillumbik Community Health Centre, 2003.



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

Responding to comments aimed at people

- 1. “I’m not sitting next to her –she’s so gay.”
- “A person’s sexual orientation is none of your business.”
- “Go away and do some research for me about the word ‘gay.’”
- “Calling her gay as if it were a bad thing is bullying - go and read the policy on bullying, harassment and homophobia.”
- 2. “He’s a poofta.” (A student explaining why they were aggressive towards another student.)
- “It doesn’t matter if he is gay or not. There is nothing wrong with being gay. But it is wrong to hit someone.”
- “What has their sexuality got to do with the situation?”
- “3. “We hate Ms Sing – she’s such a big lezzo.”
- “What do you mean by that?”

Responding to comments aimed at objects

- 1. “I’m not sitting at that desk - it’s gay.”
- “What do you mean it’s gay?”
- “How can you tell if it’s happy or sad by looking at it – have you been talking to it?”
- “I didn’t know a desk could have a sexual orientation”.
- “Is it a boy desk that likes other boy desks or a girl desk that likes girl desks?”
- “We accept both gay and heterosexual desks in this classroom”
- 2. “This movie is so gay.”
- “Does it have a gay or lesbian theme?”
- “What’s a better word to explain what you mean?”
- “So are you saying you like it or you don’t like it?”

12 actions that would make a difference

1. Assume at least 10% of the young people you encounter are same-sex attracted.
2. Be a role-model for inclusiveness and diversity to the whole-school community.
3. Intervene in homophobic and gender-based abuse consistently, in the same way you'd respond to racism.
4. Display posters and brochures in obvious places around the school.
5. Buy books and DVDs for the school library.
6. Make your classroom/s a "Sexism, Racism and Homophobia-Free Zone."
7. Audit curriculum for inclusive content (e.g. diverse families, texts with gay and lesbian characters etc).
8. Organise a whole school review of your anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies – use this to start a whole-school conversation.
9. Ensure that school computers allow internet access to sites discussing issues relating to sexuality and gender.
10. Be openly supportive towards, and a resource for, young people in your school.
11. Advertise the local same sex attracted youth social & support group.
12. Display rainbow stickers around the school.

Adapted from Felicity Martin, SSA Project Worker, Nillumbik Community Health Centre, 2003

Your next steps

Scale of Attitudes

- Repulsion
- Pity
- Tolerance
- Acceptance
- Support
- Admiration
- Appreciation
- Nurturance

From the perspective of a young person who does not fit into conventional expectations regarding sexuality and gender, where is your school now?

Where would you like it to be?

How will you get there?

Adapted from *Not Round Here: Affirming Diversity, Challenging Homophobia Rural Service Providers Training Manual* by Kenton Penley Miller & Mahamati. This training package was auspiced by Outlink, a project of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2000, pp 71-73.

Resources for the work

Please see distributed resources list.

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Every student has the right to feel safe at school.

Bullying is when someone deliberately upsets or hurts another person on more than one occasion.

In safe and effective schools, school leaders and teachers should:

- Implement the Student Code of Conduct to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all students
- Proactively manage individual incidents of bullying
- Be responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students
- Involve parents and the school community in the development of safety and wellbeing strategies

To prevent and manage bullying, school leaders and teachers can:

- Provide effective transition programs
- Develop strategies to promote positive peer relationships across all year levels
- Organise structured lunchtime activities
- Encourage genuine student leadership
- Provide a wide range of extracurricular activities
- Facilitate community service opportunities
- Have high expectations of the behaviour of all students
- Model positive values and behaviours

For more information go to:
www.schweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/index.htm

Knowledge & Skills
Building a Team
Victorian Curriculum & Assessment

Posters for Schools

Teachers' Posters

Are you being bullied?

Have you seen someone being bullied?

Website addresses

Safe Schools are Effective Schools

www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/index.htm



Effective Schools model

www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/blueprint/es/default.asp

