GLSEN®

Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States

A Survey of Students and Teachers

A Report from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network

glsen.org

Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States

A Survey of Teachers and Students

Conducted on behalf of GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network)

by Harris Interactive, Inc.

About GLSEN

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For information on GLSEN's research, educational resources, public policy advocacy, student organizing programs and educator training initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.

National Headquarters
90 Broad Street, Second Floor
New York, NY 10004
Ph: 212-727-0135 Fax: 212-727-0254

DC Policy Office
1012 14th Street, NW, Suite 1105
Washington, DC 20005
Ph: 202-347-7780 Fax: 202-347-7781

About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive is one of the world's leading custom market research firms, leveraging research, technology, and business acumen to transform relevant insight into actionable foresight. Known widely for the Harris Poll and for pioneering innovative research methodologies, Harris offers expertise in a wide range of industries including healthcare, technology, public affairs, energy, telecommunications, financial services, insurance, media, retail, restaurant, and consumer package goods. Serving clients in over 215 countries and territories through our North American and European offices and a network of independent market research firms, Harris specializes in delivering research solutions that help us – and our clients – stay ahead of what's next. For more information, please visit www.harrisinteractive.com.

Harris Interactive, Inc.
161 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10013

978-1-934092-09-5

GLSEN and Harris Interactive (2012). *Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States, A Survey of Students and Teachers*. New York: GLSEN.

Cover photography: Kate Ter Haar under Creative Commons license

Inside photography: pp. 21, 35, 83 and 117 – Conrad Ventur; p. 1 – Hunter McIntosh, first place primary winner of the 2007 No Name-Calling Week Creative Expression Contest, p. 55 – Bart Everson under Creative Commons license, p. 103 – Students from Heather Fountain's kindergarten class, Jackson Road Elementary School

Table of Contents

Preface xii

Executive Summary xiv

Survey Method xvi

Key Findings xvi

Conclusion xxi

About the Research xxii

Survey Methods xxii

A Note on Reading the Tables and Figures xxii

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations Used in Report xxiii

Project Responsibility and Acknowledgements xxiv

Public Release of Survey Findings xxiv

Chapter 1: Biased Language at School 1

Overview 2

Section 1. Students' Reports on Biased Language at School 2

Biased Remarks 3

Remarks Related to Not Conforming to Traditional Gender Norms 7

Section 2. Teachers' Reports on Biased Language at School 11

Addressing Student Use of Biased Language 15

Summary 19

Chapter 2: Incidents of Bullying and Name-Calling at School 21

Overview 22

Section 1. Incidents of Bullying and Name-Calling Witnessed by Students 23

Reasons Other Students Are Bullied or Called Names at School 23

Section 2. Incidents of Bullying and Name-Calling Witnessed by Teachers 28

Reasons Students Are Bullied or Called Names at School 30

Summary 33

Chapter 3: Students' Feelings of Safety and Their Personal Experiences with Bullying and Name-Calling at School 35

Overview 36

Feelings of Safety at School 37

Experiences of Bullying and Name-Calling at School 40

Relational Bullying and Cyberbullying 40
Reasons Students Experience Bullying and Name-Calling at School 44
Bullying and Name-Calling of Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 45
Where Do Bullying and Name-Calling Occur at School? 47
Reporting Personal Incidents of Bullying or Name-Calling to School Personnel 48
Impact of Bullying and Name-Calling 51
Lessons about Bullying, Name-Calling and Respect at School 53
Summary 53
Chapter 4: Teachers' Attitudes and Efforts about Gender and Sexual Orientation 55
Overview 56
Section 1: Teachers' Attitudes, Efforts and Responses to Students Who Are or May Be LGBT 57
Teachers' Perspectives on the Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who Are or May Be LGBT 57
Teachers' Comfort Addressing LGBT Issues 59
Teachers' Comfort Intervening in Homophobic Name-Calling and Bullying 61
Section 2: Teachers' Attitudes, Efforts and Responses Regarding Gender Non-Conforming Students 63
Teachers' Attitudes Regarding Gender Non-Conforming Students 63
Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts Addressing Gender-Related Issues 63
Teachers' Feelings of Obligation and Helpfulness of Efforts to Ensure a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 68
Teachers' Efforts for Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 69
Teachers' Responses to Bullying, Name-Calling, or Harassment towards Gender Non-Conforming Students 73
Lessons about Gender Equality at School 79
Summary 80
Chapter 5: Teachers' Attitudes, Efforts and Responses to Students from Families with LGBT Parents 83
Overview 84
Teachers' Perspectives on the Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who Have LGBT Parents 85
Teachers' Perspectives on the Comfort Level of LGBT Parents of Elementary School Students 85

Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts Addressing Families with LGBT Parents 87
Teachers' Feelings of Obligation to Ensure a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment for Families with LGBT Parents 87
Teachers' Responses to Bullying, Name-Calling or Harassment towards Students from Families with LGBT Parents 95
Teaching and Learning about Different Family Types at School 96
Chapter 6: School-Wide Anti-Bullying and Harassment Efforts 103
Overview 104
Anti-Bullying and Harassment Measures at School 105
Components of School Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies 107
Impact of Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies on Bullying, Name-Calling, Biased Comments and Comfort Level at School 109
Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies and Teachers' Attitudes and Efforts 113
Summary 115
Chapter 7: Teacher Professional Development 117
Overview 118
Teachers' Professional Development Background 119
Areas for Further Professional Development 122
Impact of Teachers' Professional Development 123
Summary 125

List of Tables and Figures

Figure 1.1 Hearing Biased Remarks from Other Students at School 3

Table 1.1 Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks from Other Students at School by School Type and School Location 5

Figure 1.2 Students Who Reported Ever Hearing Biased Remarks from Teachers and Other Adults at School 6

Table 1.2 Differences by Grade Level of Students Who Reported Ever Hearing Biased Remarks from Teachers and Other Adults at School 6

Figure 1.3 Frequency of Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Other Students at School 8

Table 1.3 Frequency of Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Other Students at School by School Type and School Location 9

Figure 1.4 Students Who Reported Ever Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Teachers and Other Adults 9

Table 1.4 Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Teachers and Other Adults at School and Differences by Grade Level and School Location ... 10

Table 1.5 Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Other Students at School by Hearing Teacher Encourage Traditional Gender Norms 10

Figure 1.5 Frequency of Biased Remarks Teachers Hear Students Make at School 12

Table 1.6 Frequency of Biased Remarks Teachers Hear Students Make at School by Grade Level Taught and School Location 13

Table 1.7 Frequency of Teachers Hearing Biased Remarks by Years of Teaching Experience……..... 14

Figure 1.6 Number of Students Teachers Hear Making Biased Remarks 15

Figure 1.7 Frequency With Which Teachers Address Biased Remarks Made by Students . 16

Table 1.8 Frequency With Which Teachers Address Biased Remarks Made by Students by School Location 17

Table 1.9 Frequency at Which Teachers Address Biased Remarks Made by Students by Years of Teaching Experience 18

Figure 1.8 Frequency of Teachers Hearing Biased Remarks from Other Teachers or School Staff 19

Figure 2.1 Frequency of Student Reports of Bullying and Name-Calling at School 24

Table 2.1 Frequency of Student Reports of Bullying and Name-Calling at School by School Type and School Location 24

Figure 2.2 Reasons Other Students are Bullied or Called Names at School 25

Table 2.2 Reasons Other Students are Bullied or Called Names at School by Grade Level, School Type and School Location 26
Figure 2.3 Family-Related Reasons Other Students are Bullied or Called Names at School 27
Table 2.3 Family-Related Reasons Other Students are Bullied or Called Names at School by Grade Level, School Type and School Location 27
Figure 2.4 Teachers' Perceptions on Seriousness of Bullying or Name-Calling at School 28
Table 2.4 Teachers' Perceptions on Seriousness of Bullying or Name-Calling at School by School Location and School Type 29
Table 2.5 Teachers' Perceptions on Seriousness of Bullying or Name-Calling at School by Grade Level Taught 29
Table 2.6 Teachers' Perceptions on Seriousness of Bullying or Name-Calling at School by Years of Experience 30
Figure 2.5 Teachers' Perception on Reasons Students Are Bullied or Called Names At School 31
Figure 2.6 Teachers' Perception on Reasons Students Are Most Often Bullied or Called Names at School 32
Figure 3.1 Students' Feelings of Safety at School 37
Table 3.1 Students' Feeling of Safety at School by Gender and Race/Ethnicity 38
Table 3.2 Students' Feeling of Safety at School by School Type and School Location 38
Figure 3.2 Reasons Students Feel Unsafe or Afraid at School 39
Figure 3.3 Frequency of Personally Being Bullied and Called Names at School 41
Table 3.3 Frequency of Personally Being Bullied and Called Names at School by Race/Ethnicity, School Location and School Type 41
Figure 3.4 Students' Personal Experiences With Other Forms of Bullying 42
Figure 3.5 Ways Students Were Left Out or Ignored by Other Students 43
Table 3.4 Students' Personal Experiences with Other Forms of Bullying by Feelings of Safety at School 43
Figure 3.6 Reasons Students Experience Bullying or Name-Calling at School 44
Table 3.5 Profile of Students Who Do and Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 46
Figure 3.7 Locations Where Bullying or Name-Calling Occurs at School 47
Figure 3.8 Frequency and Helpfulness of Telling a Teacher about Being Called Names, Made Fun of or Bullied at School 49
Table 3.6 Relationship between Frequency and Helpfulness of Telling a Teacher about Being Called Names, Made Fun of or Bullied at School 49

Figure 3.9 Teachers' Reactions to Student Reports of Being Called Names, Made Fun of or Bullied 50
Table 3.7 Teachers' Reactions to Student Reports of Being Called Names, Made Fun of or Bullied by Frequency of Experiencing Bullying and Grade Level 50
Table 3.8 Students' Relationships, School Performance and Well-Being by Frequency of Being Bullied 52
Figure 4.1 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Students Who Might Be or Grow Up To Be LGBT 58
Table 4.1 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Students Who Might Be or Grow Up To Be LGBT By Years of Teaching Experience 58
Table 4.2 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Students Who Might Be or Grow Up To Be LGBT by School Location 59
Figure 4.2 Teachers' Level of Comfort in Responding to Student Questions about LGBT People 60
Table 4.3 Teachers' Level of Comfort in Responding to Student Questions about LGBT People by School Type and Knowing an LGBT Parent or Student 60
Figure 4.3 Teachers' Level of Comfort in Addressing Bullying, Name-Calling and Harassment of Students Perceived to be LGB 62
Table 4.4 Teachers' Level of Comfort in Addressing Bullying, Name-Calling and Harassment of Students Perceived to be LGB by Years of Experience and Knowing an LGBT Parent or Student 62
Figure 4.4 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 64
Table 4.5 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by Years of Experience 65
Table 4.6 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by School Location 65
Figure 4.5 Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Issues of Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes and Non-Traditional Gender Expression 66
Table 4.7 Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Issues of Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes and Non-Traditional Gender Expression by Years of Experience 67
Table 4.8 Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Issues of Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes and Non-Traditional Gender Expression by School Location 67
Figure 4.6 Teachers' Feelings of Obligation towards Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 68

Figure 4.7 Teachers' Perceptions on Helpfulness of Efforts in Creating Safer and More Supportive Schools for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 69
Table 4.9 Teachers Who Have Personally Engaged in Efforts to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Students Who May not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by Grade Level Taught and School Location 71
Figure 4.8 Efforts Teachers Have Made to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 71
Table 4.10 Efforts Teachers Have Made to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by School Location 72
Figure 4.9 Reasons Why Teachers Have Not Made Efforts to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 73
Figure 4.10 Teachers' Level of Comfort in Addressing Bullying, Name-Calling or Harassment of Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Roles 74
Table 4.11 Teachers' Level of Comfort in Addressing Bullying, Name-Calling or Harassment of Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Roles by Grade Level Taught and Years of Experience 75
Figure 4.11 Ways That Teachers Would Address Incidents Where Students are Bullied or Called Names for Not Conforming to Traditional Gender Norms 76
Table 4.12 Ways That Teachers Would Address Incidents Where Students are Bullied or Called Names for Not Conforming to Traditional Gender Norms by Grade Level 77
Figure 4.12 How Teachers Would Approach Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms 78
Table 4.13 How Teachers Would Approach Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by Years of Experience 78
Table 4.14 How Teachers Would Approach Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by School Type and School Location 79
Figure 4.13 Students' Reports of Being Taught at School That Girls and Boys Can Do the Same Things 80
Figure 5.1 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students with LGBT Parents 85
Table 5.1 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students with LGBT Parents by Years of Teaching Experience and School Location 86
Figure 5.2 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of LGBT Parents Participating in School Activities 86
Table 5.2 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of LGB Parents Participating in School Activities by Years of Teaching Experience 87

Table 5.3 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of LGB Parents Participating in School Activities by School Location 88
Table 5.4 Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Transgender Parents Participating in School Activities by Years of Teaching Experience 89
Figure 5.3 Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Families with LGBT Parents 89
Table 5.5 Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Families with LGBT Parents by Years of Teaching Experience and School Type 90
Table 5.6 Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Families with LGBT Parents by School Location 91
Figure 5.4 Teachers' Sense of Obligation to Ensure a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment for Students with LGBT Parents/Family Members 91
Figure 5.5 Teachers' Perceptions on the Helpfulness of Efforts to Create Safer and More Supportive Schools for Families with LGBT Parents 92
Table 5.7 Teachers Who Have Made Efforts to Create Safe and Supportive Environments for LGBT Families by Knowing an LGBT Student or Parent and School Location 93
Table 5.8 Efforts Teachers Have Made to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Families with LGBT Parents 94
Figure 5.6 Reasons Why Teachers Have Not Engaged in Efforts to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Families with LGBT Parents 94
Table 5.9 Reasons Why Teachers Have Not Engaged In Efforts to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Families with LGBT Parents by School Location 95
Figure 5.7 Ways Teachers Would Address Incidents in Which Students are Bullied or Called Names for Having LGBT Parents or Other Family Members 97
Table 5.10 Ways Teachers Would Address Incidents in Which Students are Bullied or Called Names for Having LGBT Parents or Other Family Members by Grade Level Taught and Years of Experience 98
Figure 5.8 Teachers' Reports of the Family Types Represented When the Topic of Families is Discussed in Classroom 99
Table 5.11 Teachers' Reports of the Family Types Represented When the Topic of Families is Discussed in Classroom by School Location and Grade Level Taught 100
Table 5.12 Teachers' Reports of the Family Types Represented When the Topic of Families is Discussed in Classroom by Knowing LGBT Student or Parent 100
Figure 5.9 Students' Reports of Types of Families They Are Taught About in School 101
Figure 5.10 Students' Reports of Knowing Anyone Who is Gay or Lesbian 101
Figure 6.1 Measures Implemented in School Regarding Bullying or Harassment 105

Table 6.1 Anti-Bullying or Harassment Measures Implemented at School by School Type, School Size and School Location 106
Figure 6.2 Components Included in School Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies 108
Figure 6.3 Characteristics Specifically Mentioned in School Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies 108
Table 6.2 Characteristics Specifically Mentioned in School Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies by School Location 109
Figure 6.4 Teachers' Reports on Type of School Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy 110
Table 6.3 Teachers' Reports of Biased Language in School by Type of Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy 111
Table 6.4 Teachers' Reports on Bullying in School by Type of Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy 112
Table 6.5 Teachers' Perspective of Supportiveness of School Community on Efforts Related to Gender and LGBT Families by Type of School Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy 113
Table 6.6 Teachers' Efforts Related to Gender and LGBT Families by Type of School Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy 114
Table 6.7 Teachers' Comfort With Addressing Name-Calling, Bullying or Harassment Related to Gender and Sexual Orientation by Type of School Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy 114
Figure 7.1 Professional Development in the Following Areas Received by Teachers 119
Table 7.1 Professional Development in Current Position by Type of Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy 120
Table 7.2 Professional Development in Current Position by Knowing an LGBT Student or Parent 121
Table 7.3 Professional Development during Pre-Service Education or Student Teaching by Years of Teaching Experience 121
Figure 7.2 Areas in Which Teachers Feel They Need Further Professional Development 122
Table 7.4 Comfort Level Addressing Bullying and Responding to Questions by Professional Development in Gender Issues and LGBT Families 124
Table 7.5 Family Types Represented When Topic of Families is Discussed in Classroom by Professional Development in LGBT Families 125

PREFACE

In 1972, the album Free to Be You and Me sang a vision of a future in which gender stereotypes, sexism and bias did not limit children's lives. As a child myself at the time, I was one of the many American elementary and middle-school schoolchildren who sang along with Marlo Thomas about "a land … where the children are free." The songs on the album and sketches in the Emmy-winning 1974 television special sought to illustrate for children the full range of possibilities in the lives that lay before them.

When my oldest child was born, I made sure we had these songs in heavy rotation, and enjoyed seeing her dance along to them. Hearing them again from my current vantage point as an advocate to end bias and bullying in K-12 schools, I was struck by their cheerful faith in imminent progress. Notably, there are only glancing references to the name-calling and bullying that give stereotypes such power.

Today's society has started to grapple with the terrible impact and consequences of bias-based bullying and harassment among children – a policing of norms different from the tacit understandings of girls' and boys' "proper place" that seemed to be the primary hurdles forty years ago. Three weeks after my oldest child started kindergarten, she threw a tantrum because I said "no" about something or other, and yelled, "Mama, you are a SISSY!" She clearly had little sense of the word's meaning, but had learned in her brief elementary school career that this was one of the worst epithets she could hurl in anger.

This report from GLSEN illustrates the extent to which children's elementary school experiences still draw artificial boundaries on their lives based on critical personal characteristics. Name-calling and bullying in elementary schools reinforce gender stereotypes and negative attitudes towards people based on their gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or family composition. Elementary school students and teachers report frequent use of disparaging remarks like "retard" and "that's so gay," and half of the teachers surveyed report bullying as a "serious problem" among their students. Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are at higher risk for bullying, and are less likely than their peers to feel safe at school. Our research also shows the connection between elementary-school experiences of bullying and a lower quality of life.

There is, however, some good news. Elementary school teachers are alert to the problems that students face. A large majority report that their schools are taking action in some way to try to address bullying and harassment. Students report that they have at least heard some of the right messages about mutual respect and the equality of boys and girls. However limited their impact may be, these steps represent a foundation for the additional action needed to turn aspirations into reality. Teachers surveyed for this report provide some initial indications of the additional resources, training and public education needed to continue forward progress.

For twenty years, GLSEN has developed resources and programs to respond to the specific needs of those working in K-12 school environments. In conjunction with the release of this new research report, we are pleased to be releasing a new resource, *Ready, Set, Respect! GLSEN's Elementary School Toolkit*, which provides a set of tools to help elementary school educators ensure that all students feel safe and respected and develop respectful attitudes and behaviors.

Forty years ago, Marlo Thomas sang bravely “I say it ain’t far to this land from where we are.” Clearly, we have a way to go yet. But awareness of the unacceptable price of prejudice is growing, as is the will to clear the path for a healthy and happy life for every child. In undertaking this study, GLSEN sought to understand the scope and impact of the problem in elementary schools nationwide as a basis for effective action. I hope you will join us in the on-going effort to ensure that every child is free to be their happiest, healthiest and best self.

Eliza S. Byard, Ph.D.
Executive Director
GLSEN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Students' school education consists of not only what they are explicitly taught in the classroom, but also what they implicitly learn through the language, attitudes and actions of other students and teachers. When these attitudes, remarks and actions are unsupportive or hostile, they create a school climate that can negatively impact students' feelings of safety and their interest in school and learning. Understanding school climate is an important first step in ensuring that all students feel safe and supported in their learning environments.

Previous research conducted by GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) has documented the prevalence of biased language, name-calling and bullying, as well as supportive resources, at the secondary school level[1]; yet, the precursors to secondary school climate are less understood. The current study examines school climate, student experiences and teacher practices at the elementary school level.

In this study, students in elementary school were asked about their school climates, including hearing biased remarks, witnessing and experiencing bullying as well as lessons they received on bullying, gender issues and family diversity. Elementary school teachers were asked similar questions about school climate, as well as questions about attitudes and efforts toward students with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parents and students who may not conform to traditional gender norms, their schools' anti-bullying or harassment efforts and their own professional development experiences.

The findings from this study provide an important context for the discussion of bullying and harassment across school grades and insight into the precursors of the types of biased language and bullying that characterize secondary schools, particularly the middle school years when bullying and harassment are most prevalent.[2]

[1] See: Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN.
Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Diaz, E. M., & Bartkiewicz, M. J. (2010). *The 2009 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

[2] Robers, S., J. Zhang, et al. (2010). *Indicators of school crime and safety: 2010 (NCES 2010-002/ NCJ 230812)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

SURVEY METHOD

Harris Interactive, Inc. conducted a survey of elementary school students and elementary school teachers on behalf of GLSEN. A national sample of 1,065 elementary school students in 3rd to 6th grade and 1,099 elementary school teachers of Kindergarten to 6th grade participated in the online survey. The sample was drawn primarily from the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) opt-in panel. The survey was conducted during November and December 2010.

KEY FINDINGS

Biased Remarks at School

Elementary school students and teachers report that biased remarks are regularly used by students at their schools. The most commonly heard negative remarks from students in elementary schools are insults toward intellectual ability and using the word 'gay' in a negative way.

- Half of students (51%) say that students at their school make comments such as "retard" or "spaz" sometimes, often or all the time. Slightly less than half of teachers (45%) report hearing students make comments like "spaz" or "retard" sometimes, often or very often.
- About half of students (45%) report that they hear comments like "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" from other kids at school sometimes, often or all the time. Half of teachers (49%) say they hear students in their school use the word "gay" in a negative way sometimes, often or very often.

Sexist language and remarks about gender stereotypes are commonly heard in elementary schools.

- Four in ten students (39%) say they hear other kids at their school say there are things that boys should not do or should not wear because they are boys at least sometimes. One third of students (33%) say they hear other kids at their school say there are things that girls should not do or should not wear because they are girls at least sometimes.
- Half of teachers (48%) report that they hear students make sexist remarks at least sometimes at their school.

Although they are less common, homophobic remarks and negative remarks about race/ethnicity and religion are heard by a sizable number of elementary school students and teachers.

- One quarter of students (26%) and teachers (26%) report hearing other students make comments like "fag" or "lesbo" at least sometimes.
- One in four students (26%) and 1 in 5 teachers (21%) hear students say bad or mean things about people because of their race or ethnic background at least sometimes.
- One in ten students (10%) and less than a tenth of teachers (7%) hear other students say bad or mean things about people because of their religion at least sometimes.

Bullying and School Safety

Most elementary school students report that students at their school are bullied or called names at least sometimes at their school, and half of elementary school teachers consider bullying and name-calling to be a serious problem at their school.

- Three quarters (75%) of elementary school students report that students at their school are called names, made fun of or bullied with at least some regularity (i.e., all the time, often or sometimes).
- Nearly one half of elementary school teachers believe that bullying, name-calling or harassment is a very or somewhat serious problem at their school (47%).

Although a majority of elementary school students feel very safe at school, bullying and name-calling are experienced by a sizable number of students. Students who are bullied regularly at school report lower grades and a lower quality of life than other students.

- Slightly more than half (59%) of elementary school students say they feel very safe at school.
- Over one third (36%) of elementary school students say they have been called names, made fun of or bullied at least sometimes this year at school.
- Students who are bullied at least sometimes are less likely than others to say that they get good grades (57% vs. 71%) and that they've been happy at school this year (34% vs. 69%).
- Students who are bullied at least sometimes are four times as likely as other students to say that they sometimes do not want to go to school because they feel afraid or unsafe there (33% vs. 8%).
- Students who are bullied at least sometimes are less likely than others to say that they get along with their parents (61% vs. 75%) and that they have a lot of friends (33% vs. 57%).
- Students who are bullied at least sometimes are three times as likely as others to say they often feel stressed (15% vs. 4%).

The most common reason for being bullied or called names, as well as feeling unsafe at school, is physical appearance.

- Two thirds of students attribute the bullying and name-calling that they witness at school to students' appearance or body size (67%). Students are next most likely to attribute the bullying and name-calling to not being good at sports (37%), how well they do at schoolwork (26%) and being a boy who acts or looks "too much like a girl" or a girl who acts or looks "too much like a boy" (23%).
- Seven in ten teachers say that students in their school are very often, often or sometimes bullied, called names or harassed because of the way they look or their body size (70%). Teachers are also likely to report that students in their school are frequently bullied, called names or harassed because of their ability at school (60%), they have a disability (39%), their family does not have a lot of money (37%), they are a boy who acts or looks "too much like a girl" (37%) or their race/ethnicity (35%).
- The number one reason among all students for personally feeling unsafe or afraid at school, cited by one in seven students (16%), is personal appearance.

Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are more likely than other students to experience incidents of bullying or name-calling school and to feel less safe at school.

- Almost one in ten of elementary school students (8%) report that they do not conform to traditional gender norms – i.e., boys who others sometimes think act or look like a girl, or they are girls who others sometimes think act or look like a boy.
- Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are more likely than others to say they are called names, made fun of or bullied at least sometimes at school (56% vs. 33%).
- Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are twice as likely as other students to say that other kids at school have spread mean rumors or lies about them (43% vs. 20%) and three times as likely to report that another kid at school has used the internet to call them names, make fun of them or post mean things about them (7% vs. 2%).
- Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are less likely than other students to feel very safe at school (42% vs. 61%) and are more likely than others to agree that they sometimes do not want to go to school because they feel unsafe or afraid there (35% vs. 15%).

Students in public schools and schools in urban areas are more likely to go to schools where students are bullied or called names, and to be bullied or called names and feel less safe at school themselves.

- Students in urban schools are more likely than those in suburban or rural schools to say students at their school are bullied all the time or often (34% vs. 21% vs. 24%).
- Students in urban schools are also less likely than those in suburban or rural schools to feel very safe at school (52% vs. 60% vs. 67%).
- Public school students are more likely than private or parochial school students say that bullying occurs all the time or often at their school (27% vs. 9%).
- Public school students are less likely than private or parochial school students to say they feel very safe at school (58% vs. 79%).

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

The vast majority of elementary school teachers believe that educators have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students who do not conform to traditional gender norms. Most teachers agree that other school personnel would be supportive of efforts that specifically address issues of non-traditional gender expression, although fewer believe that other members of their school communities would be supportive. However, less than half of teachers believe that students who do not conform to traditional gender norms would feel comfortable at the school where they teach.

- Over eight in ten teachers (83%) agree that teachers and other school personnel have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students who do not conform to traditional gender norms.
- The majority of teachers report that school-level staff would be supportive of efforts that specifically address issues of gender roles, gender stereotypes and non-traditional gender expression, including other teachers (61%), administrators in their school (59%) and other school staff (56%). Fewer teachers report that district-level administration (47%), the school board (46%), parents (46%) or the PTA or PTO (41%) would be supportive.

- Fewer than half of teachers (44%) say that a male student who acts or looks traditionally feminine would feel comfortable at the school where they teach.
- Nearly half of teachers (49%) say that a female student who acts or looks traditionally masculine would feel comfortable at the school where they teach.
- Less than half of teachers (41%) say that a student who might be or grow up to be transgender would feel comfortable at the school where they teach.

Most elementary school teachers believe that teachers have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parents or other family members. Most teachers agree that other school personnel would be supportive of efforts that specifically address families with LGBT parents. However, less than half of teachers believe that a student with an LGBT parent would feel comfortable at the school where they teach.

- Seven in ten teachers (70%) agree that teachers and other school personnel have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parents or other family members.
- The majority of teachers report that school-level staff would be supportive of efforts that specifically address families with LGBT parents, including other teachers (57%), administrators in their school (55%) and other school staff (51%). Fewer teachers report that district-level administration (44%), the school board (41%), parents (37%) or the PTA or PTO (36%) would be supportive.
- Half of teachers (49%) say that a student with a lesbian, gay or bisexual parent would feel comfortable at the school where they teach.
- Fewer than half of teachers (42%) say that a student with a transgender parent would feel comfortable at the school where they teach.

Elementary school teachers report high levels of comfort in addressing and taking action in situations of name-calling, bullying or harassment of students in a range of situations.

- Eight in ten teachers (81%) would feel comfortable addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because a student is or is believed to be gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- Eight in ten teachers (81%) would feel comfortable addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because they do not conform to traditional gender roles.
- A majority of teachers say that they very often or often address the situation when students make homophobic remarks (66%) or use the word “gay” in a negative way (68%).
- A majority of teachers say that they very often or often address the situation when students make comments about a male acting or looking “too feminine” (63%) or a female acting or looking “too masculine” (59%), or make sexist remarks (67%).
- A majority of teachers say that they very often or often address the situation when students make racist remarks (72%) or comments like “spaz” or “retard” (67%).

Nearly half of elementary school teachers are comfortable responding to questions from their students about lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people.

- Just less than half of teachers (48%) would feel comfortable responding to questions from their students about gay, lesbian or bisexual people. The other half say they would feel uncomfortable (26%) or neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (25%).
- Four in ten teachers (41%) would feel comfortable responding to questions from their students about transgender people. The majority say they would feel uncomfortable (34%) or neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (24%).

Most elementary school students say they have been taught about bullying, name-calling and respecting others and about gender equality in school. While most have learned that there are many different kinds of families, few have learned specifically about families with gay or lesbian parents.

- Nine in ten students (92%) say they have been taught that people should not bully others or call people names.
- Nine in ten students (91%) say they have been taught that they should respect people who are different from them.
- Nearly nine in ten students (88%) say they have been taught that girls and boys can do the same things.
- Seven in ten students (72%) say they have been taught that there are many different kinds of families.
- Two in ten students (18%) have learned about families with gay or lesbian parents (families that have two dads or two moms).

School-Wide Efforts and Professional Development

The vast majority of teachers report that their school has taken steps to address bullying and harassment, most commonly with anti-bullying and harassment policies. Additionally, most teachers have had professional development on these issues, although many believe they need more.

- Eight in ten teachers (81%) report that their school has implemented anti-bullying or anti-harassment policies, including 24% who say their school has a comprehensive policy that specifically mentions sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
- Six in ten teachers (61%) report that their school has classroom-based curricula or education programs for students regarding bullying or harassment.
- Six in ten teachers (61%) report that their school has implemented professional development (i.e., training) for school personnel related to bullying or harassment.
- A large majority of teachers have personally received professional development on bullying or harassment (85%). However, less than half (45%) feel they need further professional development in this area.

Elementary teachers seldom receive professional development on lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families or gender issues. A sizable minority of teachers believe they need further professional development on these issues.

- Although a large majority of teachers have received professional development on diversity or multicultural issues (85%), this education is unlikely to include content about LGBT families or gender issues. Just over a third of teachers (37%) have ever received professional development on gender issues. Only a quarter (23%) have received professional development on families with LGBT parents.
- One in three teachers believe they need further professional development on addressing homophobic name-calling, bullying and harassment (30%) and working with LGBT families (29%). Nearly a quarter believe they need further professional development on working with students who do not conform to traditional gender norms (23%) and on gender issues in general (23%).

CONCLUSION

Bullying and harassment are not uncommon occurrences at the elementary school level, especially for students who may be vulnerable because of personal characteristics such as physical appearance, ability and not conforming to traditional gender norms. Although school climates are not especially hostile at this age, more can be done to set a foundation for safe and supportive school environments that span across students' school years.

Elementary teachers often intervene in incidents of bullying and harassment, and most report being comfortable doing so. Yet, most are not comfortable responding to questions about LGBT people and few elementary students are taught about LGBT families. This tendency is not surprising given that most teachers report receiving professional development on addressing bullying, but not about subjects like gender issues or LGBT families. It is clear that an approach that fosters respect and values diversity even before bullying occurs, in addition to addressing bullying as it happens, would be welcomed by elementary school teachers who are eager to learn more about creating safe and supportive environments. Ensuring that all students and families are respected and valued in elementary school would not only provide a more positive learning environment for younger students, but would also lay the groundwork for safe and affirming middle and high schools.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Harris Interactive, Inc. conducted *Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States*, *A Survey of Students and Teachers*, on behalf of GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network). This survey is intended to extend findings from GLSEN's study of secondary student and teacher experiences, *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America*, conducted by Harris Interactive, in 2005. The 2005 survey documented and raised awareness of secondary students' and teachers' experiences with bullying and harassment. It provided the first ever nationally representative findings about school climate for secondary school students, and included questions about sexual orientation and gender expression.

Topics covered in *Playgrounds and Prejudice* include elementary school students' perspectives on biased remarks and bullying incidents that they witness and personally experience at school, and students' reports of the lessons they received on bullying, gender issues and family diversity. The study also includes elementary school teachers' perspectives on biased remarks and bullying in their schools, teachers' attitudes and efforts for students with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parents and students who may not conform to traditional gender norms, anti-bullying or harassment policies and professional development for teachers.

Survey Methods

A national sample of 1,065 elementary school students in 3rd to 6th grade and 1,099 elementary school teachers of Kindergarten to 6th grade participated in the online survey. The sample was drawn primarily from the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) opt-in panel and supplemented with a sample from trusted partner panels. All respondents were invited to participate through password protected emails. Interviews with students averaged 15 minutes in length and were conducted between November 3 and November 29, 2010. Interviews with teachers averaged 20 minutes in length and were conducted between November 11 and December 7, 2010. In addition, an online strategy session was conducted on June 14, 2010 with a group of 20 elementary school teachers of grades ranging from Kindergarten to 6th grade to inform the development of the survey. Key informants (e.g., elementary school teachers, administrators, students and teacher educators) reviewed the student and teacher surveys to assess comprehension and face validity.

A Note on Reading the Tables and Figures

An asterisk (*) on a table signals a value of less than one-half percent. A dash (-) represents a value of zero. Percentages may not always add up to 100% because of computer rounding, the acceptance of multiple answers from respondents, or because some answer categories may be excluded from the table or figure. The base for each figure and table is the total number of respondents answering a question (unless otherwise indicated, all survey respondents; either 1,065 elementary school students or 1,099 elementary school teachers). In cases where the base does not include all respondents, further information is provided above the table or figure. For tables and figures displaying group differences, the base is also provided for each group, representing the total number of respondents in the subgroup. Note that in some cases, results may be based on small sample sizes. This is typically true when

questions were asked of subgroups. Caution should be used in drawing any conclusions of the results based on these samples.

Analyses were conducted to determine statistically significant different (at 95% confidence level) responses between subgroups (e.g., 3rd-4th grade students vs. 5th-6th grade students).[3] Statistically significant differences are indicated by a superscript capital letter (e.g., 58%[A]). This notation indicates that the particular result is significantly greater than the corresponding data point in the column of the superscript letter. For example, Table 1.1 below shows that statistically significant differences exist between the responses of 3rd-4th grade students and 5th-6th grade students on the frequency of which they hear others make comments like "retard" or "spaz." The table shows that 5th-6th grade students are more likely than 3rd-4th grade students to hear these remarks at their school.

Table 1.2
Biased Remarks from Other Students at School

	Grade Level	
	3rd-4th grade	5th-6th grade
	A	B
Base:	548	517
All the Time/Often/ Sometimes	46%	58%[A]
All the Time/Often	17%	26%[A]
Sometimes	28%	32%
Never/Almost Never	54%[B]	41%

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations Used in Report

Comprehensive Anti-Bullying Policies
Anti-bullying or harassment policies that specifically mention sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

Does not Conform to Gender Norms/Roles
Students who do not follow societal expectations of gender, including boys who others think look or act traditionally feminine and girls who others think look or act traditionally masculine.

[3] Note that only teachers who exclusively teach K-2, 3-4 or 5-6 are included in the analyses of differences by grade level taught; those who teach across these grade level categories (e.g., a teacher who teaches grades 2 and 3) are not included in the these specific analyses of grade level differences. As such, the base sample for the analyses of grade level differences in smaller than the total sample.

Also note that only students who identified as exclusively White, Black/African-American or Hispanic are included in the analyses of differences by race/ethnicity. There were too few students who identified as another racial/ethnic category (e.g., Asian) or as more than one race/ethnicity to be included in the statistical analyses of group differences.

Generic Anti-Bullying Policies
Anti-bullying or harassment policies that do not specifically address sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

LGBT
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender

PD
Professional development

Relational Bullying or Aggression
A form of bullying, name-calling or harassment that can damage peer relationships, such as spreading rumors or purposely excluding or isolating students.

Project Responsibility and Acknowledgements

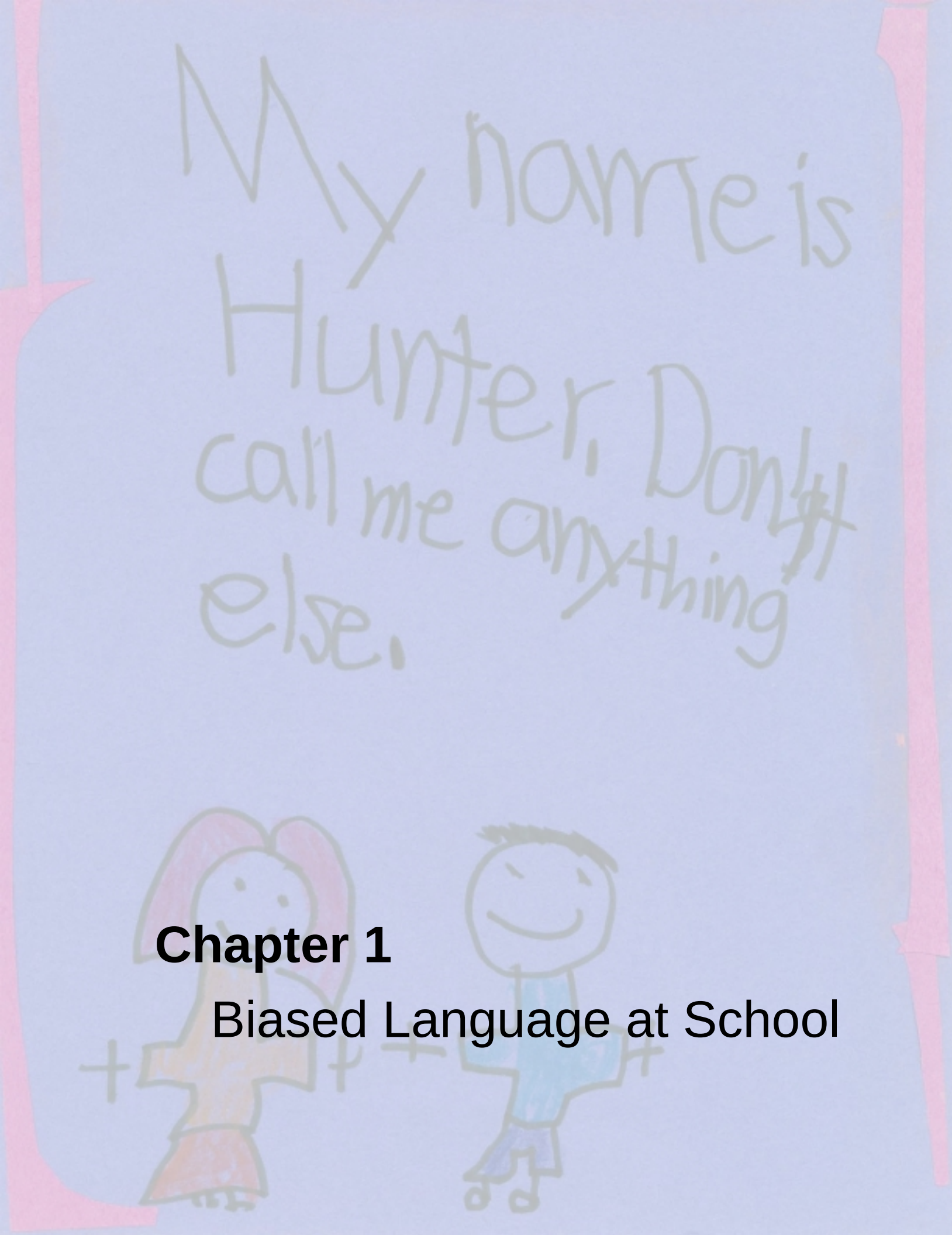
The Harris team responsible for the design and analysis of this survey includes Dana Markow, Ph.D., Vice President; Andrea Pieters, Senior Project Researcher; and Helen Lee, Project Researcher.

The GLSEN team responsible for this research includes Joseph Kosciw, Ph.D., Emily Greytak, Ph.D., Neal Palmer, Mark Bartkiewicz, Maddy Boesen and Ryan Kull.

The authors would like to thank the elementary educators who provided insight into the development of the research and the elementary educators, teacher educators and students who reviewed survey drafts and provided feedback. The authors would also like to thank the elementary teachers who participated in the online formative research session and the teachers and students who completed the surveys.

The authors are also grateful to Elizabeth Diaz, formerly of GLSEN, for her important contribution to this research.

Public Release of Survey Findings



Chapter 1

Biased Language at School

Overview

One contribution to a hostile school environment is the use of biased language – regardless of whether or not it is directed at a particular individual or intended to be offensive. Previous research conducted by GLSEN has documented the prevalence of biased language in middle schools and high schools.[1] The current research seeks to contribute to the overall knowledge of school climate by exploring what may be precursors of bullying and harassment, such as biased language. This chapter examines the incidents of biased language that occur in elementary schools, as reported by students and teachers. The chapter also explores what students have been taught about these issues in school.

We asked elementary school students and teachers about the frequency of which they hear a range of biased remarks in the course of a day at school, such as remarks that are disparaging of someone's intellectual capabilities, race, ethnicity or religion. In addition, qualitative, formative research we conducted with elementary school teachers suggests that the students also commonly use the word "gay" to indicate something is bad or worthless, as in the expressions "that's so gay" or "you're so gay." Furthermore, the research suggests that homophobic slurs, such as "fag" or "lesbo," also commonly occur in elementary school and that children may learn early on that such epithets are meant to be hurtful, even if they do not always understand the meaning of the words entirely. For these reasons, we also asked elementary students and teachers about hearing expressions like "that's so gay" and hearing the use of epithets like "fag" or "lesbo" in school.

[4]Harris Interactive & GLSEN. (2005). *From Teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York, GLSEN.

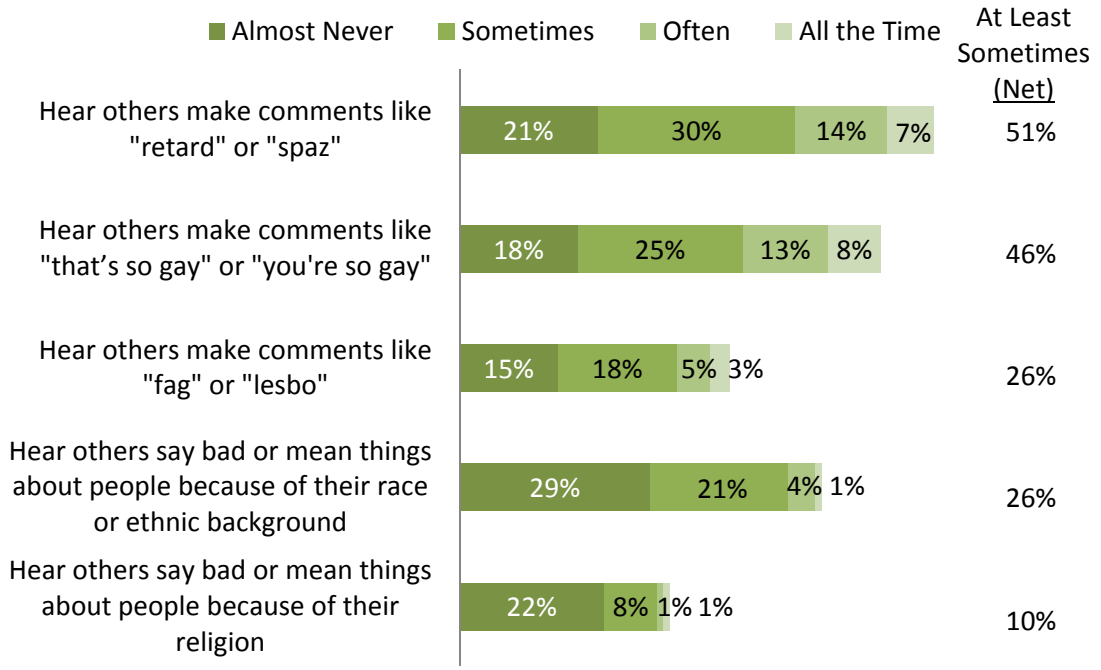
Section 1.
Students' Reports on Biased Language at School

Biased Remarks

As shown in Figure 1.1, the most common forms of biased language that elementary school students report hearing are terms that are meant to criticize someone's intellectual abilities and the use of "gay" in a negative manner. About half of students (51%) say that students at their school make comments such as "retard" or "spaz" at least sometimes, with one in five saying that it happens all the time or often (21%). Nearly half of students (46%) report that they hear comments like "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" from other kids at school with some regularity (i.e., all the time, often, sometimes), with nearly a quarter (21%) saying that it happens all the time or often.

The use of homophobic slurs, such as "fag" or "lesbo," and negative comments about race or ethnicity also occur in elementary school, but are less commonly heard. Around a quarter of elementary school students (26%) hear other students at their school say "fag" or "lesbo" at least sometimes and about a quarter (26%) also hear racist remarks as frequently. Elementary school students are least likely to report hearing other students make negative remarks about religion, with only one in ten (10%) reporting that students make biased religious comments at least sometimes.

Figure 1.1
Hearing Biased Remarks from Other Students at School



Q915/Q905/Q910. How often do kids at your school say things like: "retard" or "spaz"/"that's so gay" or "you're so gay"/"fag" or "lesbo"? Q950. How often do kids at your school say bad or mean things about people for these reasons: Because of their race or ethnic background/Because of their religion? (Excludes "Never" response.)

With the exception of negative comments about race/ethnicity or religion, the frequency of hearing biased comments increases with age. Older students (5th and 6th graders) are more likely than younger students (3rd and 4th graders) to say that students at their school use words such as "retard" or "spaz" at least sometimes (58% vs. 46%). Older students are also more likely than younger students to report hearing remarks like "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" (53% vs. 40%) and "fag" or "lesbo" (34% vs. 21%) at least sometimes at school.

The frequency with which students hear these remarks typically does not vary by gender - the only instance in which boys tend to differ from girls is the frequency with which they report hearing homophobic remarks like "fag" or "lesbo." Boys tend to hear these slurs more often than girls, with one third of boys (31%) reporting hearing these remarks at least sometimes, compared to 22% of girls. Black/African American (41%) and Hispanic (33%) students are also more likely than White students (21%) to hear homophobic remarks at least sometimes.

Differences in the prevalence of biased comments may also be related to school characteristics. Public school students are much more likely than private or parochial school students to report hearing all of these derogatory remarks (see Table 1.1). School location also plays a role in the frequency of biased comments heard by students. Overall, students in urban areas are more likely than students in suburban or rural areas to hear negative remarks, with the exception of "retard" or "spaz"; comments related to intellectual capability are heard at the same frequency across urban, suburban and rural schools (see also Table 1.1).

Students are not the only source of biased remarks at school – alarmingly, two in ten elementary school students (19%) say that they have heard teachers or other adults at school make biased comments (see Figure 1.2). Most commonly, students report that teachers or other adults call a student "stupid" or "dumb" (11%) or make racial or ethnic slurs (3%). Very few students, 2% or less, say that they have heard teachers or adults say things like "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" (2%), denigrate people that the teachers or adults believe are gay (2%) or make negative remarks about religion (1%).

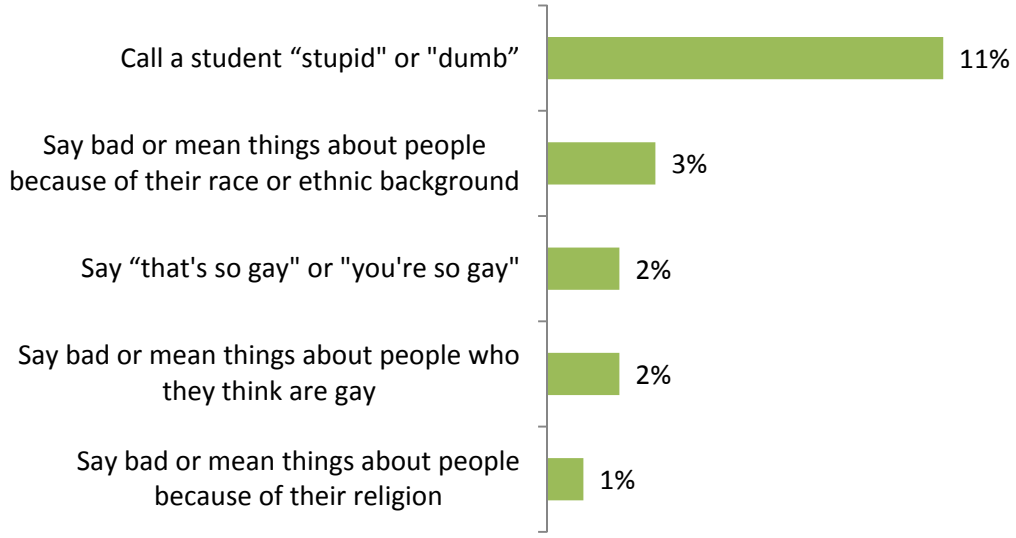
As shown in Table 1.2, the prevalence of students hearing biased remarks from teachers is higher among older than younger students. Older students in 5th-6th grade are more likely than younger students in 3rd-4th grade to say that they have heard their teachers or other adults in school make any of these biased remarks (23% vs. 17%). In particular, older students are more likely than younger students to say that they have heard a teacher or other adult call a student "stupid" or "dumb" (15% vs. 9%). There are no differences by other student characteristics, such as gender or race/ethnicity or by school characteristics.

Table 1.1
Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks from Other Students at School by School Type and School Location

	School Type		School Location		
	Public	Private/ Parochial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	928	130	318	433	310
Hear others make comments like "retard" or "spaz"					
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	53%[B]	36%	52%	50%	52%
Never/Almost Never	47%	64%[A]	47%	50%	47%
Hear others make comments like "that's so gay" or "you're so gay"					
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	47%[B]	27%	56%[DE]	38%	46%[D]
Never/Almost Never	52%	73%[A]	41%	61%[CE]	53%[C]
Hear others make comments like "fag"or "lesbo"					
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	28%[B]	10%	37%[DE]	22%	24%
Never/Almost Never	70%	90%[A]	61%	77%[C]	75%[C]
Hear others say bad or mean things about people because of their race or ethnic background					
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	28%[B]	6%	37%[DE]	24%	19%
Never/Almost Never	71%	94%[A]	62%	76%[C]	80%[C]
Hear others say bad or mean things about people because of their religion					
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	11%[B]	3%	16%[E]	8%	8%
Never/Almost Never	87%	96%[A]	81%	91%[C]	91%[C]

Q915/Q905/Q910. How often do kids at your school say things like: "retard" or "spaz"/"that's so gay" or "you're so gay"/"fag" or "lesbo"? Q950. How often do kids at your school say bad or mean things about people for these reasons: Because of their race or ethnic background/Because of their religion?

Figure 1.2
Students Who Reported Ever Hearing Biased Remarks from Teachers and Other Adults at School



Q955. Did a teacher or other adult at school ever do any of these things?

Table 1.2
Differences by Grade Level of Students Who Reported Ever Hearing Biased Remarks from Teachers and Other Adults at School

	Grade Level	
	3rd-4th grade	5th-6th grade
	A	B
Base:	548	517
Call a student "stupid" or "dumb"	9%	15%[A]
Say bad or mean things about people because of their race or ethnic background	2%	4%
Say "that's so gay" or “you're so gay”	1%	3%
Say bad or mean things about people who they think are gay	2%	1%
Say bad or mean things about people because of their religion	*	1%
None of these	83%[B]	77%

Q955. Did a teacher or other adult at school ever do any of these things?

Remarks Related to Not Conforming to Traditional Gender Norms

In some of our previous research on climate in secondary schools, we have found that around six in ten students report hearing disparaging comments about someone's gender expression (such as saying that a male student is "too feminine" or a female student is "too masculine") at least sometimes.[2] Further, GLSEN's research on the experiences of LGBT-identified students in secondary school shows that the majority of this student population also hears comments about gender expression.[3] We wanted to understand the extent to which these comments occur in earlier grades and how such attitudes about gender roles are expressed. In formative qualitative research, elementary school teachers indicated that students and teachers see many behaviors as gender-specific at the elementary school level, including: sports in general (e.g., as more appropriate for boys) and specific types of sports (e.g., tetherball as more appropriate for girls); ways of interacting with other students and with the teacher (e.g., with girls expected to be kind, help the teacher); clothes and hair styles; and choice of friends (e.g., with friendships consisting of same-gender individuals). In addition, teachers report sometimes using gender separation as a classroom management tool and for purposes such as bathroom lines.

In looking specifically at the elementary school climate, we find that a sizable minority of elementary students hear other students say that there are things that boys or girls should not do or wear just because they are boys or girls (see Figure 1.3). Furthermore, it is more common for students to hear that boys should not do or wear certain things because they are boys than to hear similar comments about girls. Four in ten (38%) students report that other students at their elementary school say that there are things boys should not do or wear "because they are boys" at least sometimes, with 11% reporting that they hear these comments being made all the time or often. Slightly fewer elementary school students report hearing remarks from other students that there are things girls should not do or wear "because they are girls": one third (33%) report hearing comments about how girls are expected to act or look according to societal norms at least sometimes, with 7% saying that they hear these comments all the time or often.

Compared to their older peers, younger girls seem to be more accepting of other girls who may not conform to traditional gender norms, than are their older peers. About half of 3rd-4th grade girls (47%) report that they never hear other kids make these types of comments about girls, compared with just over one third of 5th-6th grade girls (36%). In contrast, there are no differences by grade level or gender in hearing other students say that there are things that boys should not do or wear because they are boys. There are also no differences by the other student demographics that we examined, such as race/ethnicity.

The prevalence of gender-based remarks is also related to school characteristics. Students in public and urban schools are more likely to hear other students say that there are things boys or girls should not do or wear just because they are boys or girls. Public school students are more likely than private/parochial school students to say that they hear other students make these comments about what boys are not supposed to do or wear, although there are no such school type differences regarding comments about what girls are traditionally expected to do or wear. As for school location, students in urban schools are more likely than those at suburban or rural schools to say that they hear these remarks about boys, and are more likely than students in rural

[2] Harris Interactive & GLSEN. (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York, GLSEN.

[3] Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Diaz, E. M., & Bartkiewicz, M. J. (2010). *The 2009 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York:GLSEN.

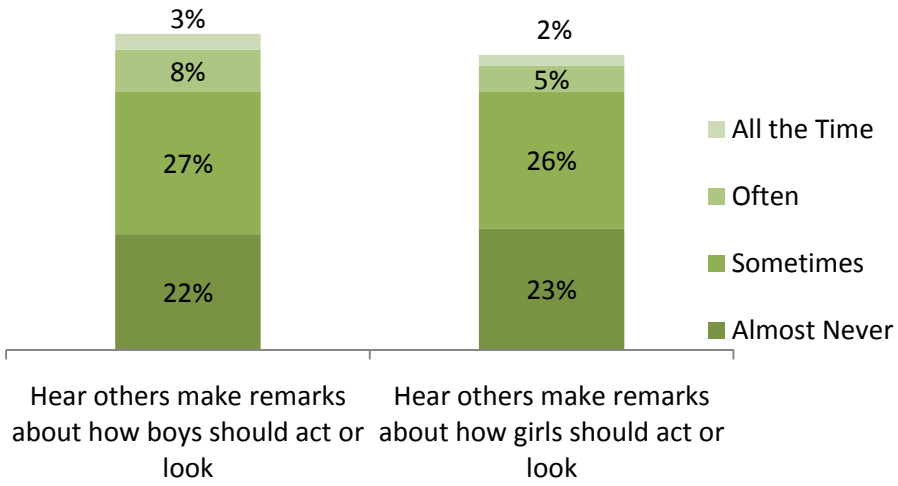
schools to hear the same types of comments about girls (see Table 1.3).

Students were also asked about the kinds of messages they hear from teachers about how boys and girls should behave based on gender. The number of students who report hearing teachers make these comments is small – less than 10% of students report that they have heard their teacher make comments about what is appropriate for girls to do or boys to do or comments that one gender is better than the other (see Figure 1.4). Older elementary school students are somewhat more likely than younger students to say that they have heard a teacher or other adult at school say that there are things that boys and girls should not do or wear because of their gender. No other differences based on student characteristics are apparent.

When examining the prevalence of teachers or adults making biased comments regarding gender expression by school location, we see again that these remarks are more likely to occur in urban elementary schools. Students in urban schools are more likely than students in suburban schools to report that they hear adults at their school say that there are things boys and girls should not do because of their gender and that one gender is better than another (see Table 1.4). No significant differences can be seen when comparing urban and suburban schools against rural schools (see also Table 1.4), nor is there a difference based on school type.

Whereas the number of students who report hearing teachers or other adults make biased comments is small, the impact is sizable. Teacher behavior appears to be related to the prevalence of students' comments regarding gender norms. As shown in Table 1.5, students are more likely to make comments about how boys and girls are expected to behave or look in schools where students have heard teachers say that there are things boys and girls should not do or wear because of their gender: three quarters of the students hear gender remarks from other students at their school (79% about boys and 75% about girls) in schools where teachers encourage students to act or look according to societal expectations of their gender, compared to a third (35% and 29%, respectively) of students in schools who have not heard teachers make such remarks.

Figure 1.3
Frequency of Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Other Students at School



Q930/Q940. How often do kids at your school say that there are things that boys should not do or should not wear because they are boys?/How often do kids at your school say that there are things that girls should not do or should not wear because they are girls? (Excludes "Never" response.)

Table 1.3
Frequency of Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Other Students at School by School Type and School Location

	School Type		School Location		
	Public	Private/ Parochial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	928	130	318	433	310
Hear others make remarks about how boys should act or look					
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	40%[B]	24%	46%[DE]	36%	35%
Never/Almost Never	59%	77%[A]	52%	64%[C]	65%[C]
Hear others make remarks about how girls should act or look					
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	34%[B]	23%	38%[E]	32%	30%
Never/Almost Never	65%	77%[A]	60%	68%	70%[C]

Q930/Q940. How often do kids at your school say that there are things that boys should not do or should not wear because they are boys?/How often do kids at your school say that there are things that girls should not do or should not wear because they are girls?

Figure 1.4
Students Who Reported Ever Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Teachers and Other Adults

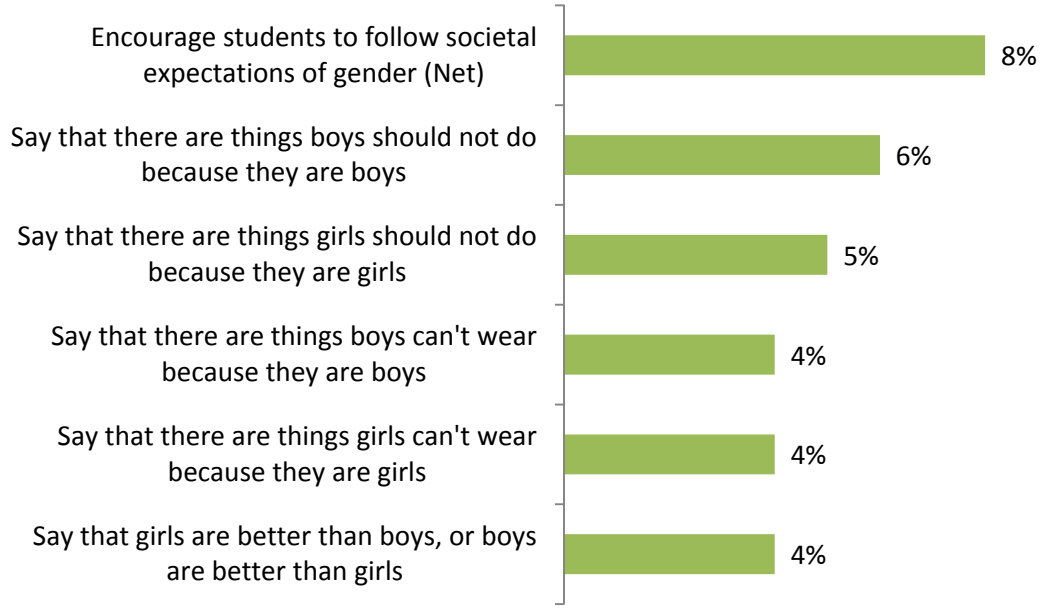


Table 1.4
Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Teachers and Other Adults at School and Differences by Grade Level and School Location

	Grade Level		School Location		
	3rd-4th grade	5th-6th grade	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	548	517	318	433	310
Encourage students to follow societal expectations of gender (Net)	7%	10%	11%	6%	8%
Say that there are things boys should not do because they are boys	4%	8%[A]	9%[D]	3%	6%
Say that there are things girls should not do because they are girls	3%	7%[A]	8%[D]	3%	6%
Say that there are things boys can't wear because they are boys	3%	6%	6%	4%	4%
Say that there are things girls can't wear because they are girls	3%	5%	6%	3%	2%
Say that girls are better than boys, or boys are better than girls	3%	5%	7%[D]	2%	3%

Q955. Did a teacher or other adult at school ever do any of these things?

Table 1.5
Hearing Remarks Related to Students' Gender Expression from Other Students at School by Hearing Teacher Encourage Traditional Gender Norms

	Heard Teacher Encourage Traditional Gender Norms	
	Yes	No
	A	B
Base:	98	959
Hear others make remarks about how boys should act or look		
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	79%[B]	35%
Never/Almost Never	21%	64%[A]
Hear others make remarks about how girls should act or look		
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	75%[B]	29%
Never/Almost Never	25%	70%[A]

Q930/Q940. How often do kids at your school say that there are things that boys should not do or should not wear because they are boys?/How often do kids at your school say that there are things that girls should not do or should not wear because they are girls?

Section 2.
Teachers' Reports on Biased Language at School

Teachers provide an important perspective on school climate. In this section, we examine teachers' views on the prevalence of biased language among students at their school. In addition, we discuss teachers' reports on how they address biased language in their classrooms. It is also valuable to examine whether students and teachers have similar perspectives. For example, in our previous research among secondary school teachers and students, we have found a sizable discrepancy in perceptions of how often racist, sexist and homophobic remarks are made in schools, with students reporting a much more serious problem than teachers.[4]

Elementary school teachers report that the types of biased remarks that they hear students make most often are the use of the word "gay" in a negative way, sexist remarks and comments like "spaz" or "retard" – with nearly half of teachers reporting that they hear students make these remarks at least sometimes (see Figure 1.5). Teachers' reports on the frequency with which students use the word "gay" in a negative way and make comments like "spaz" or "retard" are similar to students' own perspectives on the prevalence of these remarks, as discussed in the previous section.

Whereas use of the word "gay" in a negative way is the type of biased language heard most often by teachers in elementary schools, they are less likely to indicate that other homophobic remarks, like "faggot" or "queer," are used by elementary students– about a quarter say that they hear these types of homophobic comments at least sometimes (26%, including 9% who hear them very often or often). One quarter of teachers (26%) hear negative remarks regarding students who may not conform to gender norms (a female acting or looking "too masculine" or a male acting or looking "too feminine") at least sometimes. And similar to student reports, teachers indicate that students at least sometimes make comments about boys who seem "too feminine" (25%), which is higher than with comments about girls who seem "too masculine" (15%).

Racist remarks and negative religious remarks are less common, with 21% of teachers saying they at least sometimes hear students make racist remarks and 7% of teachers saying they at least sometimes hear students make negative religious remarks (see Figure 1.5).

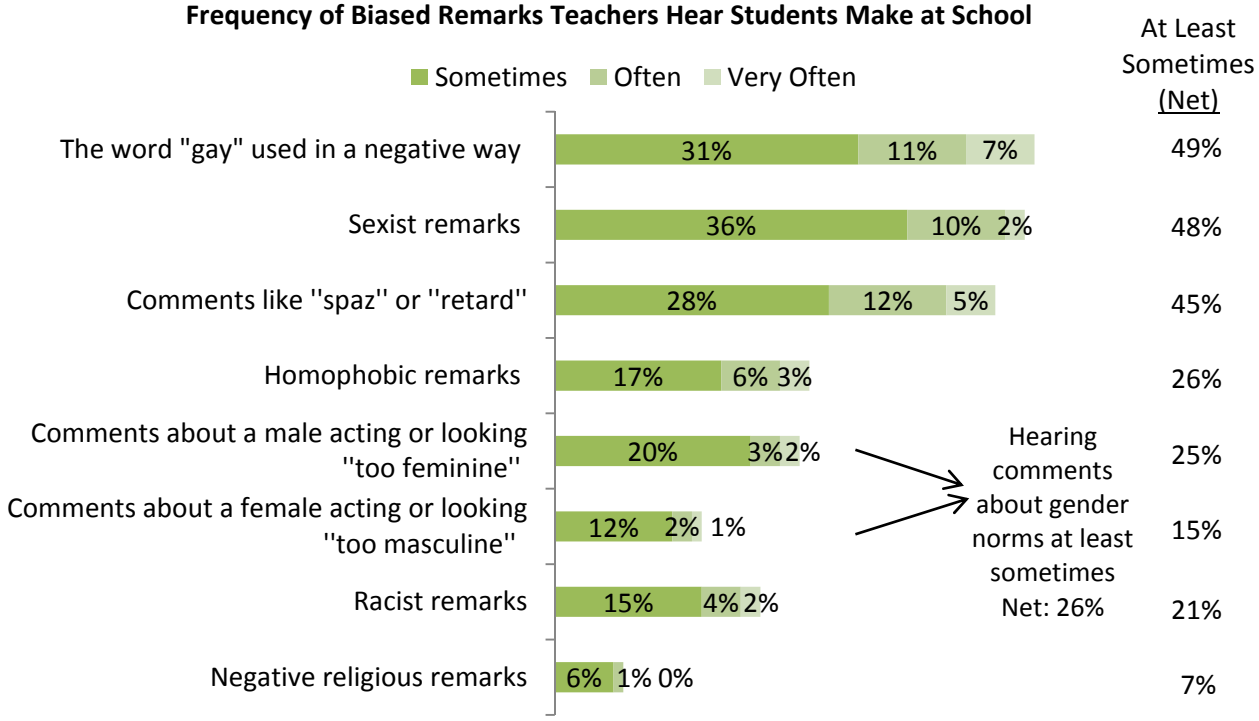
The close alignment of teacher and student assessments in elementary school differs from research findings at the secondary school level. Secondary school teachers report that biased language among students occurs less frequently than the levels that students report. This most likely reflects the greater level of supervision of students by teachers at the elementary school level, which may provide teachers with more opportunities to hear students use biased language. However, previous research shows that even at the secondary school level, teachers and students are in agreement about the types of biased language that are most commonly heard from students: sexist and homophobic remarks.[5]

Elementary teachers are more likely to report hearing many of these biased comments as their students get older (see Table 1.6), which is also consistent with student reports. A third of K-2nd grade teachers say they at least sometimes hear the word "gay" used in a negative way (36%), while more than half of 3rd-4th grade teachers (55%) and two thirds of teachers in 5th-6th grade (66%) report the same. Comments like "spaz" or

[4] GLSEN & Harris Interactive (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN.

[5] GLSEN & Harris Interactive (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN.

Figure 1.5
Frequency of Biased Remarks Teachers Hear Students Make at School



Q720. At your school, how often do you hear students make the following types of remarks? (Excludes "Never"and "Rarely" responses.)

"retard" are heard at least sometimes by 40% of K-2nd grade teachers, 50% of 3rd-4th grade teachers and 53% of 5th-6th grade teachers. This pattern also holds for teachers who report hearing racist remarks from students at least sometimes (14% of K-2nd grade teachers, 21% of 3rd-4th grade teachers and 38% of 5th-6th grade teachers).

Although students in urban schools are more likely than those in suburban and rural schools to report hearing other students make nearly all types of biased comments assessed here, the trend is not as strong for teachers. When examining differences between teachers by school location, it is apparent that biased comments are least commonly heard in suburban schools (see Table 1.6). Six in ten teachers in suburban schools say they rarely or never hear students use the word "gay" in a negative way (58%), compared to four in ten teachers in urban schools (43%) and half of teachers in rural schools (50%). Teachers in suburban schools are also more likely than those in urban or rural schools to say that they rarely or never hear students make comments like "spaz" or "retard" (61% vs. 55% vs. 48%), homophobic remarks (82% vs. 69% vs. 71%) or negative comments about students who do not conform to traditional gender norms (92% vs. 83% vs. 82%). Racist remarks are most likely to be heard by teachers in urban schools, with 32% indicating that they hear racist remarks very often, often or sometimes, compared to 17% of teachers in suburban schools and 15% of those in rural schools.

The frequency of teachers hearing biased remarks varies somewhat by years of teaching experience. As shown in Table 1.7, teachers with fewer years of experience (5 years or less) are more likely to hear some types of biased remarks from students. For example, 24% of newer teachers report hearing comments like "spaz" or "retard" often or very often, compared to 16% of teachers with 6 to 20 years experience and 11% of teachers with 21 or more years experience.

In addition to asking teachers about the frequency with which they hear students use biased

language, we also asked teachers to report on the proportion of students in their school who make these remarks in order to understand the pervasiveness of such language in the elementary student population. Among elementary school teachers who hear students at their school make biased remarks, the predominant response is that these remarks are made by just a few students in the school (see Figure 1.6). However, teachers report that a larger number of students use “gay” in a negative way and make comments like “spaz” or “retard” in their schools.

Table 1.6
Frequency of Biased Remarks Teachers Hear Students Make at School by Grade Level Taught and School Location

	Grade Level Taught			School Location		
	K-2nd	3rd-4th	5th-6th	Urban	Sub-urban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Base:	280	214	139	353	376	368
The word ''gay'' used in a negative way						
Very Often/Often	14%	18%	22%	20%	21%	14%
Sometimes	21%	37% A	44% A	37% E	21%	34% E
Rarely/Never	64% BC	45%	33%	43%	58% D	50%
Comments like ''spaz'' or ''retard''						
Very Often/Often	13%	23%	17%	18%	15%	17%
Sometimes	27%	27%	36%	27%	23%	34% E
Rarely/Never	61% C	59% C	41%	55%	61% F	48%
Homophobic remarks						
Very Often/Often	8%	8%	9%	8%	8%	10%
Sometimes	15%	19%	19%	20% E	10% E	21% E
Rarely/Never	77%	73%	72%	69%	82% DF	71%
Comments about students who do not conform to traditional gender norms						
Very Often/Often	5%	4%	5%	8%	4%	3%
Sometimes	18%	21%	27%	23%	15%	26% E
Rarely/Never	82%	86%	83%	83%	92% DF	82%
Racist remarks						
Very Often/Often	5%	2%	14% AB	9%	5%	4%
Sometimes	9%	19% A	24% A	23% EF	12%	11%
Rarely/Never	83% C	79% C	58%	66%	82% D	82% D

Q720. At your school, how often do you hear students make the following types of remarks?

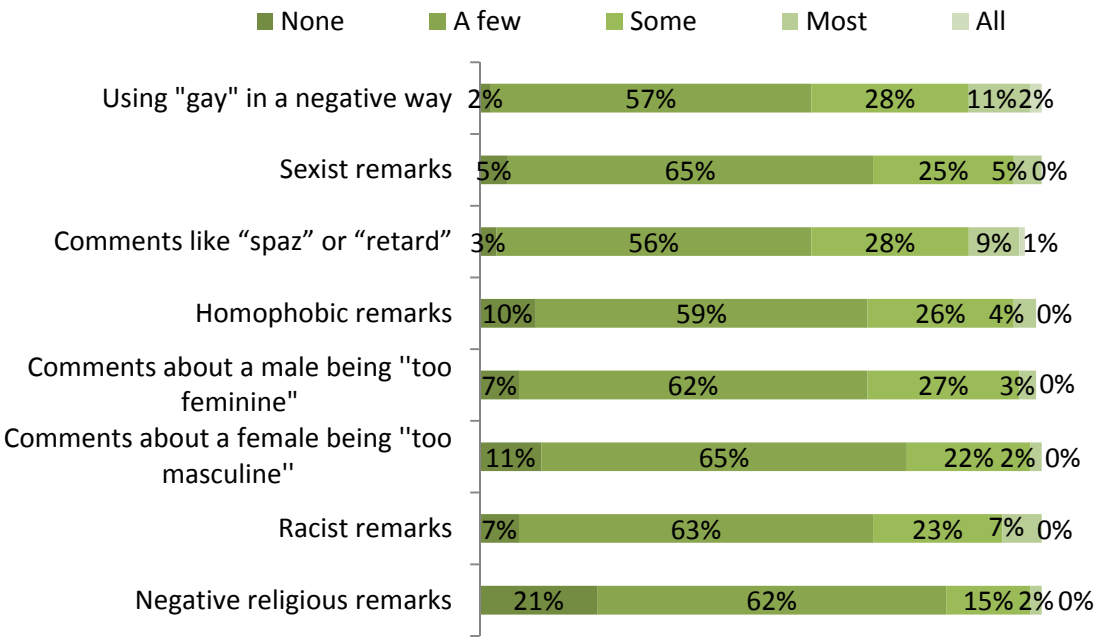
Table 1.7
Frequency of Teachers Hearing Biased Remarks by Years of Teaching Experience

	Years of Teaching Experience		
	5 Years or Fewer	6 to 20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C
Base:	171	514	400
The word ''gay'' used in a negative way			
Very Often/Often	25%	15%	17%
Sometimes	27%	32%	30%
Rarely/Never	48%	52%	52%
Comments like ''spaz'' or ''retard''			
Very Often/Often	24%[C]	16%	11%
Sometimes	25%	27%	34%
Rarely/Never	52%	56%	54%
Homophobic remarks			
Very Often/Often	13%	8%	5%
Sometimes	22%	14%	16%
Rarely/Never	65%	77%[A]	78%[A]
Comments about students who do not conform to traditional gender norms			
Very Often/Often	8%[C]	5%	2%
Sometimes	27%	17%	22%
Rarely/Never	85%	87%	84%
Racist remarks			
Very Often/Often	10%[B]	4%	6%
Sometimes	20%	11%	15%
Rarely/Never	68%	83%[A]	79%

Q720. At your school, how often do you hear students make the following types of remarks?

Figure 1.6
Number of Students Teachers Hear Making Biased Remarks

Base: Varies by remarks heard



Q725. At your school, how many students make the following types of remarks?

Addressing Student Use of Biased Language

A majority of teachers report that when they are faced with situations in which students make biased remarks, they very often or often seek to address it (see Figure 1.7). Teachers are most likely to report that they very often or often address racist remarks made by students (72%). Two thirds say they take action very often or often when the word “gay” is used negatively (68%), when they hear sexist remarks (68%) and when homophobic remarks are made (66%). Six in ten teachers say that they very often or often address situations in which they hear students make comments about a male acting or looking “too feminine” (63%) or a female acting or looking “too masculine” (59%).

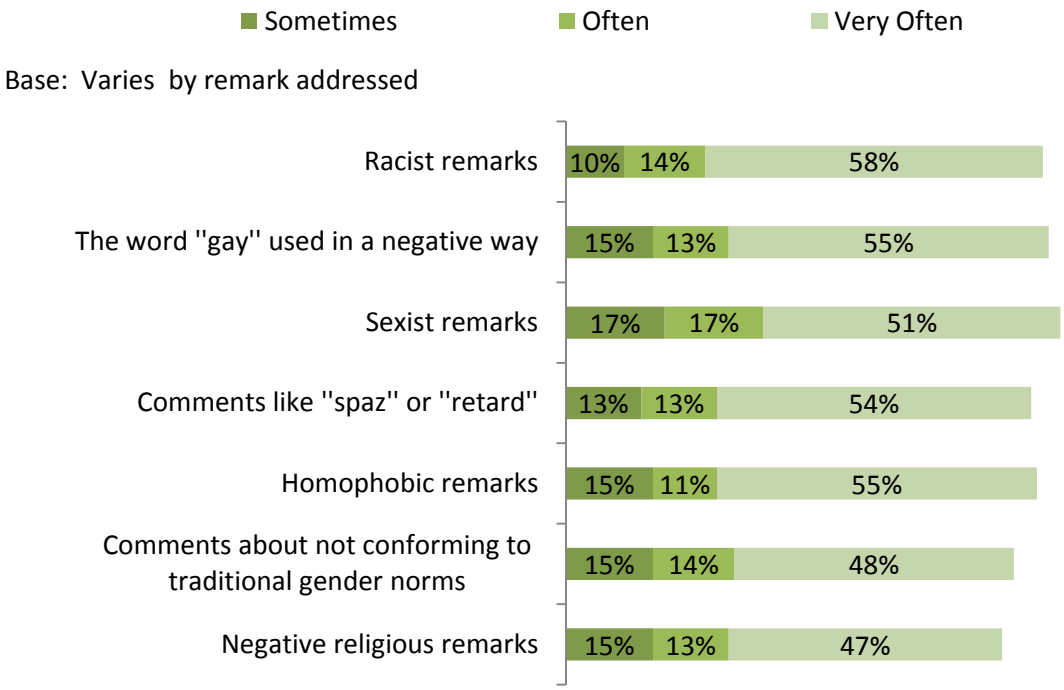
Conversely, approximately one quarter of teachers say they never or rarely address a situation in which they hear a student make a biased comment about a boy acting or looking “too feminine”(23%) or comments about a girl acting or looking “too masculine” (28%). In fact, biased remarks regarding students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are the least likely of any type of biased comment to be addressed by elementary school teachers. Most commonly, elementary school teachers say they did not address biased comments about a boy who seems “too feminine” or a girl who seems “too masculine” because another teacher or adult addressed the situation instead (12% and 13%, respectively).

Teachers tend to react to these biased comments with the same frequency regardless of the grade level they teach or the type of school where they teach (public, private or parochial). However, teachers in suburban schools tend to be more proactive than rural schools in addressing certain biased comments that students make (see Table

1.8). Three quarters of teachers in suburban schools say they very often or often address it when they hear a student use the word “gay” in a negative way (76%). This level is considerably greater than reports by teachers in rural schools (60%), but similar to those in urban schools (71%). Teachers in suburban schools (75%) are also more likely than teachers in rural schools (58%) to say they very often or often address it when they hear a student make comments like “spaz” or “retard,” but do not differ from teachers in urban schools (71%).

Reactions to certain biased remarks also vary by years of teaching experience (see Table 1.9). Newer teachers with 5 or fewer years of experience are more likely than veteran teachers with 21 or more years of experience to address racist remarks and comments about a male acting or looking “too feminine” very often or often (75% vs. 58%). This trend applies to homophobic remarks as well, which veteran teachers are more likely than newer teachers to say they rarely or never address (26% vs. 8%).

Figure 1.7
Frequency With Which Teachers Address Biased Remarks Made by Students



Q736. How often have you addressed the situation when students made the following types of remarks? (Excludes "Never" responses.)

Table 1.8
Frequency with Which Teachers Address Biased Remarks Made by Students by School Location

Base: Varies by remark addressed

	School Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C
Base:	*195*	*154*	*186*
Racist remarks			
Very Often/Often	72%	78%	68%
Rarely/Never	13%	17%	21%
Base:	*279*	*255*	*287*
The word ''gay'' used in a negative way			
Very Often/Often	71%	76%[C]	60%
Rarely/Never	15%	14%	19%
Base:	*271*	*296*	*308*
Sexist remarks			
Very Often/Often	68%	70%	65%
Rarely/Never	13%	13%	17%
Base:	*255*	*263*	*279*
Comments like ''spaz'' or ''retard''			
Very Often/Often	71%	75%[C]	58%
Rarely/Never	15%	16%	25%
Base:	*210*	*177*	*198*
Homophobic remarks			
Very Often/Often	63%	74%	62%
Rarely/Never	15%	18%	23%
Base:	*203*	*205*	*265*
Comments about not conforming to traditional gender norms (Net)			
Very Often/Often	61%	67%	60%
Rarely/Never	25%	23%	30%
Base:	*223*	*203*	*225*
Comments about a male acting or looking ''too feminine''			
Very Often/Often	60%	68%	61%
Rarely/Never	21%	19%	28%
Base:	*186*	*180*	*201*
Comments about a female acting or looking ''too masculine''			
Very Often/Often	57%	63%	58%
Rarely/Never	27%	27%	30%
Base:	*109*	*106*	*108*
Negative religious remarks			
Very Often/Often	56%	69%	56%
Rarely/Never	25%	21%	26%

Q736. How often have you addressed the situation when students made the following types of remarks?

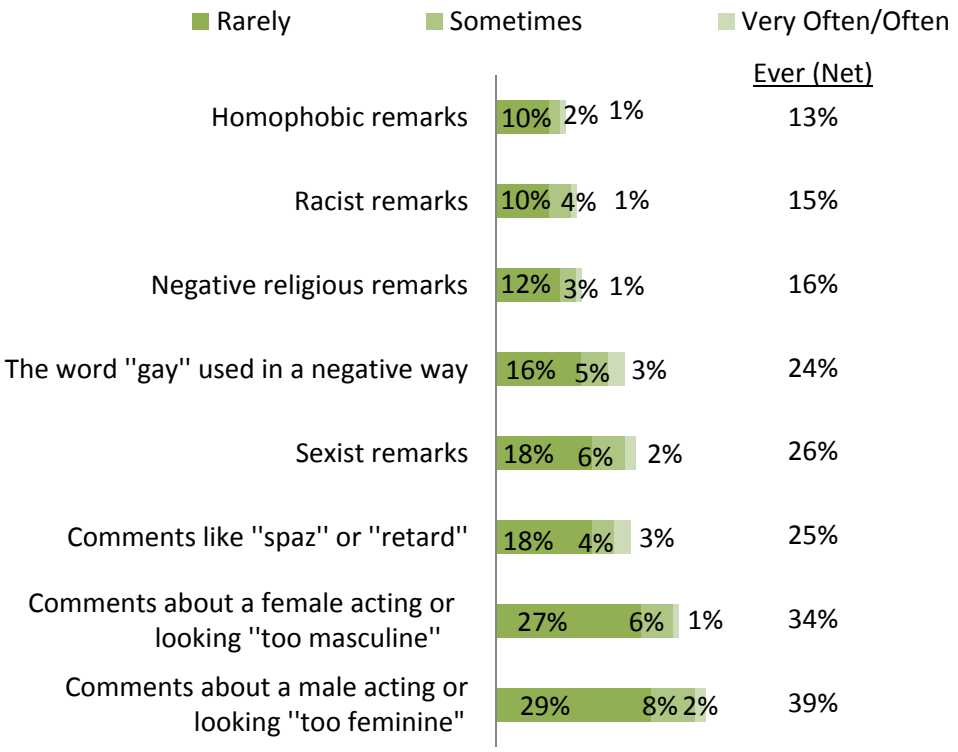
Table 1.9
Frequency at Which Teachers Address Biased Remarks Made by Students by Years of Teaching Experience

Base: Varies by remark addressed

	Years of Teaching Experience		
	5 Years or Less	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C
Base:	*87*	*247*	*193*
Racist remarks (Base=536)			
Very Often/Often	86%[B]	69%	71%
Rarely/Never	10%	17%	23%
Base:	*130*	*378*	*304*
The word ''gay'' used in a negative way (Base=823)			
Very Often/Often	78%	66%	67%
Rarely/Never	7%	21%[A]	16%
Base:	*132*	*400*	*335*
Sexist remarks (Base=877)			
Very Often/Often	77%	65%	65%
Rarely/Never	10%	15%	17%
Base:	*125*	*377*	*286*
Comments like ''spaz'' or ''retard'' (Base=799)			
Very Often/Often	72%	65%	68%
Rarely/Never	16%	19%	20%
Base:	*97*	*254*	*225*
Homophobic remarks (Base=586)			
Very Often/Often	77%	65%	61%
Rarely/Never	8%	21%[A]	26%[A]
Base:	*97*	*307*	*244*
Comments about not conforming to traditional gender norms (Net) (Base=672)			
Very Often/Often	73%	61%	59%
Rarely/Never	18%	25%	30%
Base:	*109*	*294*	*241*
Comments about a male acting or looking ''too feminine'' (Base=653)			
Very Often/Often	75%[C]	62%	58%
Rarely/Never	13%	23%	28%[A]
Base:	*92*	*263*	*205*
Comments about a female acting or looking ''too masculine'' (Base=569)			
Very Often/Often	69%	58%	56%
Rarely/Never	20%	28%	31%
Base:	*51*	*140*	*125*
Negative religious remarks (Base=324)			
Very Often/Often	81%	60%	48%
Rarely/Never	12%	24%	35%

Q736. How often have you addressed the situation when students made the following types of remarks?

Figure 1.8
Frequency of Teachers Hearing Biased Remarks from Other Teachers or School Staff



Q755. At your school, how often do you hear teachers or other school staff make the following types of remarks? (Excludes "Never" response.)

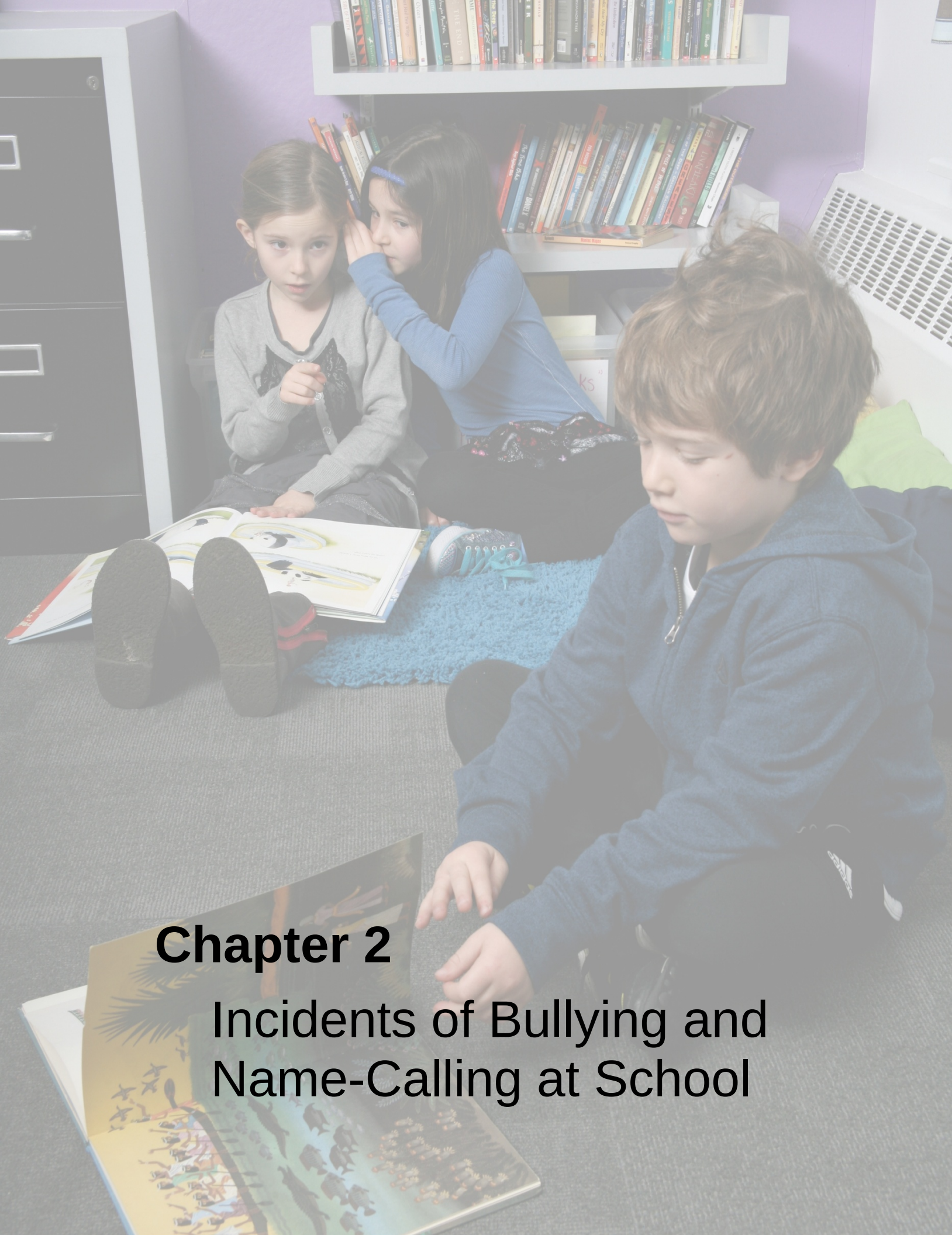
In addition to intervening in student behavior, teachers and other school staff have an opportunity through their own language to foster an atmosphere that is free of biased comments. Although they are less common than similar remarks by students, teachers report that negative or offensive remarks are occasionally made by teachers and other staff (see Figure 1.8). Teachers report that comments made by adults at school about people not conforming to traditional gender norms are the most common. More than one third of teachers have ever heard teachers or staff make comments about a male acting or looking "too feminine" (39%) or a female acting or looking "too masculine" (34%). One quarter of teachers have heard teachers or staff make comments like "spaz" or "retard," make sexist remarks (26%) or use the word "gay" in a negative way (24%). One in six teachers report hearing negative religious remarks (16%) or racist remarks (15%) from other teachers or staff at their school. Homophobic remarks are heard least frequently, with 13% of teachers saying that they have ever heard them from other teachers or staff. These reports are consistent with the low percentages of students who report hearing comments of this nature from teachers or other adults at their school.

Summary

Many elementary school students report hearing other students make biased remarks. The biased remarks that are most commonly heard in elementary schools, reported by approximately

half of students, are negative comments related to someone's intellectual capability, such as "spaz" or "retard." Although children at this age may not be entirely aware of what it means to be gay or lesbian, most students in elementary schools hear students make remarks such as "that's so gay" or "you're so gay," and many hear students make homophobic remarks such as "fag" or "lesbo." The prevalence of these remarks tends to increase among older elementary school students.

Elementary school teachers are mostly in agreement with elementary school students regarding issues of biased remarks in elementary schools. Teachers in public schools, teachers with fewer years of experience and teachers who teach older students are most likely to report hearing their students make biased comments. Most teachers say they attempt to address biased comments that they hear from elementary students. Biased comments regarding gender expression are least likely to be addressed by teachers, but newer teachers are more likely to address these comments than veteran teachers. Biased comments regarding gender are also the mostly frequently heard form of biased language from other teachers or school staff. However, most teachers report that, to the extent that negative, biased or offensive remarks happen at all, they are rare occurrences – but more than a standard of "zero tolerance" would allow.



Chapter 2

Incidents of Bullying and Name-Calling at School

Overview

From our previous research on secondary school students, we know that in addition to hearing negative remarks throughout the hallways and classrooms of the school, many students are personally targeted with name-calling, bullying and harassment, often because of personal characteristics such as actual or perceived race/ethnicity or sexual orientation.[6] In order to understand the elementary school climate, we asked students and teachers about the general problem of bullying and harassment and whether some students are commonly targeted, such as for personal characteristics like race/ethnicity or religion. We also asked about students being targeted because of their family constellation (e.g., not having a father at home, being adopted or having gay parents).

Bullying and name-calling because of gender expression are very common among secondary school students, particularly for students whose gender presentation is considered to be atypical by societal expectations (e.g., a male student who behaves in a way considered to be typically feminine).[7] Children often learn at very early ages what is considered "appropriate" appearance and behavior for girls and boys. The acquisition of a consistent understanding of "gender appropriate" behavior and appearance is often considered a developmental milestone, indicating its importance in society. Thus, we asked students and teachers how often students are targeted because they do not conform to societal expectations of how girls and boys should act or look. Lastly, we asked whether students are ever targeted because they are perceived to be gay. Younger children may not fully understand issues of sexual orientation or romantic attraction, and "acting gay" may be linked to someone acting in gender non-conforming ways. However, children may have some understanding that "gay" is about same-sex attraction and may say someone is "acting gay" because they are too affectionate with another student of the same gender.

[6] Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN.

[7] Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN.

Section 1.
Incidents of Bullying and Name-Calling Witnessed by Students

Most elementary school students go to schools where bullying and name-calling are a common occurrence. Three quarters (75%) of elementary school students report that students at their school are called names, made fun of or bullied with at least some regularity (i.e., all the time, often or sometimes), including 7% who say this happens all the time and 18% who say it occurs often (see Figure 2.1).

Students report similar frequencies of bullying and name-calling regardless of grade-level. However, similar to the findings that students in urban and public schools are more likely to hear biased remarks at school (see Chapter 1), students in these schools are also more likely to witness incidents of bullying and name-calling. Students in urban schools (34%) are more likely than those in suburban (21%) or rural (24%) schools to say students at their school are bullied or called names all the time or often. More than one quarter of public school students (27%) say that this occurs all the time or often at their school compared to around one in ten (9%) private or parochial school students (see Table 2.1).

Reasons Other Students Are Bullied or Called Names at School

In order to understand the nature of bullying in elementary schools, students who said that bullying and name-calling occur at their school were asked about the reasons why they occur. As shown in Figure 2.2, physical appearance is the most common reason – two thirds of students attribute the bullying and name-calling that they witness at school to students' looks or body size (67%). Over a third of students report that other students are bullied or called names for not being good at sports (37%) and about a quarter report that bullying occurs because of how well someone performs at schoolwork (26%). Almost one quarter (23%) of elementary school students also report that other students in their school are bullied because they are girls who act or look "too much" like boys or boys who act or look "too much" like girls. About a fifth of students also report that students are bullied because other people think they act gay (21%). Name-calling and bullying because of religion is the least common reason given by students.

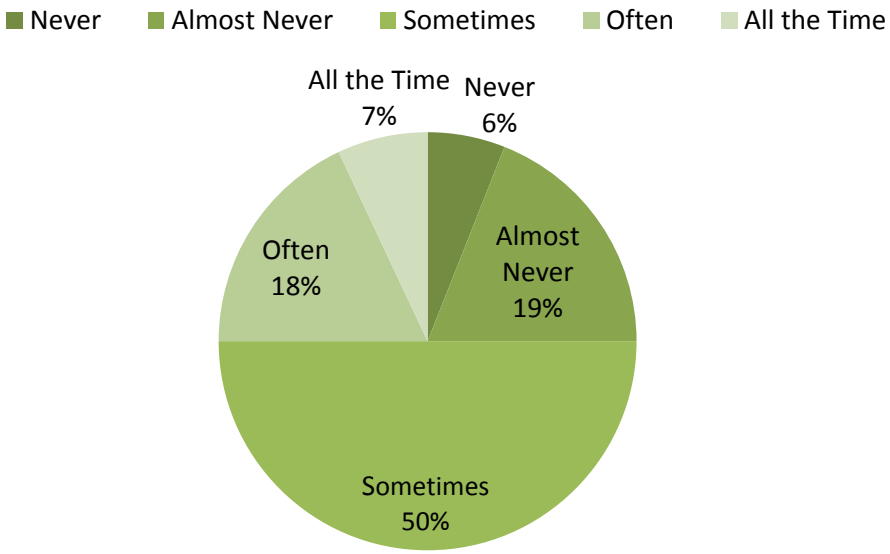
As shown in Table 2.2, being bullied or called names at school may be related to grade level. Although younger and older students report similar frequencies for most types of bullying, two exceptions arise: older students are more likely than younger students to say that other students are bullied because others think they are gay (28% vs. 16%) or because of their religion (9% vs. 3%).

In addition to grade level, Table 2.2 illustrates that the reasons why students believe others are bullied or called names in school also vary by school type and location. Students in public schools are more likely than those in private or parochial schools to say that students in their school are bullied or called names for all reasons except for athletic ability. Regarding school locale, students who attend urban schools are more likely than those who attend suburban or rural schools to say others are bullied or called names because of the way they look or their race/ethnic background. Urban students are also more likely than rural students to say that girls who act or look "too much" like a boy are bullied or called names, but no more or less likely than suburban students.

Although it is reported less commonly than other reasons for bullying, some elementary school students also witness other students being bullied or called names for reasons related to their family composition. At least one in ten students say that others are bullied or called names because they do not have a dad (13%), they have a multi-racial family (11%) or their parents are divorced or separated (10%) (see Figure 2.3). Less than one in

ten say that others are bullied because someone in their family has a disability (9%), they do not have a mom (8%), they are adopted (7%), they have gay parents (7%) or they have a step-mom or step-dad (6%). Table 2.3 shows the breakdown of these family-related issues by school characteristics. There is some variation by school type and locale. Students at public schools are more likely to say that others are bullied for not having a dad or a mom, for coming from a multi-racial family or for having gay parents. Urban students are more likely to say that others are bullied for coming from a multi-racial family or for having gay parents. These differences may simply be a reflection of diversity within the public school population and within urban areas.

Figure 2.1
Frequency of Student Reports of Bullying and Name-Calling at School



Q705. How often are students called names, made fun of or bullied at your school?

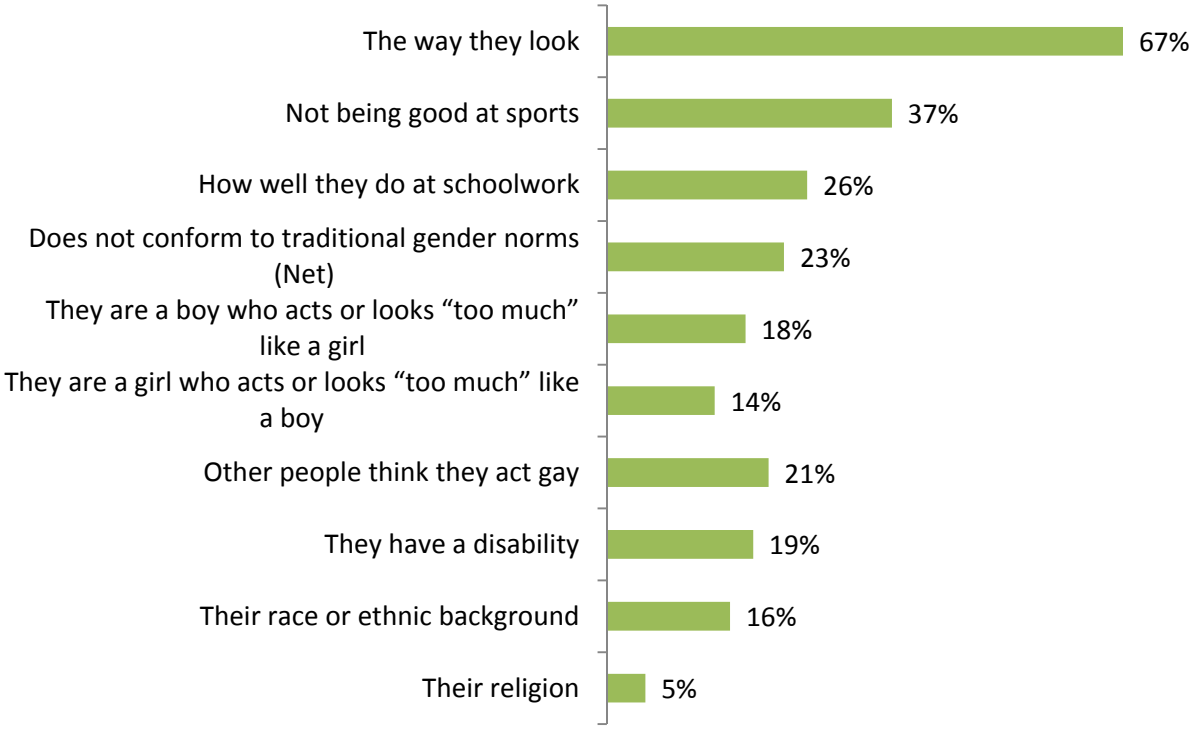
Table 2.1
Frequency of Student Reports of Bullying and Name-Calling at School by School Type and School Location

	School Type		School Location		
	Public	Private/ Parochial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	928	130	318	433	31
Hear students being called names, made fun of, or bullied					
All the Time/Often	27%[B]	9%	34%[DE]	21%	24%
Never/Almost Never	23%	48%[A]	20%	29%[C]	23%

Q705. How often are students called names, made fun of or bullied at your school?

Figure 2.2
Reasons Other Students are Bullied or Called Names at School

Base: All students who say bullying occurs at school (n=994)



Q710. Why are students called names, made fun of or bullied at your school?

Table 2.2
Reasons Other Students are Bullied or Called Names at School by Grade Level, School Type and School Location

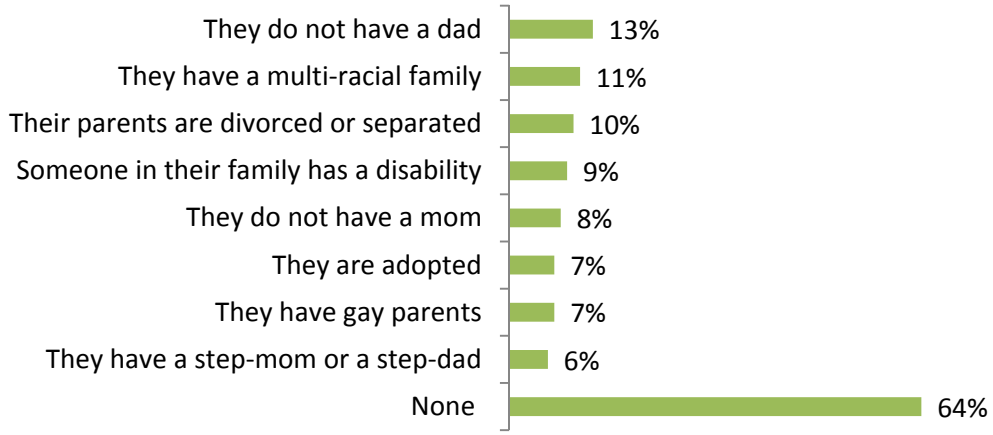
Base: All students who say bullying occurs at school (n=994)

	Grade Level		School Type		School Location		
	3rd-4th grade	5th-6th grade	Public	Private/ Parochial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Base:	512	482	876	111	294	401	296
The way they look	66%	70%	69%D	47%	76%FG	65%	63%
Not being good at sports	35%	39%	36%	45%	35%	39%	36%
How well they do at schoolwork	26%	26%	27%D	14%	26%	27%	26%
Does not conform to traditional gender norms (Net)	20%	25%	24%D	7%	27%	21%	21%
They are a boy who acts or looks "too much" like a girl	18%	18%	19%D	6%	22%	16%	17%
They are a girl who acts or looks "too much" like a boy	12%	17%	15%D	4%	17%G	15%	10%
Other people think they act gay	16%	28%A	22%D	11%	22%	21%	19%
They have a disability	19%	20%	21%D	6%	17%	19%	23%
Their race or ethnic background	15%	17%	17%D	4%	24%FG	14%	10%
Their religion	3%	9%A	6%D	-	9%	4%	4%

Q710. Why are students called names, made fun of or bullied at your school?

Figure 2.3
Family-Related Reasons Other Students are Bullied or Called Names at School

Base: All students who say bullying occurs at school (n=994)



Q715. Why else are students called names, made fun of or bullied at your school?

Table 2.3
Family-Related Reasons Other Students are Bullied or Called Names at School by Grade Level, School Type and School Location

Base: All students who say bullying occurs at school (n=994)

	Grade Level		School Type		School Location		
	3rd-4th grade	5th-6th grade	Public	Private/ Parochial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Base:	512	482	876	111	294	401	296
They do not have a dad	10%	16%[A]	13%[D]	3%	16%	12%	11%
They have a multi-racial family	11%	12%	12%[D]	3%	16%[FG]	10%	8%
Their parents are divorced or separated	9%	12%	11%	5%	10%	10%	11%
Someone in their family has a disability	8%	11%	10%	5%	10%	9%	10%
They do not have a mom	7%	10%	9%[D]	1%	11%	6%	8%
They are adopted	5%	10%[A]	8%	2%	9%	7%	6%
They have gay parents	6%	8%	7%[D]	1%	9%[G]	7%	4%
They have a step-mom or a step-dad	5%	7%	7%	1%	6%	5%	8%
None	66%	60%	62%	80%[C]	57%	64%	71%[E]

Q715. Why else are students called names, made fun of or bullied at your school?

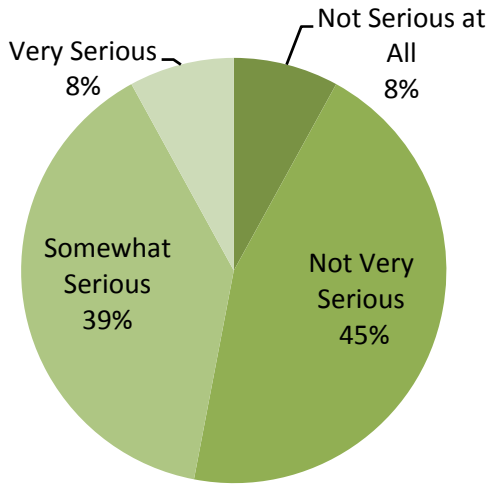
Section 2.
Incidents of Bullying and Name-Calling Witnessed by Teachers

As reported by students, bullying is a regular occurrence in most elementary schools – and many teachers believe it is a serious problem at their school as well. Nearly one half of elementary school teachers believe that bullying, name-calling or harassment is a very or somewhat serious problem at their school (47%), including 8% who say it is a very serious problem (see Figure 2.4). Teachers in public schools are more likely than teachers in private or parochial schools to say that bullying, name-calling or harassment is a very or somewhat serious problem at their school (48% vs. 33%) (see Table 2.4).

Similar to the findings with student reports, the seriousness of the problem of bullying at school was not different between teachers of 3rd-4th grade students and teachers of 5th-6th grade students. However, teachers of the youngest students, K-2nd grade, report that bullying is not as serious a problem for them as compared to teachers of 5th-6th grade students (see Table 2.5).

Newer teachers are more likely to report a greater seriousness of bullying and name-calling at their schools. As shown in Table 2.6, 53% of teachers with 5 or fewer years of experience report that it is a somewhat or very serious problem, compared to 42% of teachers with 6 to 20 years experience and 45% of teachers with 21 Years or More experience.

Figure 2.4
Teachers' Perceptions on Seriousness of Bullying or Name-Calling at School



Q705. How serious of a problem is bullying, name-calling or harassment of students at your school?

Table 2.4
Teachers' Perceptions on Seriousness of Bullying or Name-Calling at School by School Location and School Type

	School Location			School Type	
	Urban	Sub-urban	Rural	Public	Private/ Parochial
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	353	376	368	945	145
Very/Somewhat Serious	58%[BC]	38%	46%	48%[E]	33%
Very Serious	14%[BC]	3%	7%	8%	2%
Somewhat Serious	44%	35%	39%	40%	31%
Not Very/Not at All Serious	42%	62%[A]	54%[A]	52%	67%
Not Very Serious	34%	50%[A]	49%[A]	45%	40%
Not Serious at All	8%	11%	6%	7%	26%[D]

Q705. How serious of a problem is bullying, name-calling or harassment of students at your school?

Table 2.5
Teachers' Perceptions on Seriousness of Bullying or Name-Calling at School by Grade Level Taught

	Grade Level Taught		
	K-2nd	3rd-4th	5th-6th
	A	B	C
Base:	280	214	139
Very Serious	6%	10%	18%[A]
Somewhat Serious	38%	46%	37%
Not Very Serious	44%	37%	41%
Not Serious at All	11%	8%	4%

Q705. How serious of a problem is bullying, name-calling or harassment of students at your school?

Table 2.6
Teachers' Perceptions on Seriousness of Bullying or Name-Calling at School by Years of Experience

	Years of Experience		
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C
Base:	171	514	400
Very Serious	11%	6%	6%
Somewhat Serious	42%	36%	39%
Not Very Serious	37%	49%	49%
Not Serious at All	10%	9%	6%

Q705. How serious of a problem is bullying, name-calling or harassment of students at your school?

Reasons Students Are Bullied or Called Names at School

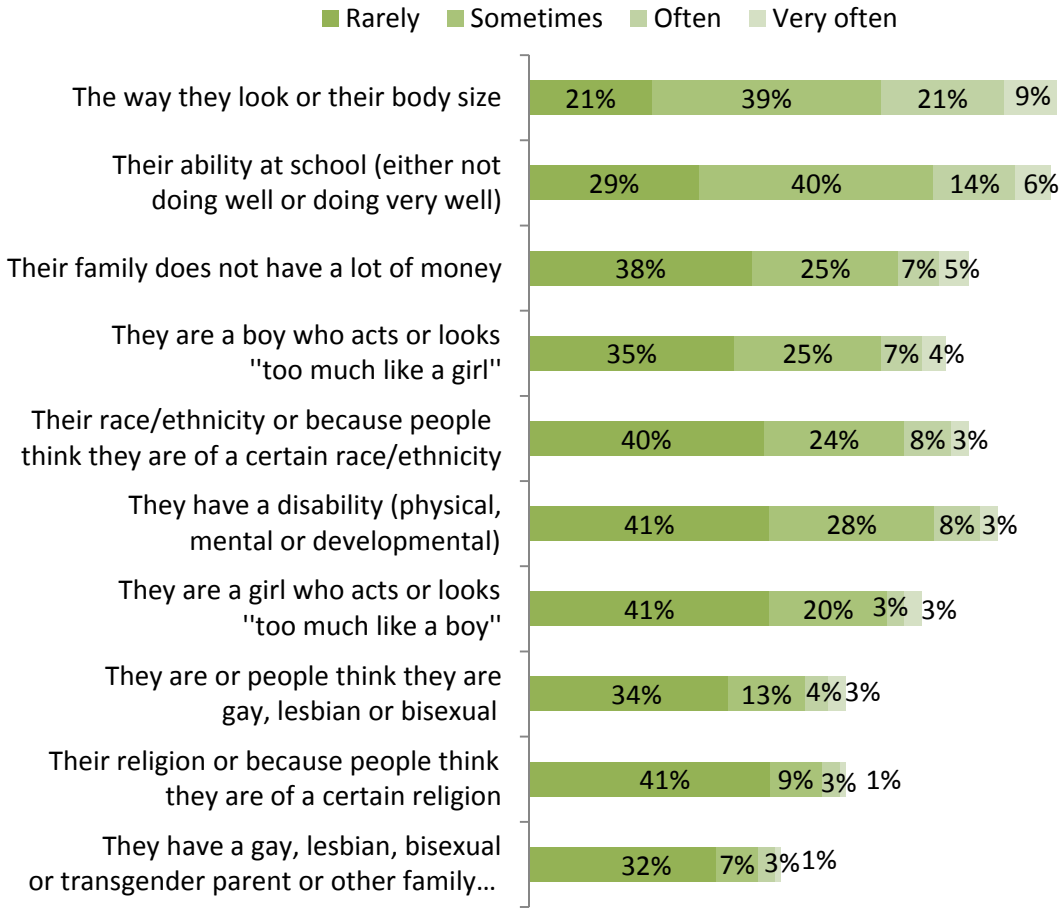
We asked teachers to report on the reasons for which students at their school are most frequently bullied or called names. As shown in Figure 2.5, teachers report that students are most frequently bullied or called names because of how they look or because of their school performance, similar to the pattern reported by students in the previous section. Three in ten teachers say that students in their school are very often or often bullied, called names or harassed because of the way they look or their body size (31%). The second most common reason for bullying that teachers report is students' ability at school, with two in ten teachers (21%) reporting that bullying happens often or very often for this reason.

Bullying because of a student's gender expression (i.e., a boy who acts "too much like a girl" or a girl who acts "too much like a boy") is less commonly observed by teachers (see Figure 2.5). Nevertheless, the majority of teachers report that gender-based bullying does occur at some frequency in school, with over 70% of teachers reporting that it occurs for boys and over 60% reporting it occurs for girls. Teachers report that boys are more commonly bullied because of gender expression than girls (11% report that boys are often/very often bullied for this reason, compared to 6% for girls).

Given that an understanding of sexual orientation is not necessarily salient to students at the elementary level, we would expect elementary school teachers to report much lower rates of bullying related to sexual orientation than teachers in secondary schools.[8] Accordingly, elementary teachers were less likely to report that students in their school are bullied, called names or harassed because they are, or are perceived to be, gay, lesbian or bisexual: 7% of elementary teachers state that this type of bullying occurs often or very often, compared to 26% of secondary teachers. Although elementary teachers report bullying based on actual or perceived sexual orientation less frequently than secondary teachers, nevertheless, two in ten (20%) elementary school teachers report that students in their school are at least sometimes bullied or called names because they are, or are perceived to be, gay, lesbian or bisexual.

[8] Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers.* New York: GLSEN.

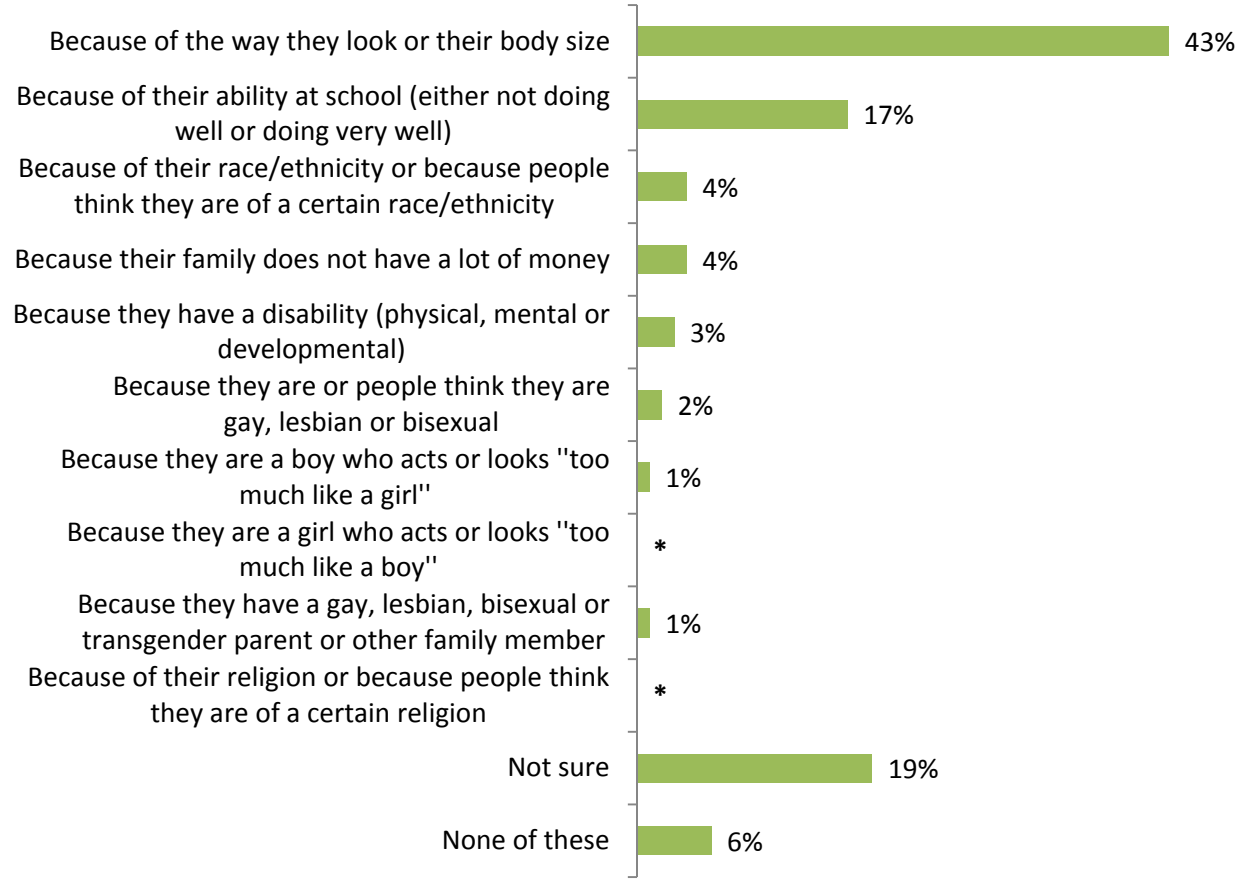
Figure 2.5
Teachers' Perceptions on Reasons Students Are Bullied or Called Names at School



Q710. At your school, how often are students bullied, called names or harassed for the following reasons? (Excludes "Never" response.)

Figure 2.6
Teachers' Perceptions on Reasons Students Are Most Often Bullied or Called Names at School

Base: All teachers at schools where students are ever bullied, called names or harassed (n=1080)



Q715. Why are students bullied, called names or harassed most often at your school?

Although estimates of the number of school-age children living with gay and lesbian parents range from one to nine million[9], this total still accounts for a small percentage of the school-age population. Thus, it is not surprising that teachers report bullying because of having gay or lesbian parents as an infrequent occurrence in school. Nevertheless, one in ten teachers reports that students are at least sometimes bullied or called names because they have a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) parent or other family member (11%, including 4% who identify this as a reason for bullying very often or often).

In addition to asking teachers about the frequency of bullying by student characteristics, we also asked teachers to identify the one reason students are most often bullied in their schools (see Figure 2.6). By far, the most common reason for bullying, is a student's physical appearance, identified by over 40% of teachers. The second most common reason for bullying from the teacher's perspective, identified by nearly 20% of respondents, is a student's ability at school (either not doing well or doing very well). Less than 5% of teachers indicate that students are most often bullied because of

[9] Stacey, J. & Biblarz, T. (2001). (How) does the sexual orientation of the parents matter? *American Sociological Review*, *66* (2), 164-183.

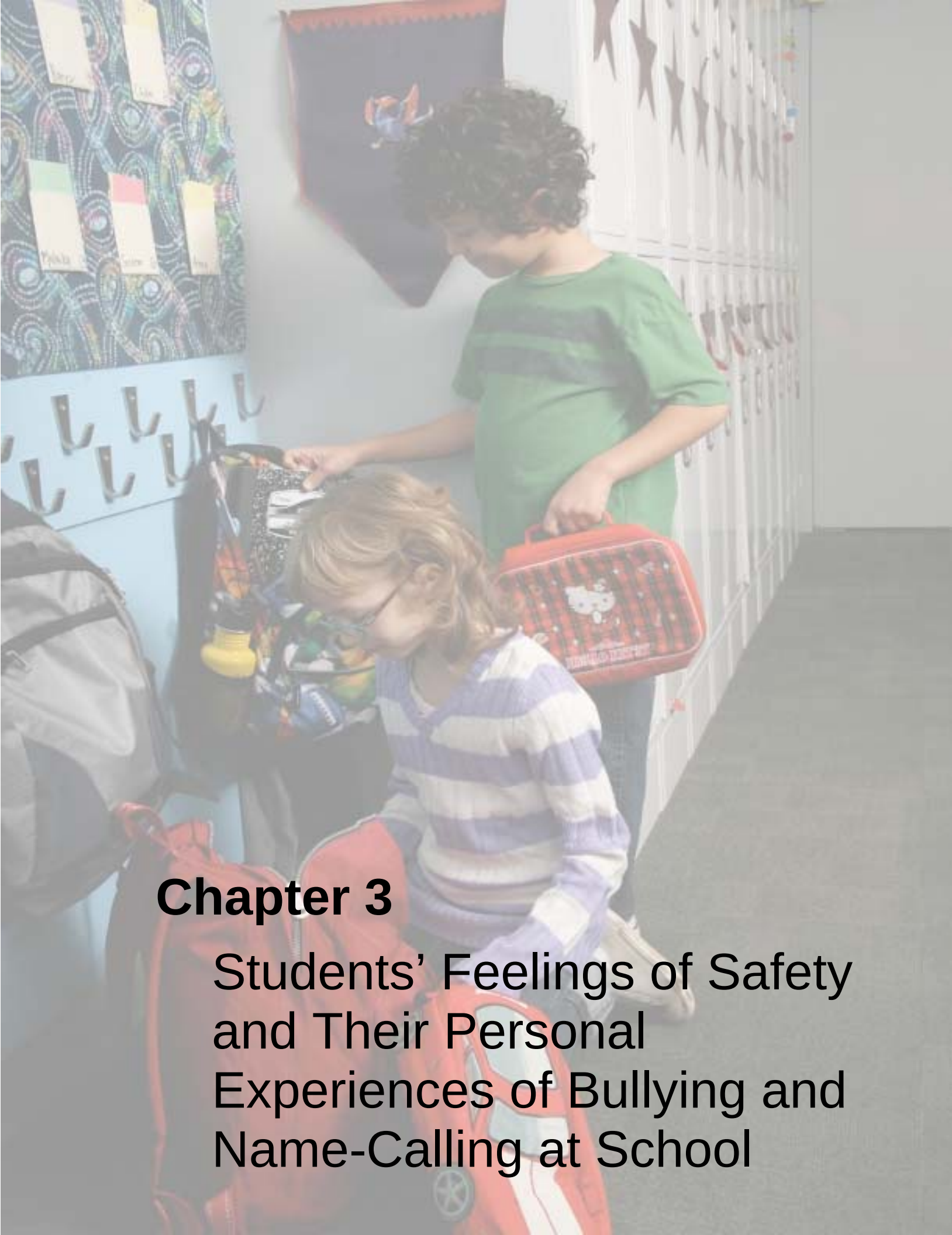
their race/ethnicity, their perceived or actual sexual orientation, their religion; or because their family does not have a lot of money, they have a disability, they do not conform to traditional gender norms or they have a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender family member (see Figure 2.6).

Summary

Three quarters of elementary school students report witnessing incidents in which other students at their school are called names, made fun of or bullied. Students report that when others at school are bullied or called names, they are most commonly targeted for their appearance, athletic ability or academic ability. About one in five elementary school students also report witnessing incidents during which other students are bullied because others think they are gay.

Half of elementary school teachers believe that bullying, name-calling and harassment are a serious problem in elementary schools and that students are most often bullied because of their looks or body size, followed by their ability at school. Overall, when comparing responses from the two surveys, teachers and students share similar perspectives as to of why students are targeted for bullying in their schools.

Teachers report a higher degree of bullying and name-calling in their school as their students get older. Similar to their students, teachers reports of bullying or name-calling seem to be more common in public schools and urban schools.



Chapter 3

Students' Feelings of Safety and Their Personal Experiences of Bullying and Name-Calling at School

Overview

In Chapters 1 and 2, we examined the incidents of biased language and bullying that elementary school students and teachers witness in order to gain a better understanding of the general elementary school climate. In this chapter, we delve into students' own personal experiences at school, specifically focusing on their feelings of safety while in school and their first-hand encounters with bullying, name-calling and harassment.

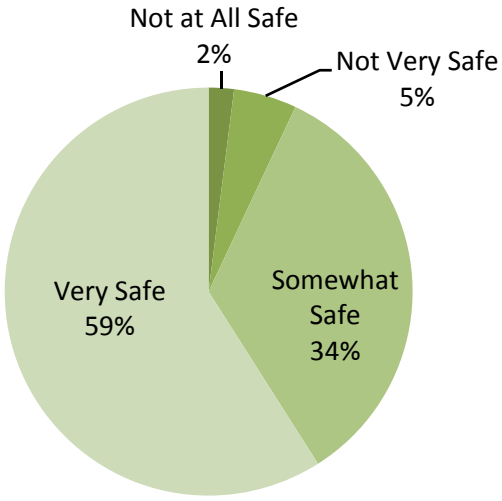
Feelings of Safety at School

We asked elementary school students how safe they feel at school, and the majority (59%) of elementary school students report feeling very safe at school. However, a third (34%) of students feel only somewhat safe and 7% feel not very or not at all safe when they are at school (see Figure 3.1).

General feelings of safety at school do not differ by grade level. However, perceptions of school safety appear to be related to some other student characteristics. Girls are more likely than boys to report greater feelings of safety at school – 64% of girls say they feel very safe at school compared to 55% of boys (see Table 3.1). Regarding race/ethnicity, Hispanic students report feeling less safe at school compared to their White and African American peers. As shown in Table 3.1, 12% of Hispanic students report feeling not safe or not very safe at school compared to 5% of White students and 4% of Black/African American students.

Students' feelings of safety are also related to certain school characteristics. As shown in Table 3.2, students in public schools are less likely than those in private or parochial schools to feel very safe at school (58% vs. 79%). Students in urban schools are more likely than those in suburban or rural schools to say they feel not very safe or not at all safe at school (11% vs. 6% vs. 3%).

Figure 3.1
Students' Feelings of Safety at School



Q805: How safe do you feel when you are at school?

Table 3.1
Students' Feeling of Safety at School by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

	Gender		Race		
	Boys	Girls	White	Black/AA	Hispanic
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	537	528	644	152	183
Somewhat/Very Safe	91%	95%	94%[E]	96%[E]	87%
Very Safe	55%	64%[A]	62%	57%	53%
Somewhat Safe	36%	31%	33%	39%	35%
Not Very/Not at All Safe	8%	5%	5%	4%	12%[CD]
Not Very Safe	6%	3%	4%	2%	9%[C]
Not at All Safe	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%

Q805: How safe do you feel when you are at school?

Table 3.2
Students' Feeling of Safety at School by School Type and School Location

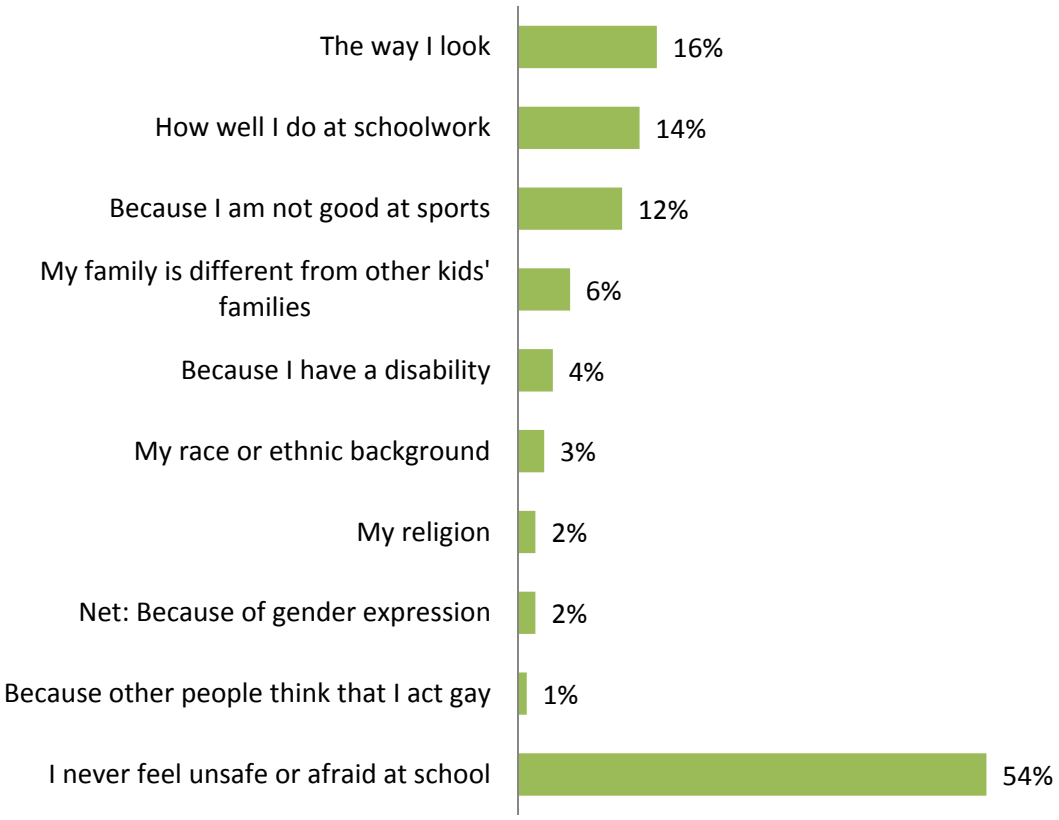
	School Type		School Location		
	Public	Private/ Parochial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	928	130	318	433	310
Somewhat/Very Safe	93%	95%	89%	94%	97%[C]
Very Safe	58%	79%[A]	52%	60%	67%[C]
Somewhat Safe	35%[B]	17%	37%	34%	30%
Not Very/Not at All Safe	7%	4%	11%[DE]	6%	3%
Not Very Safe	5%	4%	9%[DE]	4%	3%
Not at all safe	2%	-	2%	2%	*

Q805: How safe do you feel when you are at school?
*Denotes a small base.

To further understand elementary students' experiences of feeling unsafe, we asked survey participants to indicate the reasons why they feel unsafe or afraid. As shown in Figure 3.2, the most common reason among all students for feeling unsafe or afraid at school, cited by one in six students, is because of the way they look (16%). Following appearance, students feel unsafe at school because of their academic performance (14%) or because they are not good at sports (12%). Less common reasons why students feel unsafe or afraid at school include: the composition of their families (6%), their disability (4%), their race or ethnic background (3%) and their religion (2%). In addition, some elementary school students feel unsafe at school because they do not conform to traditional gender expectations of how boys and girls should act or look (2%) or because other people think they "act gay" (1%).

In general, feeling unsafe or afraid at school is unrelated to student demographics and school characteristics. Two exceptions—gender and age—emerge: girls are more likely than boys to cite their appearance as a reason for feeling unsafe or at school (19% vs. 13%), and this gap is wider for 5th-6th graders (22% of girls vs. 11% of boys).

Figure 3.2
Reasons Students Feel Unsafe or Afraid at School



Q810. Which of the following makes you feel unsafe or afraid at school?

Experiences of Bullying and Name-Calling at School

We also asked elementary school students about their own experiences with bullying and name-calling. Although most students say that they have witnessed fellow students being called names, made fun of or bullied at least sometimes at school (see Chapter 2), students are less likely to report that they have been the target of such negative experiences themselves. As shown in Figure 3.3, nearly two thirds of students (64%) report that they had never been or almost never been bullied, made fun of or called names during the current school year. Nevertheless, a notable proportion – over one third (36%) – of elementary school students say that they had been called names, made fun of or bullied at least sometimes during the current school year, including 6% who say it had occurred all the time or often.

Whereas gender and grade level do not seem to be related to the frequency with which elementary school students are bullied, race/ethnicity does appear to play a role. Black/African American students are more likely than White or Hispanic students to report being bullied at least sometimes (Black/African American: 51% vs. White: 34% vs Hispanic: 32%) (see Table 3.3). It is interesting to note that these differences by race/ethnicity are in contrast with the differences in feeling unsafe at school – Black/African American students are less likely to feel unsafe in school compared to White and Hispanic students.

Rates of bullying appear to be related to school location. Similar to the findings on witnessing bullying and feeling unsafe at school, students in public and urban schools are more likely to say they have been the target of bullying. Public school students are more likely than students in private or parochial schools to report being bullied at least sometimes at school (37% vs. 23%). Students in urban elementary schools are more likely to have experienced bullying compared to students in suburban or rural schools, with 43% of urban students saying that they have experienced bullying at least sometimes (vs 32% of suburban students and 35% of rural students) (see Table 3.3).

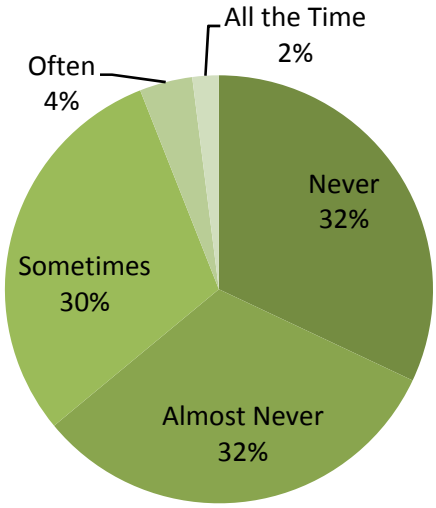
Not surprisingly, being a target of bullying and name-calling is related to feeling less safe at school. Students who personally experience bullying at least sometimes at school are much less likely to feel very safe at school than those who are never or almost never bullied (37% vs. 72%).

Relational Bullying and Cyberbullying

Although bullying is typically thought of as involving physical or verbal aggression (e.g. hitting, name-calling), it can take many forms, including spreading mean rumors, purposely ignoring a student or leaving him or her out of activities, and using the Internet to say mean things. In some instances students may not recognize that these behaviors constitute bullying.

Relational Bullying. Behaviors such as actively isolating or ignoring other students or causing harm in someone's social relationships (e.g., spreading mean rumors or lies) is referred to as relational bullying or aggression. Overall, these forms of bullying are not uncommon among the elementary student population. As shown in Figure 3.4, nearly a quarter of all elementary school students (22%) report that other students have spread mean rumors or lies about them. Nearly half of elementary school students report that they have felt left out or ignored on purpose by other kids at school (45%). Students report that being isolated or ignored by peers can occur in many ways and situations (see Figure 3.5). Among those who have felt left out or ignored by their classmates, around seven in ten say other students did not want to play with them during gym class or recess (68%) or pretended not to hear them (59%). Slightly fewer than half of students who have felt left out report that kids

Figure 3.3
Frequency of Personally Being Bullied and Called Names at School



Q835. How often have you been called names, made fun or bullied at school this year?

Table 3.3
Frequency of Personally Being Bullied and Called Names at School by Race/Ethnicity, School Location and School Type

	Race/Ethnicity			School Location			School Type	
	White	Black/ AA	Hispanic	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Public	Private/ Parochial
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Base:	644	152	183	318	433	310	928	130
Called names, made fun or bullied at school this year								
All the time	2%	3%	1%	3%	1%	2%	2%	-
Often	4%	5%	3%	7%[E]	2%	5%[E]	4%	6%
Sometimes	28%	43%[AC]	28%	33%	29%	28%	31%[H]	17%
Almost Never	34%[B]	20%	36%[B]	30%	33%	34%	32%	32%
Never	32%	28%	32%	28%	35%	32%	31%	45%[G]

Q835. How often have you been called names, made fun or bullied at school this year?

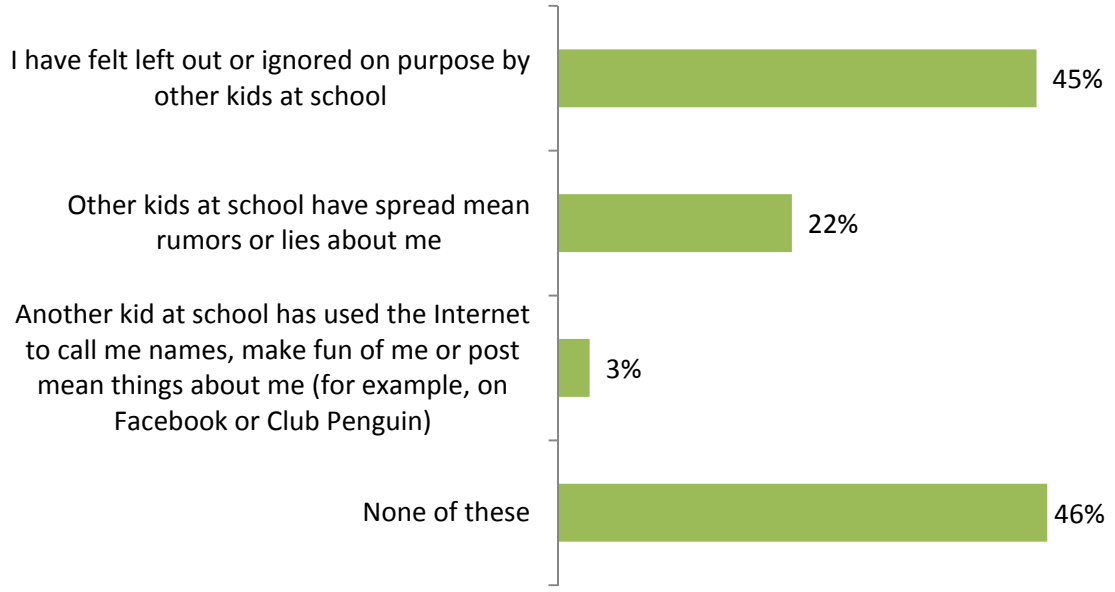
told other people not to talk or play with them (44%), and three in ten say that other students would not sit with them at lunchtime (31%) or did not want to work with them on class activities (30%).

Relational bullying appears to be more common among girls, as they are more likely than boys to say that they have felt left out or ignored by other students (51% vs. 38%). Older elementary age girls, in fact, are most likely to say that they have been the target of mean rumors or lies – the percentage of girls in 5th-6th grade was higher than the percentages of girls in younger grades and of boys overall.

As is the case with more physical forms of bullying, these types of bullying may promote feelings of an unsafe school environment. As shown in Table 3.4, students who feel less than very safe at school are also more likely to say they have experienced relational bullying. For example, 57% of students who do not feel very safe at school experience being isolated from peers, compared to 36% of students who do feel very safe at school.

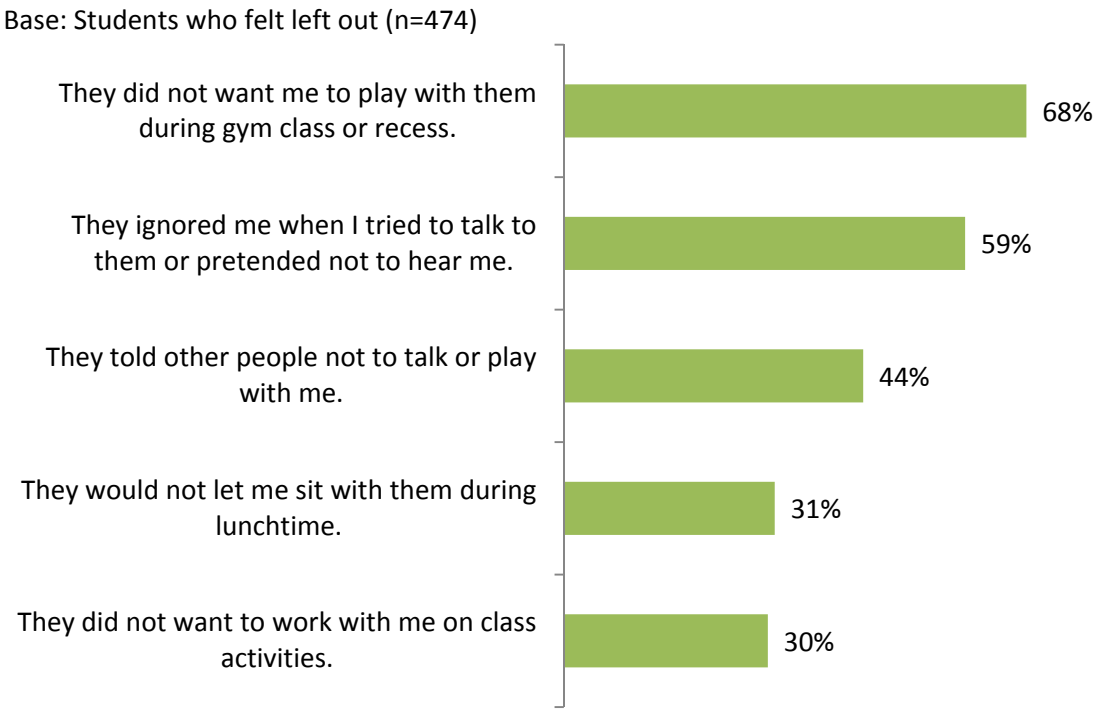
Cyberbullying. With the widespread usage of texting and social networking among today's youth, cyberbullying is an increasingly recognized concern. For elementary school students, however, it appears that the Internet is not a primary method of bullying. As shown in Figure 3.4, only 3% of students say that another kid at school has used the Internet to bully them (e.g., posted mean messages about them on a website, such as Facebook or Club Penguin). Although the percentages are still small, older elementary school students are more likely than younger students to say they have been bullied online (6% vs. 1%), possibly due to greater access to cell phones and the Internet as children grow older.

Figure 3.4
Students' Personal Experences With Other Forms of Bullying



Q825. Which of the following has ever happened to you?

Figure 3.5
Ways Students Were Left Out or Ignored by Other Students



Q825. Which of the following has ever happened to you?

Table 3.4
Students' Personal Experiences with Other Forms of Bullying by Feelings of Safety at School

	Feelings of Safety at School	
	Very Safe	Less Than Very Safe
	A	B
Base:	633	431
I have felt left out or ignored on purpose by other kids at school	36%	57%[A]
Other kids at school have spread mean rumors or lies about me	12%	36%[A]
Another kid at school has used the Internet to call me names, make fun of me, or post mean things about me (for example, on Facebook or Club Penguin)	2%	5%
None of these	58%[B]	28%

Q825. Which of the following has ever happened to you?

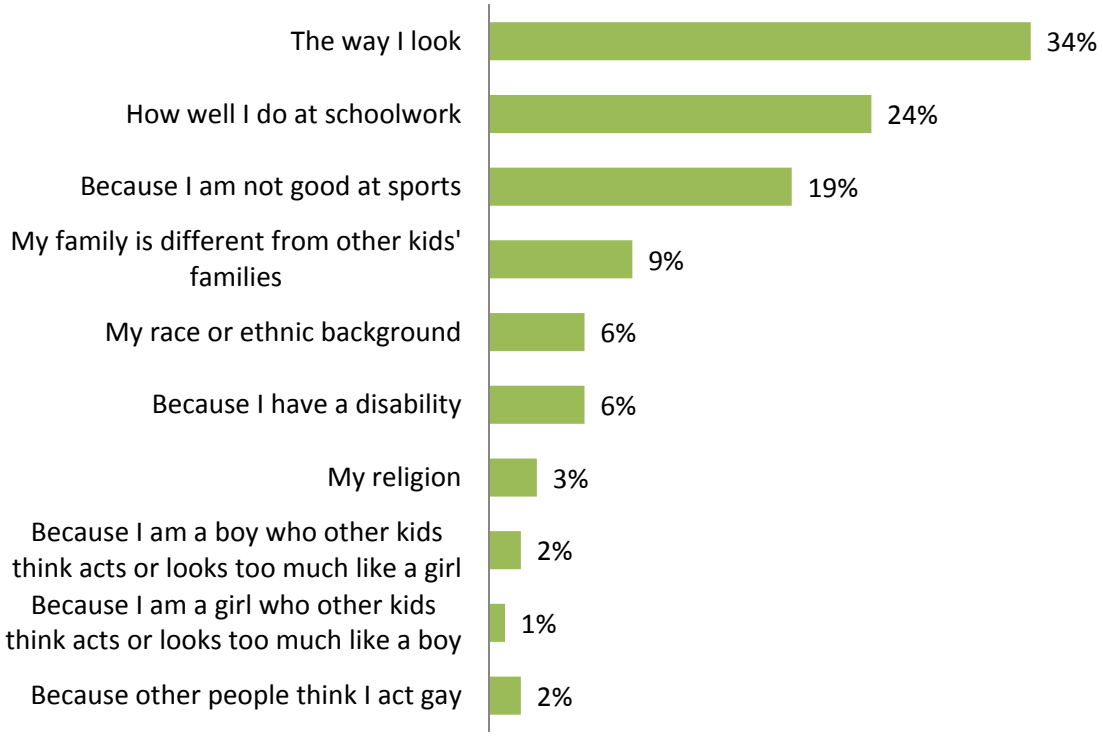
Reasons Students Experience Bullying and Name-Calling at School

We asked students who have ever been called names, made fun of or bullied if they feel they are ever targeted because of personal characteristics or attributes, such as their looks, athletic ability or school performance. Similar to reasons why students feel unsafe, and as shown in Figure 3.6, the number one reason students say they are bullied at school is because of the way they look (34%). One quarter of students who have been bullied say it is because of how they perform on their schoolwork (24%) and two in ten say it is because they are not good at sports (19%). Fewer than one in ten say that they are bullied because their families are not like other kids' families (9%), because of their race or ethnicity (6%) or because they have a disability (6%). Even in elementary school, few students report being bullied because of their religion (3%), because other kids think they do not act or look like boys and girls are traditionally expected to act or look (3%) or because other people think they "act gay" (2%) (see Figure 3.6).

The reasons why elementary school students feel targeted for bullying appear to be related to some demographic differences. One significant difference is that girls are more likely than boys to say they have been called names, made fun of or bullied because of how well they do at schoolwork (29% vs. 19%). Black/African American students (48%) are more likely than White students (29%) to say they are bullied because of the way that they look. Perhaps not surprisingly, Black/African American (11%) and Hispanic (7%) students are also more likely than White students (2%) to say they are bullied because of their race or ethnic background.

Figure 3.6
Reasons Students Experience Bullying or Name-Calling at School

Base: All students who are ever called names, made fun of or bullied (n=714)



Q840. This school year, why have you been called names, made fun of or bullied at school?

Reasons for personal experiences of bullying appear relatively unrelated to school characteristics. One exception is that students in urban areas are more likely than those in suburban or rural areas to say that they are bullied because their families are different from other students' families (urban: 14%, suburban: 6%, rural: 7%). It is possible that urban schools are more diverse in many ways, including the types of families represented, and that this difference in family-related bullying is a reflection of that heterogeneity, but further research is indicated.

Bullying and Name-Calling of Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms

Societal interpretations of gender are imposed on children from infancy and early childhood, and these gender "norms" are reinforced in the media, at school and even at home. People who look or behave outside of these norms may face challenges with being accepted by their peers or find themselves in hurtful or harmful situations. Although research on gender expression and presentation commonly focuses on adolescence, norms regarding gender conformity undoubtedly exist at all ages and may even be particularly salient in elementary school grades, as socialization around gender roles is a hallmark of early childhood.[10] Thus, it is not surprising that elementary school students who may not conform to traditional expectations of how they should act or look because of their gender are beginning to experience hurtful or harmful situations.

One in ten elementary students report that people sometimes think that their behavior or appearance does not conform to traditional gender norms (8%), including 12% of girls who say that people sometimes think they act or look like a boy and 5% of boys who say that people sometimes think they act or look like a girl. These students are more likely than other students to experience bullying and name-calling at school (see Table 3.5). More than half of these students say they are bullied at least sometimes at school, compared to a third of other students (56% vs. 33%). In addition, students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are twice as likely as other students to say that other kids at school have spread mean rumors or lies about them (43% vs. 20%) and three times as likely to report that another kid at school has used the Internet to call them names, make fun of them or post mean things about them (7% vs. 2%).

Given this relationship between bullying experiences and students' gender expression, it is not surprising that students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are less likely than other students to feel very safe at school (42% vs. 61%), and are more likely than others to agree that they sometimes do not want to go to school because they feel unsafe or afraid there (35% vs. 15%) (see Table 3.5).

[10] Eckes, T. & Trautner, H. M. (Eds.) (2000). *The developmental social psychology of gender*. Mahwah. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Table 3.5
Profile of Students Who Do and Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms

	Do NOT Conform To Traditional Gender Norms	Do Conform To Traditional Gender Norms
	A	B
Base:	87	970
Frequency of Being Bullied (This School Year)		
All the Time/Often/Sometimes	56%[B]	33%
All the Time	8%[B]	1%
Often	6%	4%
Sometimes	42%[B]	28%
Almost Never	20%	34%[A]
Never	24%	33%
Frequency of Relational and Cyberbullying (Have Ever Experienced)		
I have felt left out or ignored on purpose by other kids at school	51%	44%
Other kids at school have spread mean rumors or lies about me	43%[B]	20%
Another kid at school has used the internet to call me names, make fun of me, or post mean things about me (for example, on Facebook or Club Penguin)	7%[B]	2%
Feeling of Safety at School		
Very Safe	42%	61%[A]
Less Than Very Safe	58%[B]	39%
"Sometimes I don't want to go to school because I feel afraid or unsafe in school. "		
Agree	35%[B]	15%
Disagree	65%	85%[A]

Q835. How often have you been called names, made fun of, or bullied at school this year?
Q825. Which of the following has ever happened to you?
Q805. How safe do you feel when you are at school?
Q815. How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?: Sometimes I don't want to go to school because I feel afraid or unsafe in school.

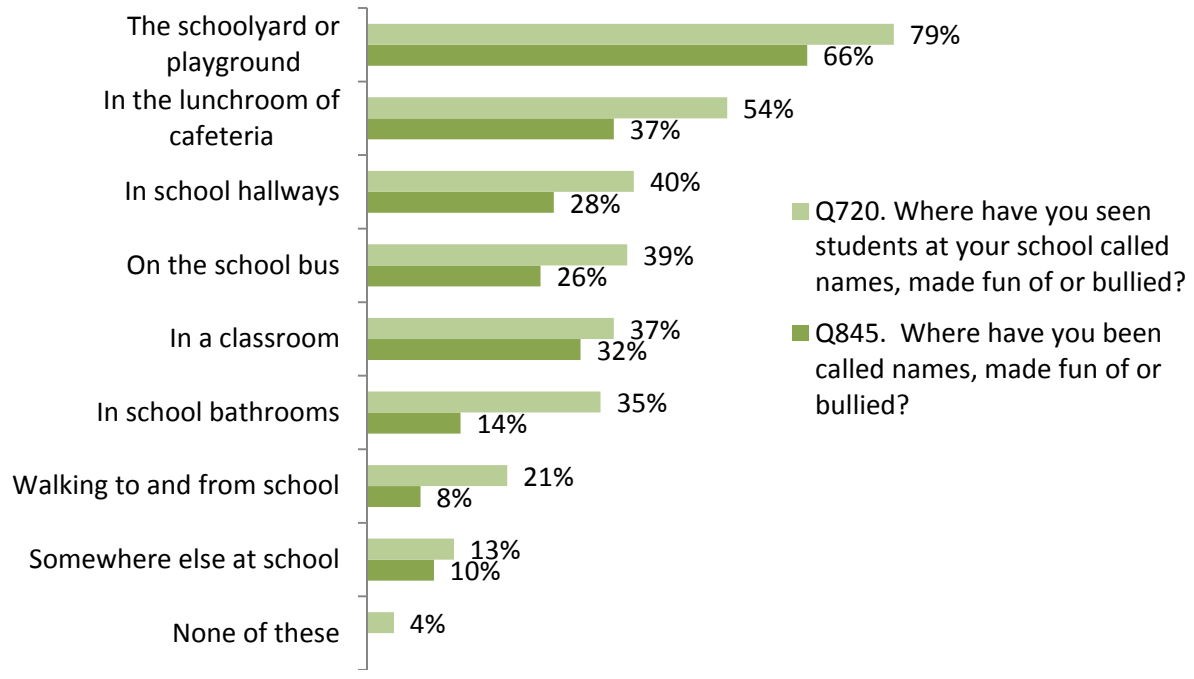
Where Do Bullying and Name-Calling Occur at School?

Bullying and name-calling behavior can happen anywhere in or around school. However, for prevention purposes, it is useful to understand where bullying more commonly occurs. Thus, we asked elementary students where they witness bullying and name-calling at school as well as where they have personally experienced bullying at school. As shown in Figure 3.7, students are most likely to both witness and experience bullying on the playground (79% and 66%, respectively) and in the lunchroom (54% and 37%, respectively). Students least commonly report that bullying and name-calling occurs walking to or from school.

For school personnel thinking about how to address bullying at their schools, it is important to note that the prominence of locations where bullying occurs may vary according to school characteristics. For example, rural students are more likely to both witness bullying on the school bus than urban and suburban students (51% vs. 29% and 38%) and be the victim of bullying on the school bus than urban students (33% vs. 21%). Such differences may reflect the greater tendency of students from rural areas to ride the bus to school and for longer periods of time, providing increased opportunity for bullying to occur.

Figure 3.7
Locations Where Bullying or Name-Calling Occurs at School

Base: All students who say bullying occurs at school (n=994)



Reporting Personal Incidents of Bullying or Name-Calling to School Personnel

In previous research on secondary school students, we have found that students are unlikely to report incidents of bullying or name-calling, with only one third (32%) saying that they reported incidents to a teacher, principal or another school staff member.[11] In contrast, elementary school students who have been bullied often do reach out to a teacher or other adult at school, and they generally find that telling these authority figures about the incidents helps to stop the bullying. As shown in Figure 3.8, most elementary school students who have been called names or bullied tell an adult at school about the incident (75%). However, bullying is not universal ly reported – only 30% of elementary students tell an adult at school all or most of the time. Further, a sizable minority – one quarter (25%) never tell an adult at school about the bullying that they experience (see Figure 3.8).

We also asked those students who have reported bullying to rate how helpful it had been to tell the teacher or other adult at school about the incidents. Most students who had ever told school personnel about the bullying they experienced at school say that it helped to stop the problem to some degree (78%); but less than a third (30%) said it helped "a lot." In fact, nearly half (48%) of students who have told a teacher about being bullied say that it had helped only "a little" (see Figure 3.8). The level of helpfulness also increases with the frequency of reporting bullying incidents: students who say that they tell teachers or other adults at school when they are bullied all of the time or most of the time are much more likely than others to say that the assistance the teacher or adult provided "helped a lot" (report all of the time: 65%; most of the time: 37%; some of the time: 20%) (see Table 3.6).

Student demographics and school characteristics appear relatively unrelated to the tendency of students to report incidents to adults. The exception is that boys are less likely than girls to report incidents to school personnel (29% of boys never tell vs. 20% of girls), especially as they get older (35% of boys in 5th-6th grade never tell vs. 24% of boys in 3rd- 4th grade).

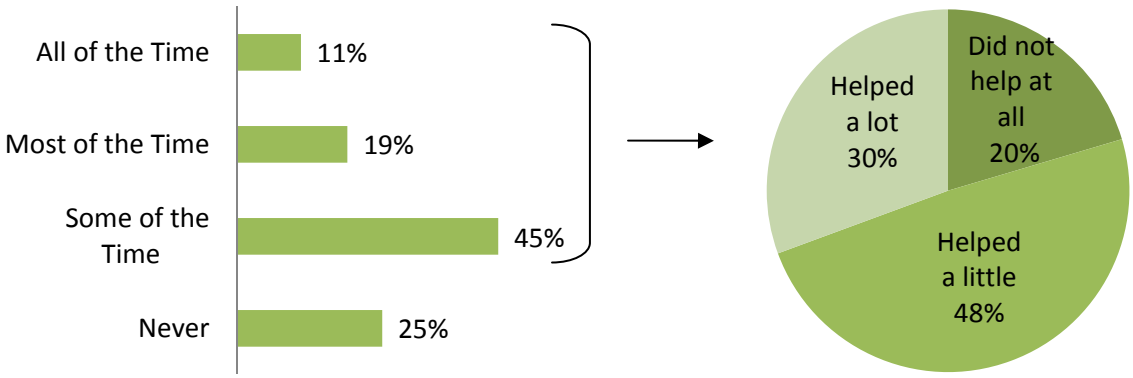
Elementary school students report a variety of reactions from teachers and other school personnel when they tell them about being called names or bullied. Nearly a third say that the adult talked to the bully about the situation (30%) and one in six say the teacher disciplined the bully in some way (16%); in addition, 15% gave the targeted student advice about how to handle the bully. Although most students report positive interactions with adults about the bullying incidents, 6% of students who told a teacher or other adult about being bullied say the adult dismissed their concern in some way (see Figure 3.9).

Interestingly, students who are frequently bullied appear to report a different pattern of response from teachers than those who are rarely bullied (see Table 3.7). Students who are bullied all the time, often or sometimes are more likely than those who are almost never bullied to say the teacher gave them advice about handling bullies (19% vs. 10%), whereas students who are rarely bullied are more likely than those who are bullied frequently to say the teacher talked to the bully (36% vs. 25%). It is possible that when teachers respond directly with the perpetrator of the bullying, it reduces future incidents and results in students being less frequently bullied. However, it is also possible that students who are more frequent targets of bullying elicit a more instructional or nurturing response from school personnel. Because the survey was conducted at only a single point in time, we are unable to

[11] Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers.* New York: GLSEN.

Figure 3.8
Frequency and Helpfulness of Telling a Teacher about Being Called Names, Made Fun of or Bullied at School

Base: All students who are ever bullied (n=714) / told a teacher about being bullied (n=526)



Q850. How often do you tell a teacher or other adult at school when you are called names, made fun of, or bullied at school?/Q860. How much did this help to stop the problem?

Table 3.6
Relationship between Frequency and Helpfulness of Telling a Teacher about Being Called Names, Made Fun of or Bullied at School

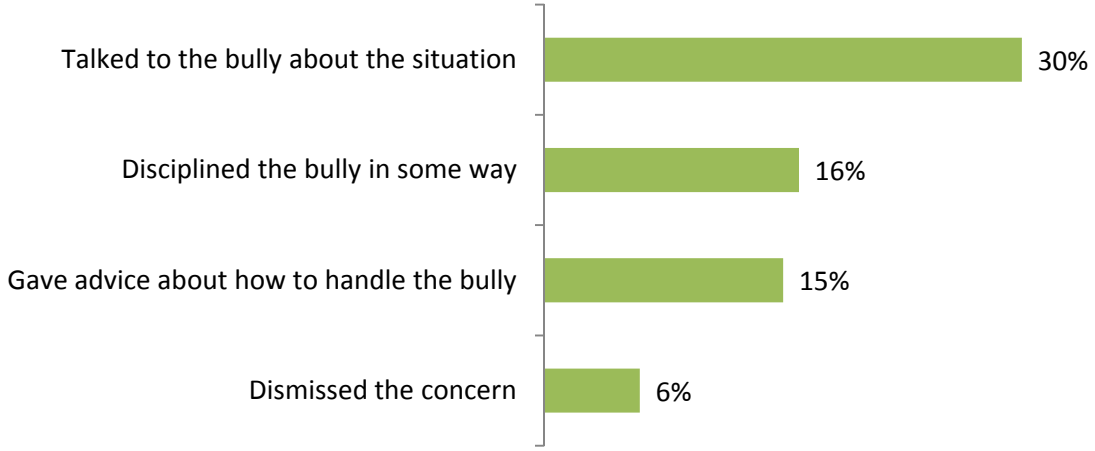
Base: All students who told a teacher about being bullied (n=526)

	Frequency of Reporting Bullying Incidents		
	All the Time	Most of the Time	Some of the Time
	A	B	C
Base:	79	136	321
Helped A Lot	65%[BC]	37%	20%
Helped A Little	24%	43%[A]	58%[A]
Did Not Help At All	10%	20%[A]	22%[A]

Q850. How often do you tell a teacher or other adult at school when you are called names, made fun of, or bullied at school?/Q860. How much did this help to stop the problem?

Figure 3.9
Teacher Reactions to Student Reports of Being Called Names, Made Fun of or Bullied

Base: All students who have told a teacher or adult about being bullied (n=526)



Q855. What did the teacher or adult do or say when you told them about being called names, made fun of or bullied?

Table 3.7
Teacher Reactions to Student Reports of Being Called Names, Made Fun of or Bullied by Frequency of Experiencing Bullying and Grade Level

Base: All students who have told a teacher or adult about being bullied (n=526)

	Experience Bullying		Grade Level	
	All the time/ Often/ Sometimes	Almost Never	3rd-4th	5th-6th
	A	B	C	D
Base:	286	240	280	246
Talked to the bully about the situation	25%	36%[B]	32%	27%
Disciplined the bully in some way	17%	14%	18%	13%
Gave advice about how to handle the bully	19%[B]	10%	12%	20%[C]
Dismissed the concern	6%	6%	8%	4%

Q855. What did the teacher or adult do or say when you told them about being called names, made fun of or bullied?

provide more conclusive results about the relationship between bullying and educator response, and hence future research is needed.

Educator response to bullying also appears to be related to grade level. Students in 5th-6th grade are more likely than 3rd-4th graders to receive advice from their teachers about how to handle the bully (20% vs. 12%) (see Table 3.7). School personnel may act in more protective ways with younger elementary students, perhaps because they believe older students can better understand strategies for handling bullying situations themselves.

Impact of Bullying and Name-Calling

This study also supports findings from prior research that being called names and bullied at school can have a detrimental impact on a student's school performance, relationships with family and classmates and overall well-being.[12] The harmful impact bullying has on elementary school students is evident when examining outcomes for students who are bullied at least sometimes compared to those who are never or almost never bullied (see Table 3.8).

Regarding relationships with peers, students who are more frequently bullied (i.e., all the time, often, sometimes) are also less likely to say that they have a lot of friends. Only one third (33%) of students who are bullied frequently say that they have a lot of friends, compared to nearly six out of ten (57%) students who are not often bullied.

Regarding family relationships, students who are bullied at least sometimes are significantly less likely than those who are rarely or never bullied to say that they get along with their parents (61% vs. 75%). It is important to recognize that although degree of bullying is associated with relationship health with family and friends, the direction of the relationship is undetermined – students may be bullied because they have weaker relationships with family and friends, they may have weaker relationships with family and friends due to being bullied or there may be another factor that accounts for both weaker relationships and being bullied.

Bullying may also negatively affect students' educational experiences (see also Table 3.8). Only 57% of students who are bullied more often (i.e., sometimes or higher) say that they get good grades at school, compared to 71% of students who are rarely bullied (i.e., never or almost never). Additionally, students who are bullied at least sometimes are also less happy at school. One third (34%) say that they had been happy during the current school year, compared to more than two thirds (69%) of students who had never or almost never been bullied. In fact, one third of students (33%) who had been bullied at least sometimes at school say that they sometimes do not want to go to school because they feel unsafe or afraid there, and they are four times as likely as students who had never or almost never been bullied to want to avoid school (33% vs. 8%).

The overall well-being of students is negatively associated with the experience of being bullied. Students who are bullied at least sometimes are less likely than others to say that they feel safe in general (45% vs. 76%) and more likely to often feel stressed (15% vs. 4%), to say that they are always bored (13% vs. 7%), to often feel sad or unhappy (8% vs. 3) and to get into trouble a lot (7% vs. 3%).

[12] Gruber, J. E. & Fineran. F. (2008). Comparing the impact of bullying and sexual harassment victimization on the mental and physical health of adolescents. *Sex Roles, 59*(1-2), 1-13.

Juvonen, J., Nishina, A., & Graham, S. (2000). Peer harassment, psychological adjustment, and school functioning in early adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 92*(2), 349-359.

Table 3.8
Students' Relationships, School Performance and Well-Being by Frequency of Being Bullied

	Experience Bullying	
	All the time/ Often/ Sometimes	Never/Almost Never
	A	B
Base:	360	704
Relationships (% A Lot Like Me)		
I get along well with my parents	61%	75%[A]
I have a lot of friends	33%	57%[A]
School Issues (% A Lot Like Me)		
I get good grades	57%	71%[A]
I have been happy at school this year	34%	69%[A]
Feelings and Behavior (% A Lot Like Me)		
I feel safe	45%	76%[A]
I am always bored	13%[B]	7%
I often feel stressed	15%[B]	4%
I often feel sad and unhappy	8%[B]	3%
I get into trouble a lot	7%[B]	3%
"Sometimes I don't want to go to school because I feel afraid or unsafe in school."		
Agree	33%[B]	8%
Disagree	66%	92%[A]

Q1030. How well do each of these statements describe you?

Lessons about Bullying, Name-Calling and Respect at School

Nearly all elementary school students report that they are taught about bullying and respect in school. In fact, over nine in ten students say that they have been taught at school that people should not bully or call names (92%) and that they should respect people who are different from them (91%). This high rate of education about bullying and respect does not vary by either student or school characteristics that we examined, such as grade level, school location (urban vs. suburban vs. rural) or school type (public vs. private or parochial school).

Summary

Feeling unsafe at school and being a target of bullying are realities that many elementary school students face. Students most commonly report physical appearance, academic performance and athletic ability as reasons for feeling unsafe or for being bullied. Reasons that are less common for elementary school students to feel unsafe or to be bullied are related to race/ethnicity, religion, not following traditional gender norms or because people think they "act gay".

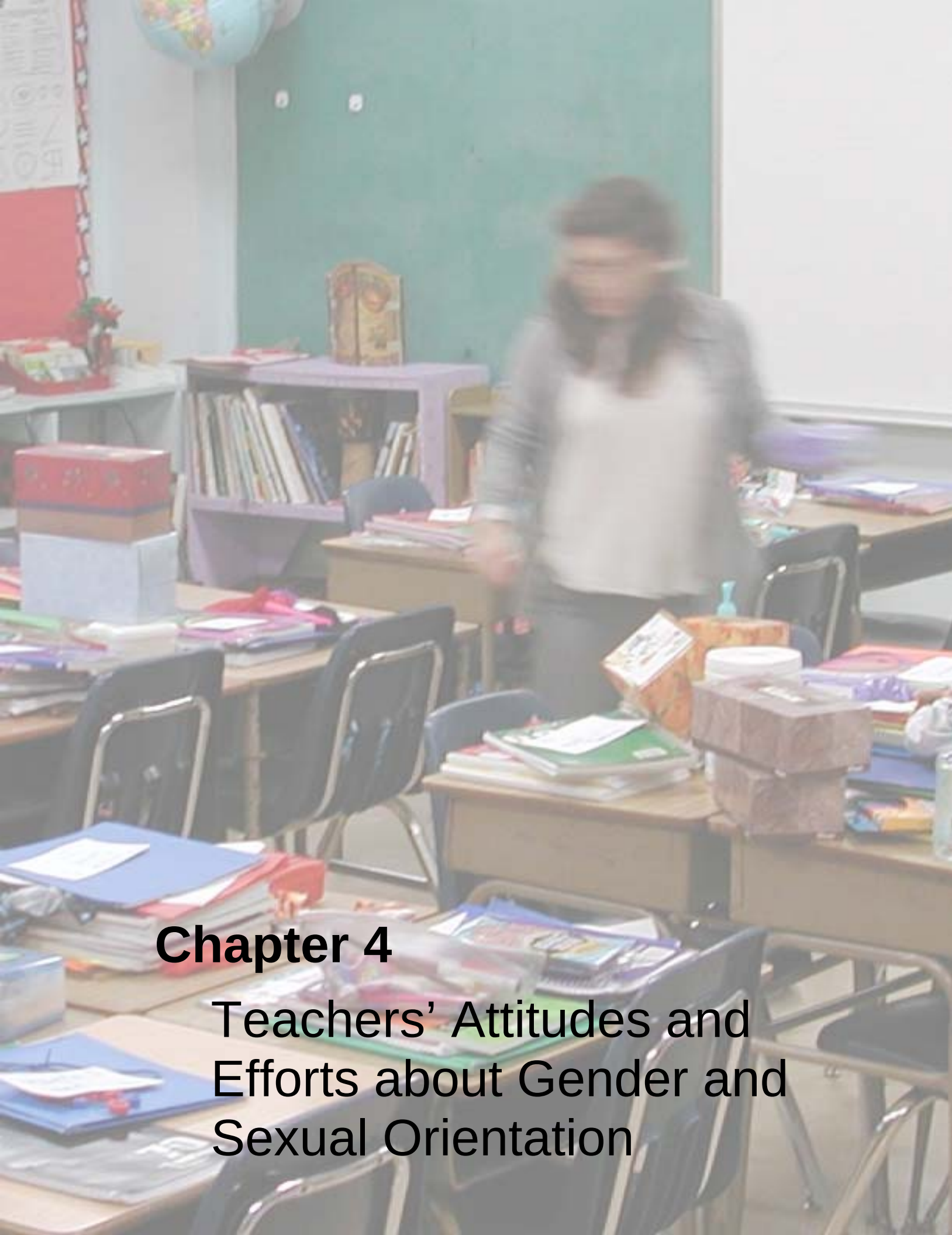
Students who may not conform to traditional gender norms are more likely than others to be frequently bullied (i.e., all the time, often, sometimes). Additionally, bullying seems to be a greater problem in public schools compared to private or parochial schools, and in urban schools compared to suburban or rural schools. Not only are students in public and urban schools more likely to witness bullying (as discussed in Chapter 2), but they are also less likely to feel safe in school and more likely to be bullied themselves.

For some elementary students, this negative school environment may make them feel unsafe at school and even afraid to go to school and . When students choose to tell school staff about being bullied or called names, staff intervention is usually helpful for students, and most students report that school staff respond positively. However, even though young children should have the expectation that their teachers will support them and protect them from harm, a small but significant minority says the teacher or other staff person dismisses their concern.

The results from this study indicate that school climate for elementary schools students may not be as hostile as we have found for secondary school students. Elementary school students are more likely to say that they feel very safe at school compared to secondary school students (59% vs. 47%).[13] The frequency of bullying, name-calling and harassment is lower among reports from elementary school students and elementary school students are much more likely to report negative incidents to school personnel when they do occur. The nature of harassment is similar in that both elementary and secondary school students cite physical appearance as the most common reason that they are bullied or called names. However, for secondary school students, race/ethnicity and gender expression are the next most common reasons, whereas for elementary school students it is school performance and athletic ability.[14]

[13] Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN.

[14] Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN.



Chapter 4

Teachers' Attitudes and Efforts about Gender and Sexual Orientation

Overview

Whereas middle and high school students are often considered to be more aware of sexual orientation and gender identity than younger students due to their age, the previous sections of this report indicate that elementary school students are aware of these concepts to a certain degree as well. Additionally, one quarter of elementary school teachers (25%) say that they know a parent of a student at their school who is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). Given the trajectory of child and adolescent development, it would be unlikely to have an elementary school student identify as LGBT, but not completely out of the question. In fact, one in ten (10%) teachers say that they know a student in their school who is LGBT. Given that LGBT students and students with LGBT parents constitute a sizable portion of the elementary school population, Section 1 of this chapter examines elementary school teachers' attitudes and efforts regarding students who may be or grow up to be LGBT and those with LGBT parents. In Section 2, we examine the experiences of students who do not conform to traditional gender norms (i.e., a male student who acts or looks traditionally feminine or a female student who acts or looks traditionally masculine) and teachers' attitudes towards this students and efforts on their behalf.

Section 1.
Teachers' Attitudes, Efforts and Responses to Students Who Are or May Be LGBT

Teachers' Perspectives on the Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who Are or May Be LGBT

A plurality of elementary school teachers believes that students who might be or grow up to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) would feel comfortable at the school where they teach. At least four in ten believe that these students would feel very or somewhat comfortable – 46% of teachers say that a student who might be or grow up to be lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) would feel comfortable and 40% believe that a student who might be or grow up to be transgender would feel comfortable at their school. In both scenarios, more teachers believe these students would be more comfortable than uncomfortable, with notable numbers reporting these students would be neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (see Figure 4.1).

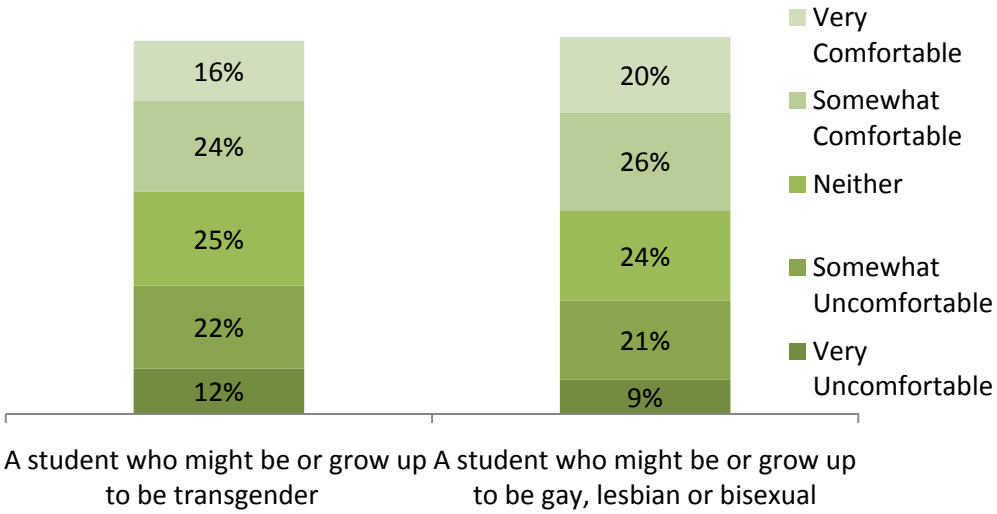
Newer teachers (those with 5 years of experience or less) are more likely than those with more teaching experience to feel that elementary school students who may be or grow up to be LGBT would feel uncomfortable at their schools. Almost one half (46%) of newer teachers believe that LGB students would feel uncomfortable at their schools, compared to two in ten teachers who have more teaching experience (6-20 years: 23%; 21+ years: 22%) (see Table 4.1). Similar proportions are observed among teachers who believe that students who are transgender would feel uncomfortable at their schools (0-5 years: 50%; 6-20 years: 28%; 21+ years: 24%). Meanwhile, teachers' perceptions of the comfort level of students who may be LGBT does not appear to differ by grade level taught.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, newer teachers are more likely to see school safety as a serious problem and, in general, more likely to report that their students make biased remarks, including homophobic comments. Thus, this finding regarding newer teachers' perceptions of the comfort of students who may be or may grow up to be LGBT is consistent with newer teachers' awareness of a more hostile school climate regarding LGBT issues.

Teachers' perceptions of the comfort of students who may be LGBT appear to be related to school characteristics, such as school size and location. Teachers in suburban schools and larger schools are more likely to feel that a student who is or will be LGB would be comfortable in their school (see Table 4.2). Approximately half (53%) of suburban teachers think an LGB student would be comfortable, compared to only 40% of rural teachers. In looking at school size, teachers at small schools are more likely than those in larger schools to say that students who may be or grow up to be LGB would feel very uncomfortable at their schools (Fewer than 300 students: 18%; 300-499 students: 6%; 500+ students: 8%). In contrast, teachers' beliefs about the comfort level of a transgender student, appear to differ only by school locale: 50% of suburban teacher think a transgender student would be comfortable, compared to 35% of rural teachers (see also Table 4.2). Teachers' beliefs on this topic do not differ by school size.

Interestingly, although public school students and teachers are more likely to report problems with bullying and harassment than those in private or parochial schools, teachers' perceptions of the comfort level of LGB or transgender students appear unrelated to whether a school is public, private or parochial.

Figure 4.1
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Students Who Might Be or Grow Up To Be LGBT



Q805. How comfortable do you think the following students would feel at the school where you teach: A student who might be or grow up to be gay, lesbian or bisexual/A student who might be or grow up to be transgender?

Table 4.1
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Students Who Might Be or Grow Up To Be LGBT by Years of Teaching Experience

	Years of Teaching Experience		
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C
Base:	171	514	400
A student who might be or grow up to be gay, lesbian or bisexual			
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	37%	49%	50%
Neither	17%	27%	28%[A]
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	46%[BC]	23%	22%
A student who might be or grow up to be transgender			
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	31%	44%[A]	45%[A]
Neither	18%	27%	31%[A]
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	50%[BC]	28%	24%

Q805. How comfortable do you think the following students would feel at the school where you teach: A student who might be or grow up to be gay, lesbian or bisexual/A student who might be or grow up to be transgender?

Table 4.2
Teachers' Perspectives on on Comfort Level of Students Who Might Be or Grow Up To Be LGBT by School Location

	School Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C
Base:	353	376	368
A student who might be or grow up to be gay, lesbian or bisexual			
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	45%	53%[C]	40%
Neither	27%	21%	25%
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	27%	26%	34%
A student who might be or grow up to be transgender			
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	37%	50%[AC]	35%
Neither	31%	23%	24%
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	31%	27%	41%[B]

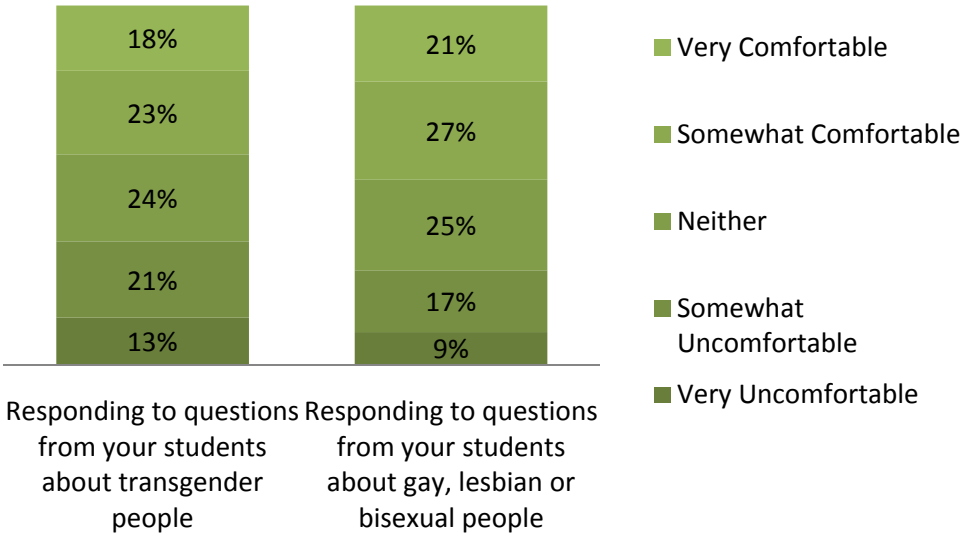
Q805. How comfortable do you think the following students would feel at the school where you teach: A student who might be or grow up to be gay, lesbian or bisexual/A student who might be or grow up to be transgender?

Teachers' Comfort Addressing LGBT Issues

Given that LGBT issues may arise in elementary schools – because of anti-LGBT language or bullying (as detailed in Chapters 1-3), because a student has an LGBT family member or because students learn about LGBT issues in media or in their community – elementary school teachers may be presented with the opportunity to address LGBT issues. They may even be asked directly about these issues by their students. Therefore, we asked teachers about their comfort levels when addressing issues related to people who are LGBT. The majority of teachers reports that they would not feel comfortable responding to questions from their students about people who are LGBT. In fact, less than one half of teachers say that they would feel very or somewhat comfortable responding to these questions from their students (about lesbian, gay or bisexual people: 48%, about transgender people: 41%). Only two in ten say that they would feel very comfortable fielding questions from their students about LGBT people (about lesbian, gay or bisexual people: 21%, about transgender people: 18%) (see Figure 4.2).

Teacher's comfort in answering questions from students about LGBT people appears related to some teacher and school characteristics. Teachers at private or parochial schools are more likely than those in public schools to feel comfortable responding to student questions about LGBT people (LGB: 67% vs. 46%; transgender: 66% vs. 39%). Teachers who know an LGBT student or parent at their school are also more likely to feel comfortable responding to these questions (LGB: 67% vs. 40%; transgender: 58% vs. 34%) (see Table 4.3).

Figure 4.2
Teachers' Level of Comfort in Responding to Student Questions about LGBT People



Q1121. How comfortable would you feel with the following…: Responding to questions from your students about gay, lesbian or bisexual people?/ Responding to questions from your students about transgender people?

Table 4.3
Teachers' Level of Comfort in Responding to Student Questions about LGBT People by School Type and Knowing an LGBT Parent or Student

	School Type		Knows a Student or Parent at School Who is LGBT	
	Public	Private or Parochial	Yes	No
	A	B	D	E
Base:	945	145	355	663
Responding to questions from your students about gay, lesbian or bisexual people				
Very/Somewhat comfortable	46%	67%[A]	67%[E]	40%
Neither	26%	13%	18%	28%[D]
Very/Somewhat uncomfortable	27%	19%	13%	32%[D]
Responding to questions from your students about transgender people				
Very/Somewhat comfortable	39%	66%[A]	58%[E]	34%
Neither	26%[B]	12%	15%	28%[D]
Very/Somewhat uncomfortable	35%	22%	27%	38%[D]

Q1121. How comfortable would you feel with the following…: Responding to questions from your students about gay, lesbian or bisexual people?/ Responding to questions from your students about transgender people?
Note: An asterisk represents a value greater than zero but less than one.

Teachers' Comfort Intervening in Homophobic Name-Calling and Bullying

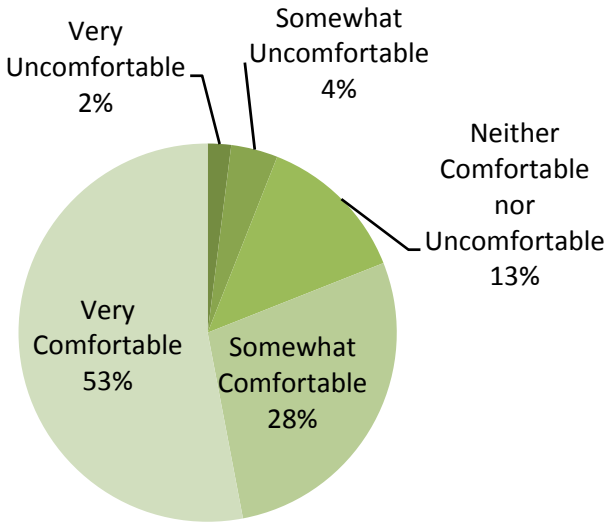
Even though elementary school teachers may not feel comfortable responding to student questions about LGBT people, a large majority are comfortable addressing situations where their students are being called names, bullied or harassed because they are or are perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. As shown in Figure 4.3, eight in ten elementary school teachers (81%) say that they would feel very or somewhat comfortable addressing situations where students are being called names, bullied or harassed because they may be LGB, with slightly over half of teachers saying that they would feel very comfortable addressing these incidents (53%).

Teachers' comfort level with addressing bullying, name-calling and harassment based on real or perceived sexual orientation varies by years of teaching experience (see Table 4.4). Teachers with fewer years of experience (5 years or less) are significantly more likely than those with 6-20 years of experience to say that they feel very or somewhat comfortable addressing bullying or name-calling incidents because of perceived or actual sexual orientation (89% vs. 78%).

Some differences between teachers exist by the grade level they teach, with teachers of younger grades being less comfortable addressing LGB-related bullying. Teachers of 3rd-4th graders are more comfortable addressing bullying incidents regarding real or perceived sexual orientation than those of K-2nd graders (90% vs. 74%). Teachers of 5th-6th graders (83%) do not differ significantly from either group. No statistically significant differences on comfort level with addressing name-calling or bullying of students who are or might be LGB can be seen by school type (public vs. private or parochial) or school location.

Whether or not teachers know a student or parent at school who is LGBT is also related to their comfort level with addressing bullying or name-calling due to perceived LGB status. Teachers who know an LGBT student or parent at their school are more likely than those who do not to say they would feel very comfortable addressing incidents of bullying or name-calling toward a student who is believed to be LGB (67% vs. 49%) (see also Table 4.4).

Figure 4.3
Teachers' Level of Comfort in Addressing Bullying, Name-Calling and Harassment of Students Perceived to be LGB



Q1121. How comfortable would you feel with the following…: Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because a student is or is believed to be gay, lesbian or bisexual?

Table 4.4
Teachers' Level of Comfort in Addressing Bullying, Name-Calling and Harassment of Students Perceived to be LGB by Years of Experience and Knowing an LGBT Parent or Student

	Years of Teaching Experience			Knows a Student or Parent at School Who is LGBT	
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More	Yes	No
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	171	514	412	355	663
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	89%[B]	78%	82%	88%[E]	79%
Very Comfortable	62%[B]	49%	53%	67%[E]	49%
Somewhat Comfortable	27%	29%	28%	21%	31%[D]
Neither Comfortable nor Uncomfortable	8%	14%	15%	8%	14%
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	3%	8%	4%	4%	7%
Somewhat Uncomfortable	2%	5%	2%	2%	5%
Very Uncomfortable	*	2%	2%	2%	2%

Q1121. How comfortable would you feel with the following…: Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because a student is or is believed to be gay, lesbian or bisexual?
Note: An asterisk represents a value greater than zero but less than one.

Section 2.
Teachers' Attitudes, Efforts and Responses Regarding Gender Non-Conforming Students

Teachers' Attitudes Regarding Gender Non-Conforming Students

Previous research on school experiences of gender non-conforming youth[15] and prevalence of harassment based on gender expression in middle and high schools[16] indicates that adolescents who do not conform to traditional gender norms may face hostile school climates. Less research focuses on the school experiences of younger gender non-conforming children. We asked teachers how comfortable they believe students who may not conform to traditional gender norms (such as a male student who acts or looks traditionally feminine or a female student who acts or looks traditionally masculine) would feel at their school. More than four in ten elementary school teachers report that gender non-conforming students would feel comfortable at their school—almost half (49%) believe that a female student who acts or looks traditionally masculine would feel comfortable at their school and 44% believe that a male student who acts or looks traditionally feminine would feel comfortable (see Figure 4.4). A sizable portion of teachers believe these students would be uncomfortable at their school (male student: 35%, female student: 27%).

Consistent with teachers' other reports on school climate (see previous chapters), elementary school teachers with fewer years of experience are more likely than their counterparts to say that gender non-conforming students may feel uncomfortable at their school (see Table 4.5). For example, 36% of newer teachers report that a gender non-conforming female student would feel uncomfortable at their school compared to around a quarter of other teachers (6-20 years: 25%; 21+ years: 20%).

Teachers' perceived comfort of gender non-conforming students also differs by school characteristics. Consistent with other findings on school climate in this report, teachers in suburban schools are more likely than their counterparts at urban or rural schools to say that both male and female gender non-conforming students would feel comfortable at their school (see Table 4.6).

Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts Addressing Gender-Related Issues

We also asked teachers about how receptive their school community would be to efforts addressing issues of gender roles, gender stereotypes and non-traditional gender expression. Overall, teachers feel that the majority of other people that work in their schools, such as teachers (62%), school administrators (60%) and other staff (56%), would be supportive of these efforts. They are somewhat less likely to say that people who do not directly work in the school building, such as district-level administration (48%), the school board (46%), parents (46%) and the PTA/PTO (41%), would be supportive of these efforts (see Figure 4.5). Fewer than two in ten believe that any of these groups would not be supportive.

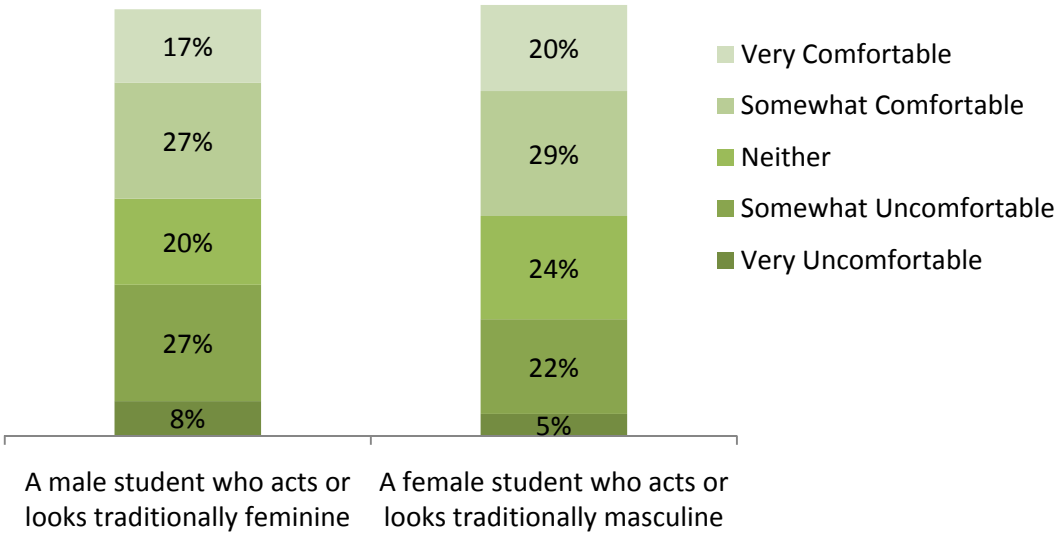
[15] Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G., & Diaz, E. M. (2009). *Harsh realities: The experiences of transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

McGuire, J. K., Anderson, C. R., Toomey, R. B. & Russell, S. T. (2010). School climate for transgender youth: A mixed method investigation of student experiences and school responses. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

[16] Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN

Although teachers with less experience often are more aware of school safety issues, teachers with more teaching experience are more likely to believe that the school community would be supportive of efforts to address the topic of gender non-conformity. As shown in Table 4.7, teachers with more than 20 years of experience are more likely than teachers with 6 to 20 years experience to report that most people in the school community would be very or somewhat supportive of these efforts. As shown in Table 4.8, teachers from suburban schools are also more likely than teachers from urban or rural schools to find the school community supportive of addressing issues of gender non-conformity.

Figure 4.4
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms



Q805. How comfortable do you think the following students would feel at the school where you teach: A female student who acts or looks traditionally masculine/A male student who acts or looks traditionally feminine?

Table 4.5
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by Years of Experience

	Years of Teaching Experience		
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C
Base:	171	514	400
A female student who acts or looks traditionally masculine			
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	43%	51%	52%
Neither	21%	24%	28%
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	36%[BC]	25%	20%
A male student who acts or looks traditionally feminine			
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	37%	48%	45%
Neither	19%	19%	25%
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	44%[C]	33%	30%

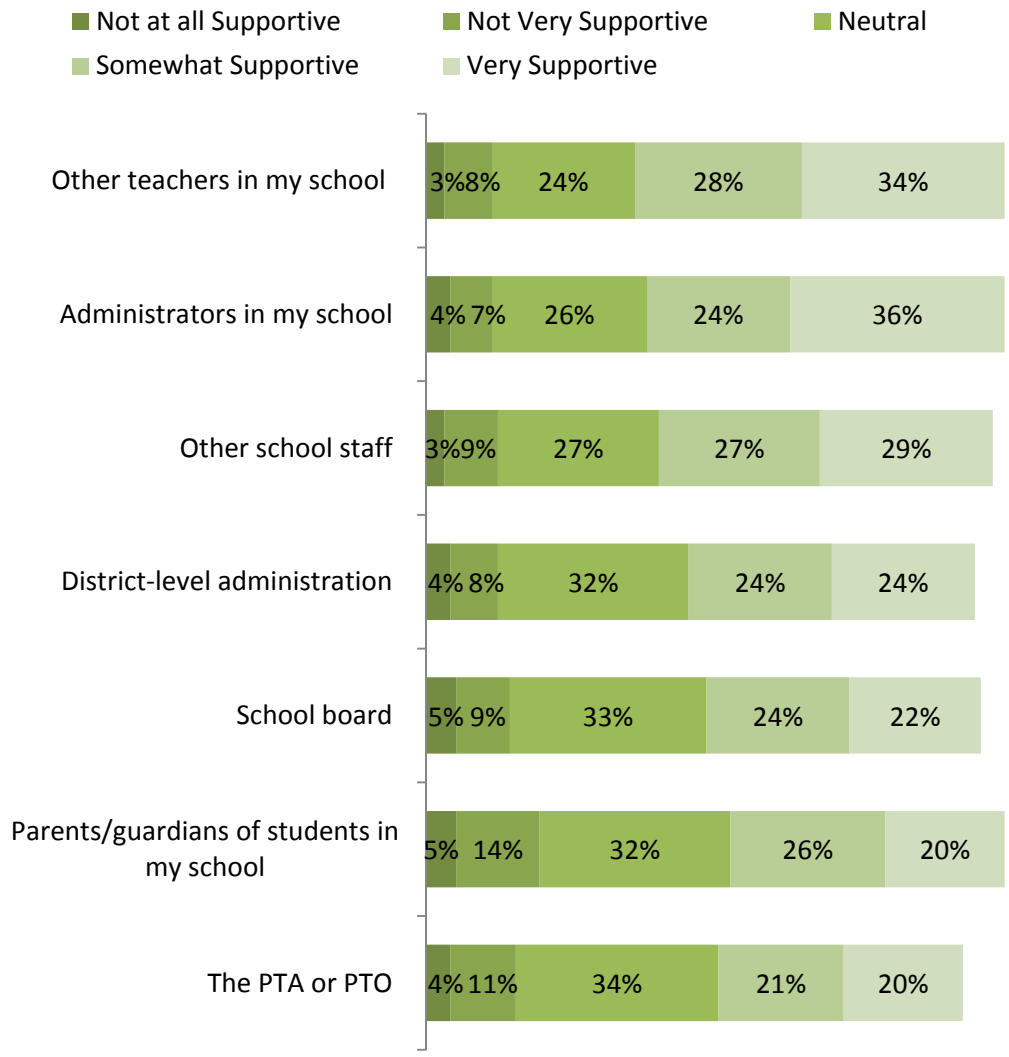
Q805. How comfortable do you think the following students would feel at the school where you teach: A female student who acts or looks traditionally masculine/A male student who acts or looks traditionally feminine?

Table 4.6
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by School Location

	School Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C
Base:	353	376	368
A female student who acts or looks traditionally masculine			
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	43%	58%[AC]	45%
Neither	29%	22%	22%
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	28%	20%	34%[B]
A male student who acts or looks traditionally feminine			
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	40%	54%[AC]	38%
Neither	22%	20%	20%
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	38%[B]	26%	43%[B]

Q805. How comfortable do you think the following students would feel at the school where you teach: A female student who acts or looks traditionally masculine/A male student who acts or looks traditionally feminine?

Figure 4.5
Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Issues of Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes and Non-Traditional Gender Expression



Q1205. How supportive would the following members of your school community be about efforts that specifically address issues of gender roles, gender stereotypes and non-traditional gender expression?

Table 4.7
Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Issues of Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes and Non-Traditional Gender Expression by Years of Experience (% Very/Somewhat Supportive)

	Years of Teaching Experience		
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C
Base:	171	514	400
Other teachers in my school	59%	59%	69%[B]
Administrators in my school	58%	56%	68%[B]
Other school staff	54%	54%	61%
District-level administration	47%	41%	59%[B]
School board	45%	41%	55%[B]
Parents/guardians of students in my school	46%	44%	49%
The PTA or PTO	45%	36%	47%[B]

Q1205. How supportive would the following members of your school community be about efforts that specifically address issues of gender roles, gender stereotypes and non-traditional gender expression?

Table 4.8
Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Issues of Gender Roles, Gender Stereotypes and Non-Traditional Gender Expression by School Location

	School Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C
Base:	353	376	368
Other teachers in my school	60%	68%[C]	56%
Administrators in my school	57%	65%	56%
Other school staff	54%	64%[C]	50%
District-level administration	45%	54%	43%
School board	44%	54%[C]	40%
Parents/guardians of students in my school	42%	55%[AC]	41%
The PTA or PTO	36%	50%[AC]	36%

Q1205. How supportive would the following members of your school community be about efforts that specifically address issues of gender roles, gender stereotypes and non-traditional gender expression?

Teachers' Feelings of Obligation and Helpfulness of Efforts to Ensure a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms

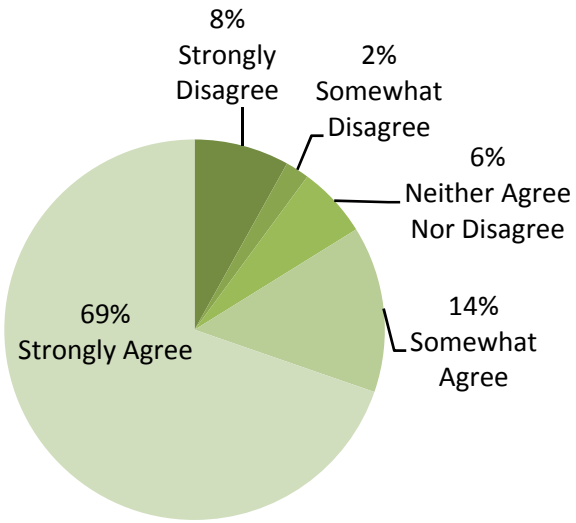
We asked teachers whether they felt an obligation to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for gender-non-conforming students. The vast majority – 83% – of teachers agree that they and other school personnel have such an obligation, with almost seven out of ten (69%) saying that they strongly agree that teachers have this obligation (see Figure 4.6).

The belief in an obligation to create a safe and supportive learning environment for students who do not conform to traditional gender norms is widespread, and generally does not vary by teacher or school characteristics.

Teachers believe that a variety of efforts could be helpful in creating a safer and more supportive school environment for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms. As shown in Figure 4.7, teachers believe that having policies that protect students from bullying, name-calling and harassment based on specific characteristics, including gender expression and gender identity, would be most helpful – almost nine in ten teachers (87%) report that these policies would be very or somewhat helpful. In addition, three quarters of teachers (74%) say that having professional development for school personnel about bullying, name-calling and harassment based on gender expression would be useful as well. Around two thirds of teachers also feel the following efforts would be very or somewhat helpful: having more resources on how to incorporate these issues into their curriculum or discussions with students (68%), implementing education programs for students about these issues (68%) and having the principal or other school administrators speak openly about these issues and supporting teachers who also address these issues (67%) (see Figure 4.7).

Few differences related to teacher or school characteristics are apparent in teachers' perceptions on the helpfulness of different efforts to create a safer and more supportive school for gender-nonconforming students. One exception is that teachers who teach K-2nd grades are more

Figure 4.6
Teachers' Feelings of Obligation towards Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms



Q1005. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: Teachers and other school personnel have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students who do not conform to traditional gender norms.

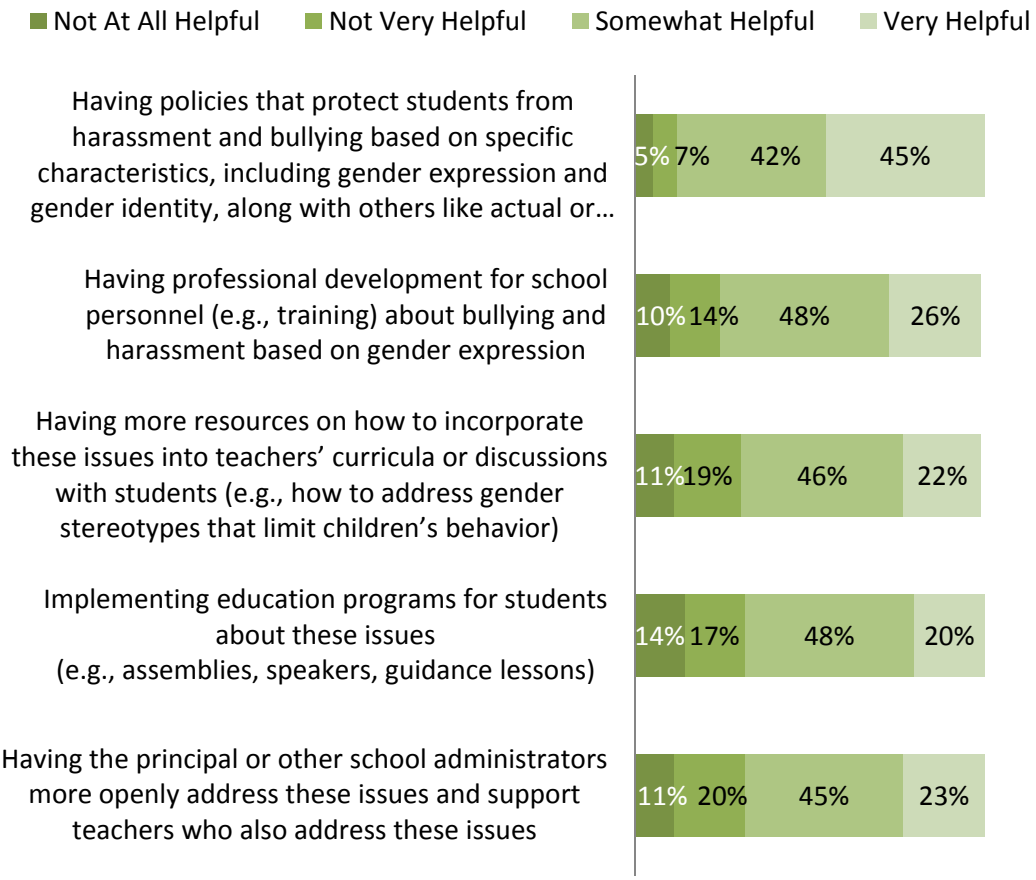
likely than those who teach 5th-6th grades to believe that having more resources on how to incorporate issues related to gender into their curriculum or discussions with students would be helpful (76% vs. 57%).

Teachers' Efforts for Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms

We asked elementary school teachers about how they might address having a student who does not conform to traditional gender norm and what practices they might employ in this area. As shown in Table 4.9, about one third of elementary school teachers (34%) say that they have personally engaged in efforts to create a safe and supportive classroom environment for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms, with teachers in the older grades (5th and 6th) being more likely to report this than teachers in the younger grades (K-2nd grade). Given that suburban teachers are most likely to think gender non-conforming students would be comfortable in

Figure 4.7
Teachers' Perceptions on Helpfulness of Efforts in Creating Safer and More Supportive Schools for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms

Base: Those Who Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Somewhat Agree Or Strongly Agree That School Personnel Have Obligation To Ensure A Safe Environment For Students Who Do Not Conform To Traditional Gender Norms (n=1009)



Q1011. How helpful would the following efforts be in creating safer and more supportive schools for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms?

their schools and that the school community would be more supportive of efforts related to gender nonconformity, it is not surprising that suburban teachers are also most willing to engage in efforts to create a supportive classroom for gender non-conforming students. Teachers in suburban (43%) and urban (38%) schools are more likely to engage in these efforts than those in rural schools (25%) (see also Table 4.9).

Teachers respond in several ways to provide a safe and supportive environment for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms. The most common action reported by teachers is to avoid reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes in their classrooms (78%). Around six in ten teachers who have engaged in efforts to support gender non-conforming students avoid situations that divide their classrooms based on gender (64%), have informally discussed the topic with their students (60%) or have addressed incidents of gender bias among their students (59%). Fewer have incorporated the topic into their teaching curriculum (20%) or have advocated for school policies and practices that would benefit students who may not conform to traditional gender norms (19%) (see Figure 4.8).

Again, few differences in teachers' efforts are apparent by teacher or school characteristics, although teachers at urban schools are more likely than those in suburban or rural schools to say they have taken action by incorporating this topic into their teaching curriculum (urban: 34% vs. suburban: 16% vs. rural: 12%). In addition, teachers at urban school are more likely to have advocated for school policies that are inclusive of or protect students who may not conform to traditional gender norms (urban: 31% vs. suburban: 14% vs. ; rural: 13%) (see Table 4.10).

We asked elementary school teachers who have not made efforts to create a safe and supportive environment for students who may be gender non-conforming their primary reasons for not doing so. Most of the teachers report that they have not made any efforts because the topic has not come up in their classrooms (83%). About two in ten (22%) say that they feel it is not necessary for them to make these efforts to create a safe environment for these students. Fewer say that they do not have the time to fit this in with everything else they need to teach (12%), they do not have the autonomy to address subjects outside of the curriculum that they need to follow (10%) or they would not know how to address this issue (9%). Fear of backlash from parents (4%) or an unsupportive administration (4%) do not rank high on the list of reasons why teachers have not made efforts for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms (see Figure 4.9).

One possible reason why more urban than rural teachers may make efforts to create a safe and supportive environment for students who do not follow societal expectations of gender is that there may be more adherence to traditional gender norms in rural areas. Almost nine in ten rural teachers (88%) say that they have not made these efforts because it has not come up in their classrooms, which is significantly greater than urban teachers who say the same (75%), although both percentages are still high. One other difference in teachers' efforts is related to school size: those who teach in smaller schools are more likely than those who teach in larger schools to say that they have not made these efforts because they did not feel that it was necessary (fewer than 300 students: 36%; 300-499 students: 20%; 500 students or more: 20%). Teachers' efforts in this area were generally unrelated to other teacher characteristics, such as grade level taught or years of teaching experience.

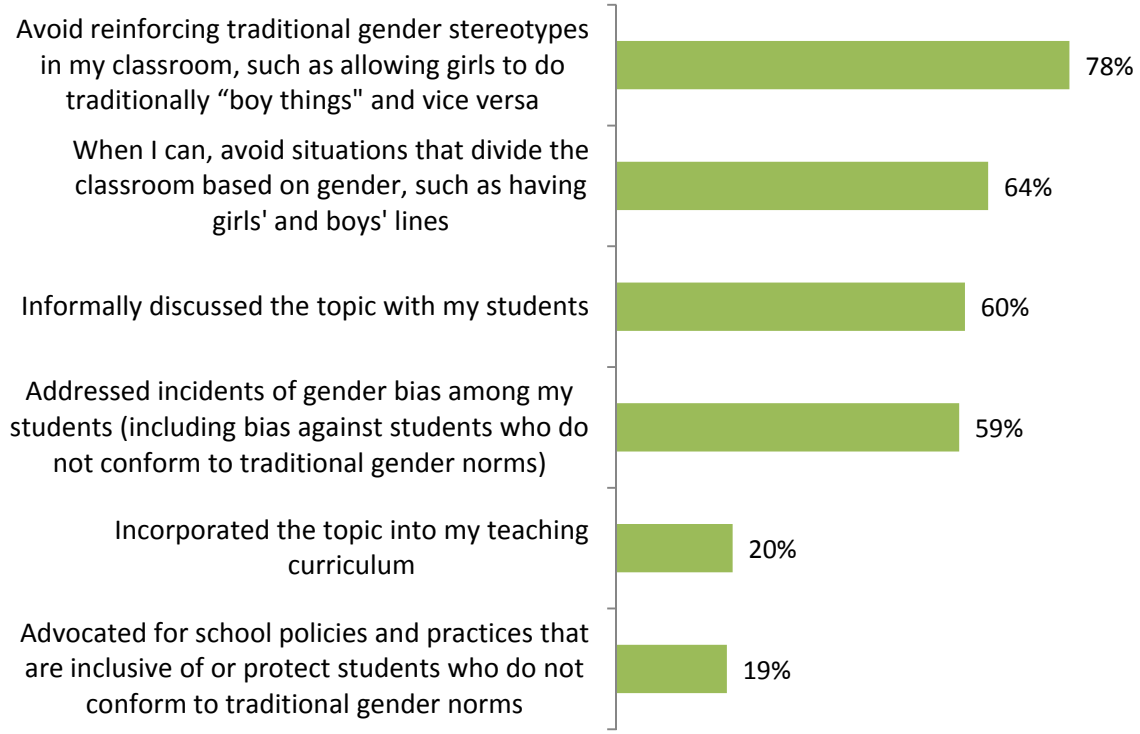
Table 4.9
Teachers Who Have Personally Engaged in Efforts to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Students Who May not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms By Grade Level Taught and School Location

	Total	Grade Level Taught			School Location		
		K-2nd	3rd-4th	5th-6th	Urban	Suburban	Rural
		A	B	C	D	E	F
Base:	1099	280	214	139	353	376	368
Engaged in any effort for gender nonconforming students	34%	30%	37%	46%[A]	38%[F]	43%[F]	25%

Q1030. Have you personally engaged in efforts specifically designed to create a safe and supportive environment in your classroom for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms?

Figure 4.8
Efforts Teachers Have Made to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms

Base: Among those who have engaged in efforts for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms (n=422)



Q1035. Which of the following have you done to create a safe and supportive environment for students in your classroom who may not conform to traditional gender norms?

Table 4.10
Efforts Teachers Have Made to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by School Location

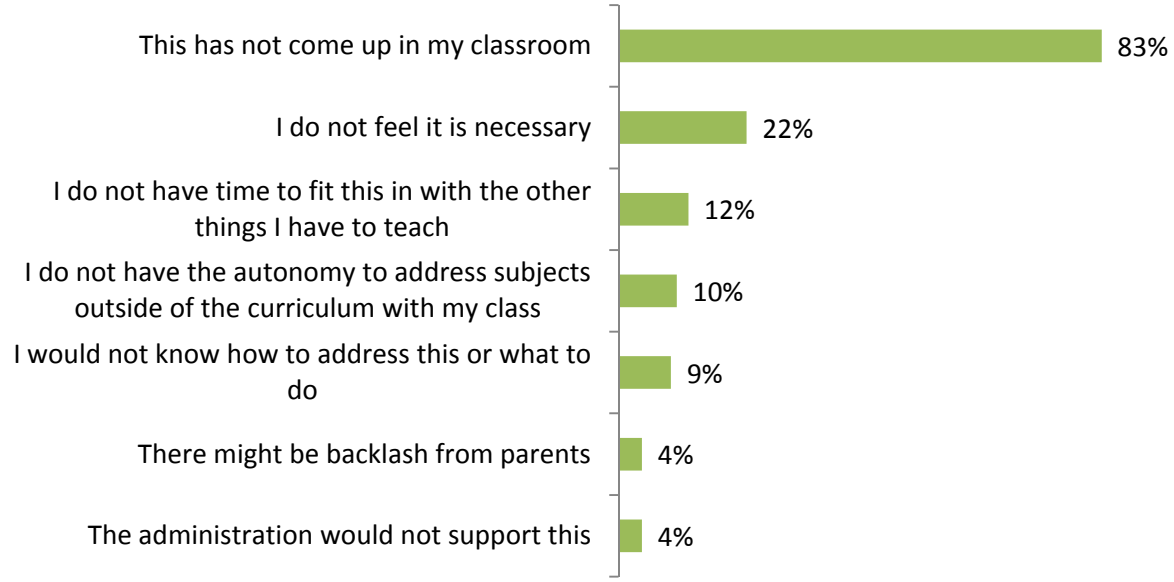
Base: Those who have engaged in efforts for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms (n=422)

	School Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C
Base:	135	173	113
Avoid reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes in my classroom, such as allowing girls to do traditionally "boy things" and vice versa	75%	83%	75%
When I can, avoid situations that divide the classroom based on gender, such as having girls' and boys' lines	62%	66%	63%
Informally discussed the topic with my students	63%	61%	55%
Addressed incidents of gender bias among my students (including bias against students who do not conform to traditional gender norms)	69%[B]	49%	65%
Incorporated the topic into my teaching curriculum	34%[BC]	16%	12%
Advocated for school policies and practices that are inclusive of or protect students who do not conform to traditional gender norms	31%[BC]	14%	13%

Q1035. Which of the following have you done to create a safe and supportive environment for students in your classroom who may not conform to traditional gender norms?

Figure 4.9
Reasons Why Teachers Have Not Made Efforts to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Students Who May Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms

Base: Teachers who have not engaged in efforts for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms (n=671)



Q1040. What are the reasons why you have not engaged in efforts in your classroom to create a safe and supportive environment for students in your classroom who may not conform to traditional gender norms?

Teachers' Responses to Bullying, Name-Calling or Harassment towards Gender Non-Conforming Students

In Chapters 1 and 2, we learned that teachers do witness student name-calling and bullying toward gender non-conforming students, although it is not one of the most frequent reasons for such negative behaviors. Although most teachers report intervening when encountering these behaviors, we nevertheless wanted to understand their comfort level in addressing incidents in which students are bullied or called names because they do not conform to traditional gender roles. Eight in ten teachers (82%) say that they would feel very or somewhat comfortable in handling these situations, with more than one half (53%) saying they would feel very comfortable (see Figure 4.10).

Teachers of older elementary students and teachers with fewer years on the job are more comfortable addressing these issues. As shown in Table 4.11, teachers who teach 3rd-4th grade (90%) are more comfortable addressing these situations than teachers of K-2nd grades (75%), but report similar comfort levels as 5th-6th grade teachers (82%). Teachers with five years of experience or less (89%) are also more likely to be comfortable addressing situations in which students who do not conform to traditional gender roles are bullied than teachers with 6-20 years of experience (79%), but not significantly more likely to be comfortable than teachers with 21 years of experience or more (83%).

Teachers' comfort level in addressing these incidents appears relatively unrelated to school characteristics, such as school type and location.

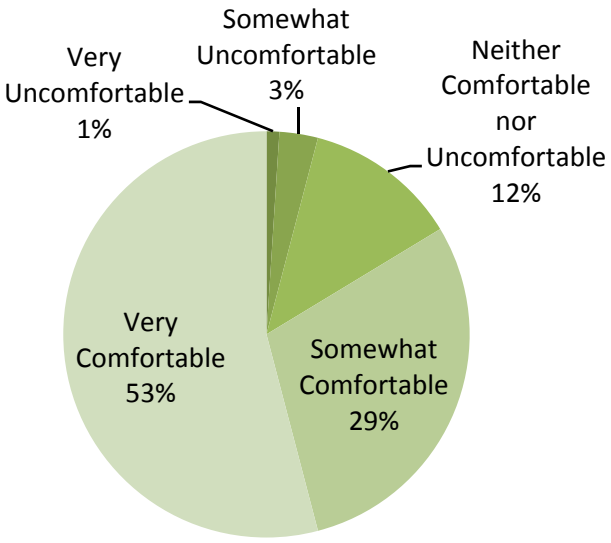
However, teachers at smaller schools are more likely than those at larger schools to say they would feel comfortable addressing these bullying incidents (fewer than 300 students: 94% vs. 300-499 students: 81% vs. 500 students or more: 82%).

We also asked elementary school teachers what they would do if a student in their class was being called names, bullied or harassed because the student did not conform to traditional gender norms. As shown in Figure 4.11, teachers report a wide range of responses: one third or more of teachers say that they would conduct a class discussion about respecting people's differences (39%), educate the perpetrator about why their actions were wrong (37%), conduct a class discussion about name-calling and bullying (36%), send the perpetrator to the principal or other administrator (35%) or talk with the victim (33%). Nearly a quarter of teachers would talk with the perpetrator and victim together (24%) or privately tell the perpetrator to stop (21%). Less common responses include talking with the parents of the victim or the perpetrator or telling the perpetrator in front of other students to stop their behavior.

Not surprisingly, we find that grade level makes a difference in the ways teachers handle situations in which students who may not conform to traditional gender norms (see Table 4.12). Teachers of younger students would be more likely than 5th-6th grade teachers to use these incidents as "teachable moments" – conducting a class discussion about respecting people's differences (K-2nd grade: 44% vs. 3rd-4th grade: 45% vs. 5th-6th grade: 28%), as well as educating the perpetrator about why his/her actions were wrong (K-2nd grade: 37% vs. 3rd-4th grade: 38% vs. 5th-6th grade: 25%).

Additionally, teachers of K-2nd grade would be more likely than other teachers to talk with the perpetrator and victim together (35% vs. 17% of 3rd-4th grade teachers and 23% of 5th-6th grade teachers), but less likely to privately tell the perpetrator to stop (15% vs. 26% of 3rd-4th grade teachers and 28% of 5th-6th grade teachers). Teachers of 5th-6th grade students would be more likely than other teachers to say they would tell the perpetrator to stop in front of other students

Figure 4.10
Teachers' Level of Comfort in Addressing Bullying, Name-Calling or Harassment of Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Roles



Q1121. How comfortable would you feel with the following…: Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because they don't conform to traditional gender roles?

(24% vs. 7% of 3rd-4th grade teachers and 10% of K-2nd grade teachers. Teacher response to these incidents appears unrelated to school type or school size, but related to years of teaching experience and school location. Teachers with more than 20 years of experience are less likely than their counterparts to say they would educate the perpetrator about why their actions were wrong (5 years or less: 47% vs. 6-20 years: 39% vs. 21 or more years: 26%).

With regard to school location, teachers in urban areas say they would be more likely to conduct class discussions about respecting people's differences compared to teachers in suburban or rural areas (urban: 48% vs. suburban: 36% vs. rural: 36%). Teachers in urban (41%) and rural (39%) schools would be more likely than those in suburban schools (29%) to conduct a class discussion about name-calling and bullying. Teachers in suburban schools would be more likely to refer the perpetrator and victim to a peer mediator to try to resolve their differences than teachers in urban and rural schools (15% vs. 7% vs. 6%).

Findings from our preliminary qualitative research show that teachers may vary in how they respond to a child who is gender non-conforming – some might encourage the behavior whereas others might urge the student to conform more to gender norms, perhaps to preempt the student from being a target of bullying or name-calling. Thus, we also asked teachers in the survey how they would respond to having students in their class who may not conform to traditional gender norms. Most teachers say that they would not try to change students who do not conform to traditional gender norms, although they would also not actively support their non-traditional gender expression. Six in ten teachers (61%) say that they would be most likely to not do or say anything and let a student who does not conform to traditional gender norms to act or look the way the student wants. Only one in five teachers (21%) say that they would actively encourage the student to continue to express him or herself. Fewer than one in ten elementary school teachers would speak with the student's parents about

Table 4.11
Teachers' Level of Comfort in Addressing Bullying, Name-Calling or Harassment of Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Roles by Grade Level Taught and Years of Experience

	Grade Level Taught			Years of Teaching Experience		
	K-2nd	3rd-4th	5th-6th	5 Years or Less	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Base:	280	214	139	171	514	412
Very/Somewhat Comfortable	75%	90%A	82%	89%E	79%	83%
Neither Comfortable nor Uncomfortable	16%B	6%	14%	9%	13%	13%
Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable	8%	3%	2%	2%	6%	3%

Q1121. How comfortable would you feel with the following…: Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because they don't conform to traditional gender roles? Note: An asterisk represents a value greater than zero but less than one.

their child's appearance or behavior (9%) or encourage the student to change his or her appearance or behavior to "fit in" (2%). An additional 7% of teachers indicate that they would handle it in another way, such as seeking help from the principal or the counselor or ensuring that the student follows the dress code.

Teachers do not differ in their responses to having a gender non-conforming student by the grade levels that they teach, although they do differ by years of experience. Teachers with 5 years of experience or less (28%) are more likely than those with 21 or more years of experience (16%) to say they would encourage students who may not conform to traditional gender norms to continue to freely express themselves (see Table 4.13).

Teachers at public schools would be more likely than those at private or parochial schools to not do or say anything and let the student act or look the way he or she wants (63% vs. 44%). Teachers in suburban schools would also be more likely than those in urban schools to not do or say anything and let the student act or look the way he or she wants (67% vs. 55%). Teachers at urban (10%) or rural (13%) schools say they would be more likely than those at suburban schools (4%) to speak with the student's parents about the student's appearance or behavior (see Table 4.14). Finally, teachers at smaller schools say they would be less likely than teachers at larger schools to say that they would not do or say anything (fewer than 300 students: 46%; 300-499 students: 61%; 500 students or more: 66%). In fact, teachers at smaller school are more likely to say that they would encourage the students to continue to freely express themselves.

Figure 4.11
Ways That Teachers Would Address Incidents Where Students are Bullied or Called Names for Not Conforming to Traditional Gender Norms

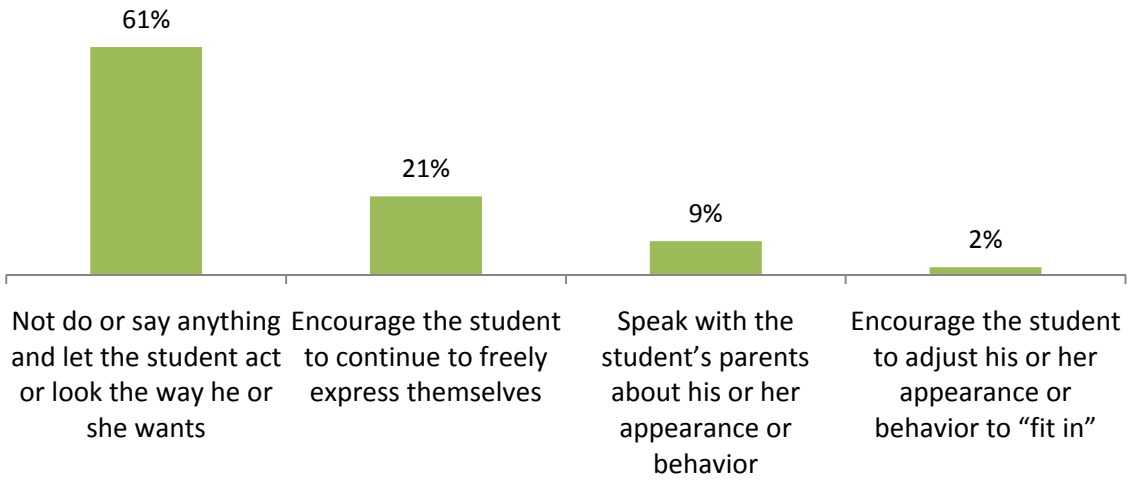
Q1120. If a student in your class was being called names, bullied or harassed because he or she didn't conform to traditional gender norms, how would you most likely address the situation?

Table 4.12
Ways That Teachers Would Address Incidents Where Students are Bullied or Called Names for Not Conforming to Traditional Gender Norms by Grade Level

	Grade Level Taught		
	K-2nd	3rd-4th	5th-6th
	A	B	C
Base:	280	214	139
Conduct a class discussion about respecting people's differences	44%C	45%C	28%
Educate the perpetrator about why his/her actions were wrong	37%	38%	25%
Conduct a class discussion about name-calling and bullying	41%	37%	38%
Send the perpetrator to the principal or other administrator	27%	31%	38%
Talk with the victim	25%	35%	36%
Talk with the perpetrator and victim together	35%B	17%	23%
Privately tell the perpetrator to stop	15%	26%A	28%A
Talk with the perpetrator's parents	17%	19%	11%
Publicly tell the perpetrator to stop in front of other students	10%	7%	24%AB
Refer the perpetrator and victim to a peer mediator to try and resolve their differences	9%	15%C	4%
Talk with the victim's parents	6%	7%	7%

Q1120. If a student in your class was being called names, bullied or harassed because he or she didn't conform to traditional gender norms, how would you most likely address the situation?

Figure 4.12
How Teachers Would Approach Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms



Q1117. If a student in your class was not conforming to traditional gender norms, how would you most likely approach the situation?

Table 4.13
How Teachers Would Approach Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by Years of Experience

	Years of Experience		
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	D	E	F
Base:	171	514	400
Not do or say anything and let the student act or look the way he or she wants	55%	64%	63%
Encourage the student to continue to freely express themselves	28%[F]	20%	16%
Speak with the student's parents about his or her appearance or behavior	13%	7%	9%
Encourage the student to adjust his or her appearance or behavior to "fit in"	1%	2%	4%

Q1117. If a student in your class was not conforming to traditional gender norms, how would you most likely approach the situation?

Table 4.14
How Teachers Would Approach Students Who Do Not Conform to Traditional Gender Norms by School Type and School Location

	School Type		School Location		
	Public	Private/ Parochial	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	945	145	353	376	368
Not do or say anything and let the student act or look the way he or she wants	63%[B]	44%	55%	67%[C]	61%
Encourage the student to continue to freely express themselves	20%	27%	25%	21%	19%
Speak with the student's parents about his or her appearance or behavior	9%	11%	10%[D]	4%	13%[D]
Encourage the student to adjust his or her appearance or behavior to "fit in"	2%	6%	4%	2%	1%

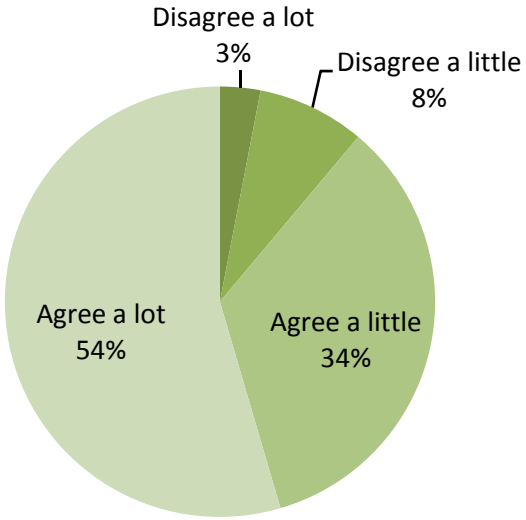
Q1117. If a student in your class was not conforming to traditional gender norms, how would you most likely approach the situation?

Lessons about Gender Equality at School

To better understand teachers' classroom practices regarding gender expression and gender non-conformity of students, we asked students what they have been taught about the abilities of boys and girls. Most elementary school students also say they are taught about gender equality at school, with almost nine in ten students agreeing that they are taught that girls and boys can do the same things (88%), including 54% who agree a lot with this statement (see Figure 4.13). This finding does not differ by grade level or school type, although it does differ by school location: students in urban schools are less likely than those in suburban or rural schools to agree that they are taught at school that boys and girls can do the same things (82% vs. 91% vs. 92%).

Interestingly, students who have heard their teachers make comments that girls and boys should behave or dress according to the societal norms of their gender are less likely than others to report that they are taught that girls and boys can do the same things at school (66% vs. 90%).

Figure 4.13
Students' Reports of Being Taught at School That Girls and Boys Can Do the Same Things



Q1025. How much do you agree or disagree with: "At my school, we are taught that girls and boys can do the same things."?

Summary

Most elementary school teachers are comfortable responding to bullying, harassment and name-calling of a student who is or is perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). However, a majority of teachers are not comfortable responding to students' questions about LGBT people. In addition, fewer than half of teachers believe that a student who is or might grow up to be LGBT would feel comfortable at their school.

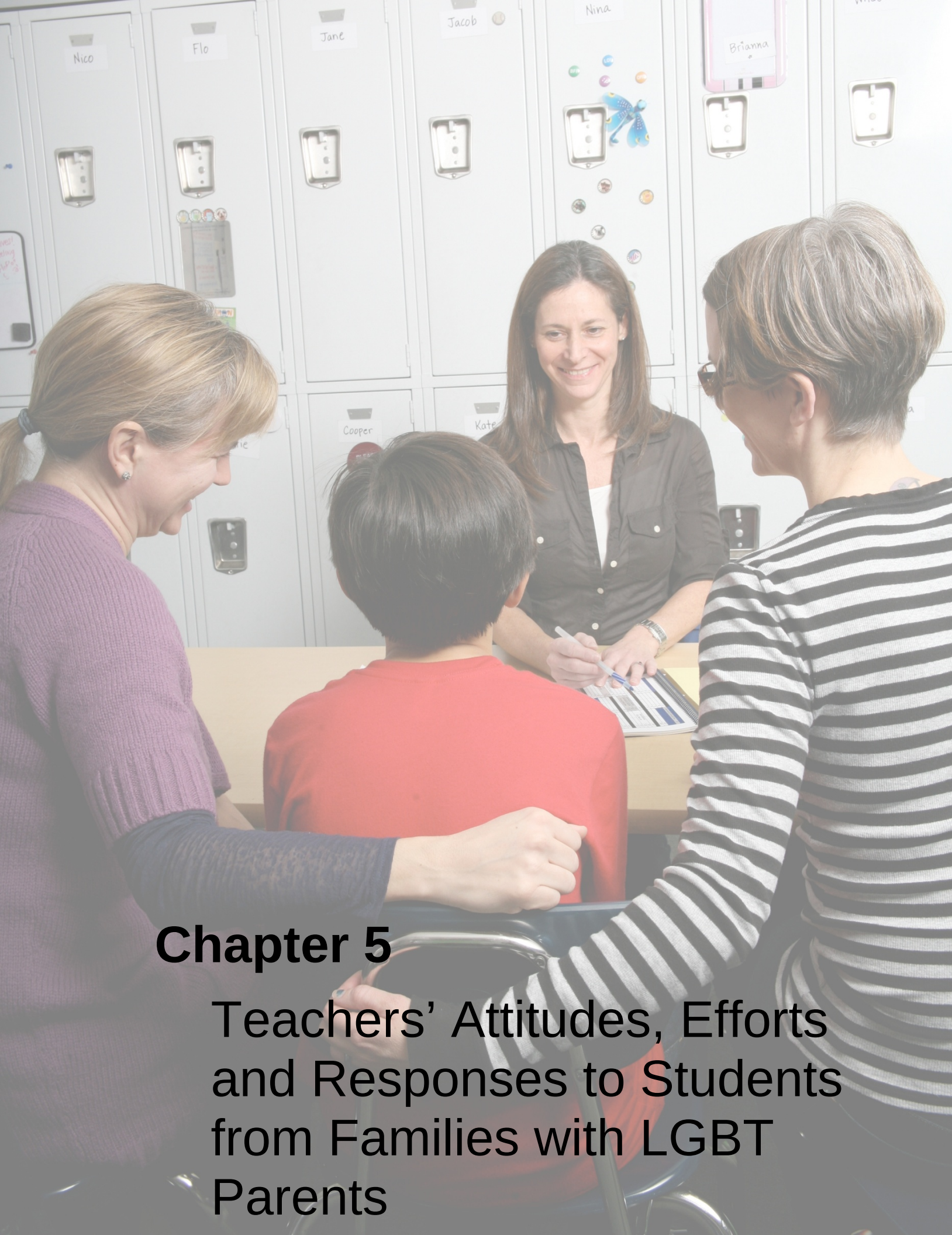
Similar to our previous research with school principals[17] and secondary school teachers[18], we find that teachers' overall responses reveal a somewhat more positive picture for lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people in schools than for transgender people. Teachers are slightly more likely to report that an LGB student would be comfortable in school than a transgender student. Teachers are also more comfortable responding to questions about LGB people than they are about transgender people.

Most elementary school teachers strongly believe that schools have an obligation to create a safe and supportive environment for students who do not conform to traditional gender norms. In addition, a majority of teachers believe that other school personnel would be supportive of efforts to address issues related to gender roles, gender stereotypes and non-traditional gender expression. When asked about the types of efforts that would be helpful in creating safer and supportive schools for gender non-conforming students, protective bullying/harassment policies and professional development are cited by the vast majority of teachers. Yet, only a third of elementary school teachers say they have personally engaged in efforts to help ensure that their classrooms are safe and supportive for gender non-conforming youth, most often by avoiding gender stereotyping. For the majority of

[17] GLSEN &Harris Interactive (2008). *The principal's perspective: School safety, bullying and harassment, A Survey of public school principals*. New York: GLSEN.
[18] Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN.

teachers who have not made such efforts, most say that it has not arisen as an issue in their classroom. Although most teachers do not take proactive steps, a majority indicate that if confronted with the bullying, harassment or name-calling of a gender non-conforming student, they would feel comfortable addressing the situation. Despite these views, less than half of teachers believe that students who do not conform to traditional gender norms would feel comfortable at their school.

These findings indicate that most elementary teachers feel strongly about the need for LGBT and gender non-conforming students to be safe at school, as evidenced by their comfort addressing bullying, harassment and name-calling and their belief in the school's obligation to ensure students' safety. However, beyond safety concerns, elementary teachers appear reluctant to address LGBT issues or issues related to non-traditional gender expression



Chapter 5

Teachers' Attitudes, Efforts and Responses to Students from Families with LGBT Parents

Overview

In the GLSEN report about the school experiences of LGBT-headed families, *Involved, Invisible and Ignored*,[19] we found that secondary school students with LGBT parents often hear negative remarks about LGBT people and sometimes experienced mistreatment from peers and adult members of the school community (i.e., parents of other students) because of the type of family they have. Further, we found that the LGBT parents, especially parents of elementary age children, were more likely than other parents to be actively engaged in the life of their child's school, to volunteer at school, to attend parent-teacher conferences or back-to-school nights, and to contact the school about their child's academic performance or school experiences. Yet, many LGBT parents reported feeling neglected, excluded or even mistreated by other members of their school communities, especially other parents. The findings from this previous report highlight the need for professional development among school staff to include multicultural diversity training that incorporates accurate information and representations of all family constellations, including LGBT families. For these reasons, we asked elementary school teachers about their attitudes, beliefs and common practices regarding these families.

[19] Kosciw, J. G. & Diaz, E. M. (2008). *Involved, invisible, ignored: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents and their children in our nation's K–12 schools*. New York: GLSEN.

Teachers' Perspectives on the Comfort Level of Elementary School Students Who Have LGBT Parents

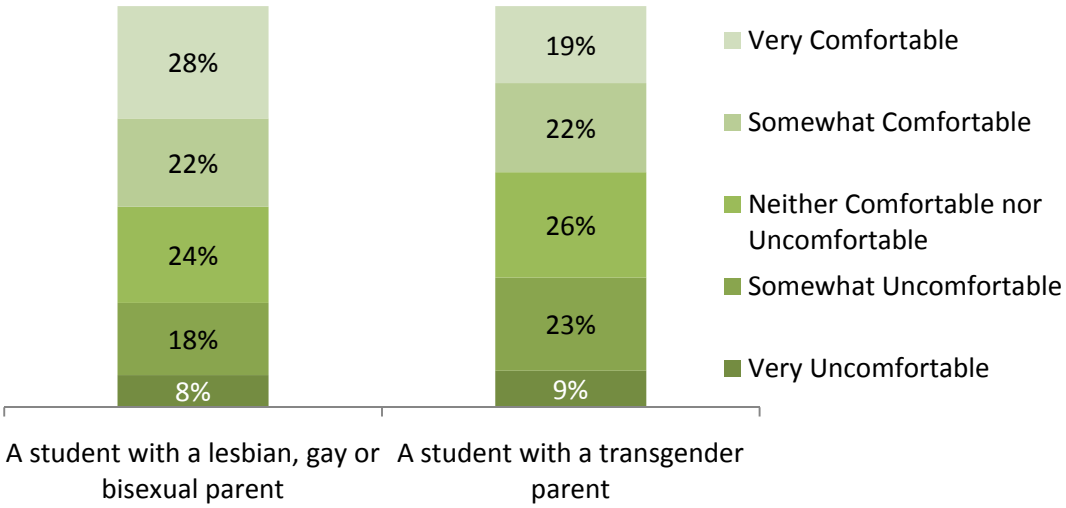
Similar to the proportion of teachers who believe that students who may be or grow up to be LGBT would feel comfortable at their schools, a plurality of elementary school teachers believe that students with LGBT parents would feel comfortable at their school (students with LGB parents: 50%; transgender parents: 41%) (see Figure 5.1). Additionally, teachers with more experience and those in suburban schools are more likely to feel that students with LGBT families would feel comfortable at their school (see also Table 5.1). Grade level taught does not appear to be related to how comfortable teachers believe these students would feel at their school.

Teachers' Perspectives on the Comfort Level of LGBT Parents of Elementary School Students

In addition to teachers' opinions on how comfortable students from LGBT families would feel at their schools, we also asked teachers how comfortable they believe lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender parents themselves would feel at their schools. Nearly two thirds of teachers believe that LGB parents would feel comfortable being involved in school-related activities such as attending a school function (64%), chaperoning a field trip (63%), helping out in the classroom (63%) and joining the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) (59%). Teachers are noticeably more likely to believe that LGB parents would feel comfortable being involved at their school than would transgender parents. Only about two in five teachers believe that transgender parents would feel comfortable at these functions or activities (see Figure 5.2).

Teachers who are more likely to believe that LGB parents would feel comfortable participating in school-related activities tend to teach in suburban districts and have more years of teaching experience. Nevertheless, regardless of the level of teacher experience or location of the school, the majority of teachers believe LGB parents would be comfortable participating (see Table 5.2 and Table 5.3). In contrast, the majority of

Figure 5.1
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students with LGBT Parents



Q805. How comfortable do you think the following students would feel at the school where you teach: A student with a lesbian, gay or bisexual parent/A student with a transgender parent?

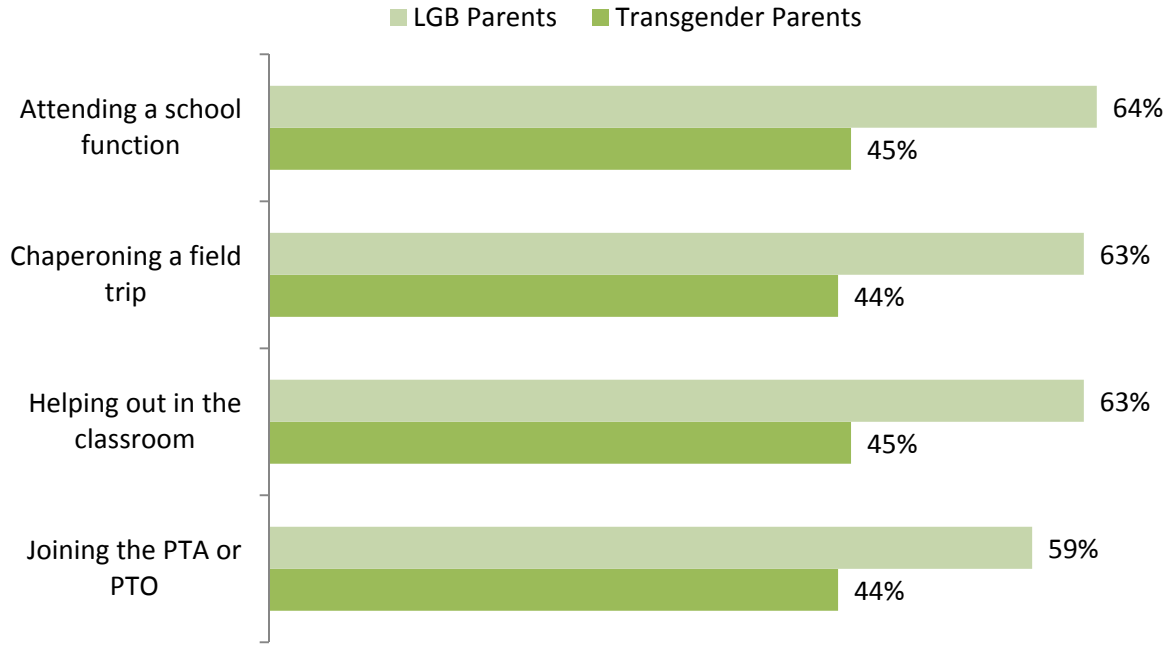
teachers believe that transgender parents would not be comfortable participating in school activities; this is largely true across school locale and teacher demographics, with the one exception that teachers with more experience are more likely than teachers with less experience to believe that transgender parents would be comfortable participating in school activities (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.1
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Elementary School Students with LGBT Parents by Years of Teaching Experience and School Location (% Very/Somewhat Comfortable)

	Years of Teaching Experience			School Location		
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Base:	171	514	400	353	376	368
A student with a lesbian, gay or bisexual parent	38%	54%[A]	54%[A]	46%	60%[DF]	43%
A student with a transgender parent	29%	45%[A]	50%[A]	39%	50%[F]	36%

Q805. How comfortable do you think the following students would feel at the school where you teach: A student with a lesbian, gay or bisexual parent/A student with a transgender parent?

Figure 5.2
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of LGBT Parents Participating in School Activities (% Very/Somewhat Comfortable)



Q815. How comfortable do you think lesbian, gay or bisexual parents would feel participating in the following activities at your school? Q820. How comfortable do you think transgender parents would feel participating in the following activities at your school?

Table 5.2
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of LGB Parents Participating in School Activities by Years of Teaching Experience (% Very/Somewhat Comfortable)

	Years of Teaching Experience		
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C
Base:	171	514	400
Attending a school function	58%	65%	73%[A]
Chaperoning a field trip	56%	64%	69%[A]
Helping out in the classroom	57%	64%	68%
Joining the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)	53%	61%	65%

Q815. How comfortable do you think lesbian, gay or bisexual parents would feel participating in the following activities at your school?

Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts Addressing Families with LGBT Parents

We also asked elementary school teachers about how supportive they felt members of their school community would be toward efforts that specifically addressed families with LGBT parents. Over half of elementary teachers think that other teachers (56%), school administrators (55%) and other staff (51%) at their school would be supportive of efforts that specifically address families with LGBT parents (see Figure 5.3). However, teachers are less likely to report that district-level administration (44%), the school board (41%), parents of students in their school (37%) or the PTA/PTO (36%) would be supportive (see Figure 5.3).

Teachers who teach in suburban schools and those with more teaching experience are somewhat more likely to believe their school community would support efforts for families with LGBT parents (see Table 5.3 and Table 5.4). In addition, public school teachers are less likely than private school teachers to believe that their colleagues at school would be unsupportive of these efforts for families with LGBT parents. For example, teachers at private or parochial schools are much more likely than teachers at public schools to say that other teachers would be unsupportive -- 27% vs. 14% (see Table 5.5).

Teachers with more years of experience (21+) are consistently more likely than others to say that, with the exception of other parents/guardians, the members of their school community would be supportive of LGBT parents. For example, 61% of veteran teachers believe that administrators at their schools would be very or somewhat supportive of LGBT parents, compared to 49% of teachers with 6 to 20 years experience and 53% of teachers with 5 years of experience or fewer (see also Table 5.5).

Teachers' Feelings of Obligation to Ensure a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment for Families with LGBT Parents

Most elementary school teachers (81%) agree that they and other school personnel have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students with LGBT parents or other family members. In fact, seven out of ten teachers (70%) say that they strongly agree with this statement (see Figure 5.4). In

addition, teachers tend to agree that they have this obligation towards students with LGBT family members as well, regardless of personal or school characteristics.

We asked teachers who agree that they have an obligation to students from families with LGBT parents about efforts that would help in achieving a more supportive environment. As shown in Figure 5.5, a majority of teachers would find all the mentioned efforts helpful in their schools. The overwhelming majority of teachers believe that having policies that are inclusive of families with LGBT parents would be helpful – 87% believe that policies specifically about bullying and harassment that include protections based on family characteristics would be very or somewhat helpful, and 81% say the same about other types of inclusive policies and practices. In addition, two thirds (66%) of teachers believe that having professional development for school personnel about families with LGBT parents would be helpful.

Overall, elementary school teachers' beliefs about the helpfulness of these efforts are relatively unrelated to personal or school characteristics. One exception is school location: teachers in urban schools are more likely than teachers in rural schools to feel that implementing education programs for students about families with LGBT parents (62% vs. 48%) and having more resources on how to incorporate families with LGBT parents into their curriculum (60% vs. 47%) would be helpful in creating a safe and supportive environment for these families. Younger teachers (those with 5 years of experience or less) are also more likely than more experienced teachers (those with 21 years or experience or more) to feel that having these educational programs about families with LGBT parents would be helpful (63% vs. 47%).

Table 5.3
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of LGB Parents Participating in School Activities by School Location (% Very/Somewhat Comfortable)

	School Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C
Base:	353	376	368
Attending a school function	60%	76%[AC]	57%
Chaperoning a field trip	60%	73%[AC]	56%
Helping out in the classroom	59%	74%[AC]	55%
Joining the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)	55%	71%[AC]	51%

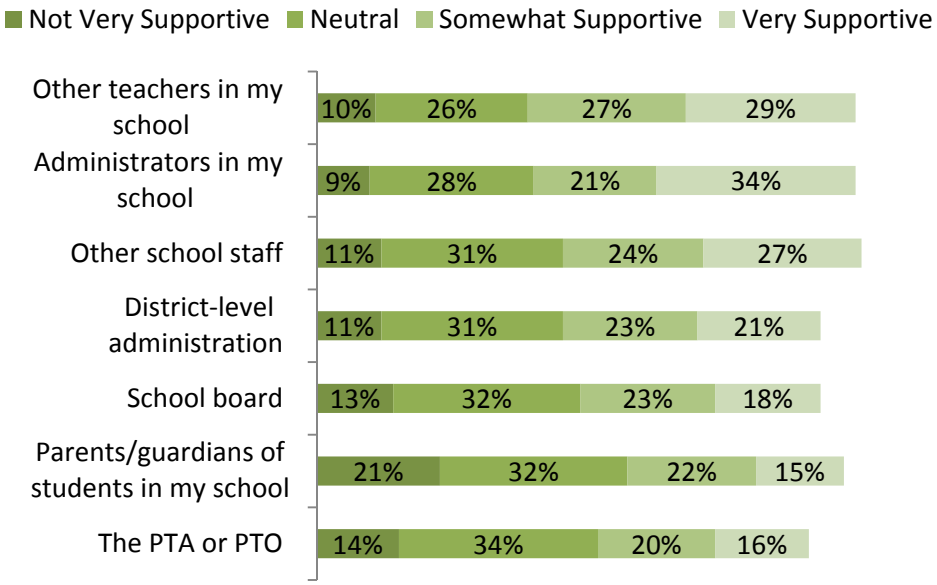
Q815. How comfortable do you think lesbian, gay or bisexual parents would feel participating in the following activities at your school?

Table 5.4
Teachers' Perspectives on Comfort Level of Transgender Parents Participating in School Activities by Years of Teaching Experience (% Very/Somewhat Comfortable)

	Years of Teaching Experience		
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C
Base:	171	514	400
Attending a school function	34%	46%	58%[AB]
Chaperoning a field trip	35%	44%	55%[A]
Helping out in the classroom	35%	45%	55%[AB]
Joining the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)	33%	44%	56%[AB]

Q820. How comfortable do you think transgender parents would feel participating in the following activities at your school?

Figure 5.3
Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts That Specifically Address Families with LGBT Parents



Q1200. How supportive would the following members of your school community be about efforts that specifically address LGBT families?

Table 5.5
Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts that Specifically Address Families with LGBT Parents by Years of Teaching Experience and School Type

	Years of Teaching Experience			School Type	
	5 Years or Fewer	6-20 Years	21 Years or More	Public	Private/ Parochial
	A	B	C	D	E
Base:	171	514	400	945	145
Other teachers in my school					
Very/Somewhat Supportive	59%	51%	66%[B]	58%	51%
Neutral	24%	30%	22%	27%[E]	13%
Not at All/Not Very Supportive	14%	16%	10%	12%	28%[D]
Administrators in my school					
Very/Somewhat Supportive	53%	49%	68%[AB]	56%	49%
Neutral	30%[C]	32%[C]	18%	29%[E]	9%
Not at All/Not Very Supportive	14%	16%	11%	12%	31%[D]
Other school staff					
Very/Somewhat Supportive	52%	46%	61%[B]	52%	47%
Neutral	31%	34%[C]	23%	32%[E]	17%
Not at All/Not Very Supportive	13%	18%	12%	14%	27%[D]
District-level administration					
Very/Somewhat Supportive	41%	38%	58%[AB]	47%[E]	18%
Neutral	34%	34%[C]	23%	33%	20%
Not at All/Not Very Supportive	15%	19%	15%	16%	21%
School board					
Very/Somewhat Supportive	37%	36%	55%[AB]	43%	32%
Neutral	36%[C]	35%[C]	22%	34%[E]	15%
Not at All/Not Very Supportive	16%	22%	18%	18%	27%
Parents/guardians of students in my school					
Very/Somewhat Supportive	33%	35%	44%	36%	46%
Neutral	37%	32%	26%	33%[E]	18%
Not at All/Not Very Supportive	26%	31%	27%	28%	28%
The PTA or PTO					
Very/Somewhat Supportive	42%[B]	29%	44%[B]	36%	35%
Neutral	35%	37%[C]	26%	36%[E]	10%
Not at All/Not Very Supportive	13%	26%[A]	19%	20%	25%

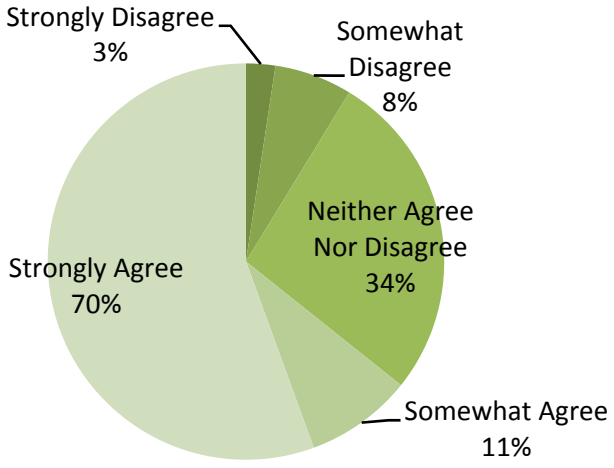
Q1201. How supportive would the following members of your school community be about efforts that specifically address LGBT families?

Table 5.6
Teachers' Perspectives on School Community Support of Efforts that Specifically Address Families with LGBT Parents by School Location (% Very/Somewhat Supportive)

	School Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C
Base:	353	376	368
Other teachers in my school	59%	64%[C]	49%
Administrators in my school	55%	61%	50%
Other school staff	52%	60%[C]	43%
District-level administration	46%	52%[C]	36%
School board	43%	50%[C]	33%
Parents/guardians of students in my school	37%	44%[C]	30%
The PTA or PTO	33%	45%[AC]	31%

Q1201. How supportive would the following members of your school community be about efforts that specifically address LGBT families?

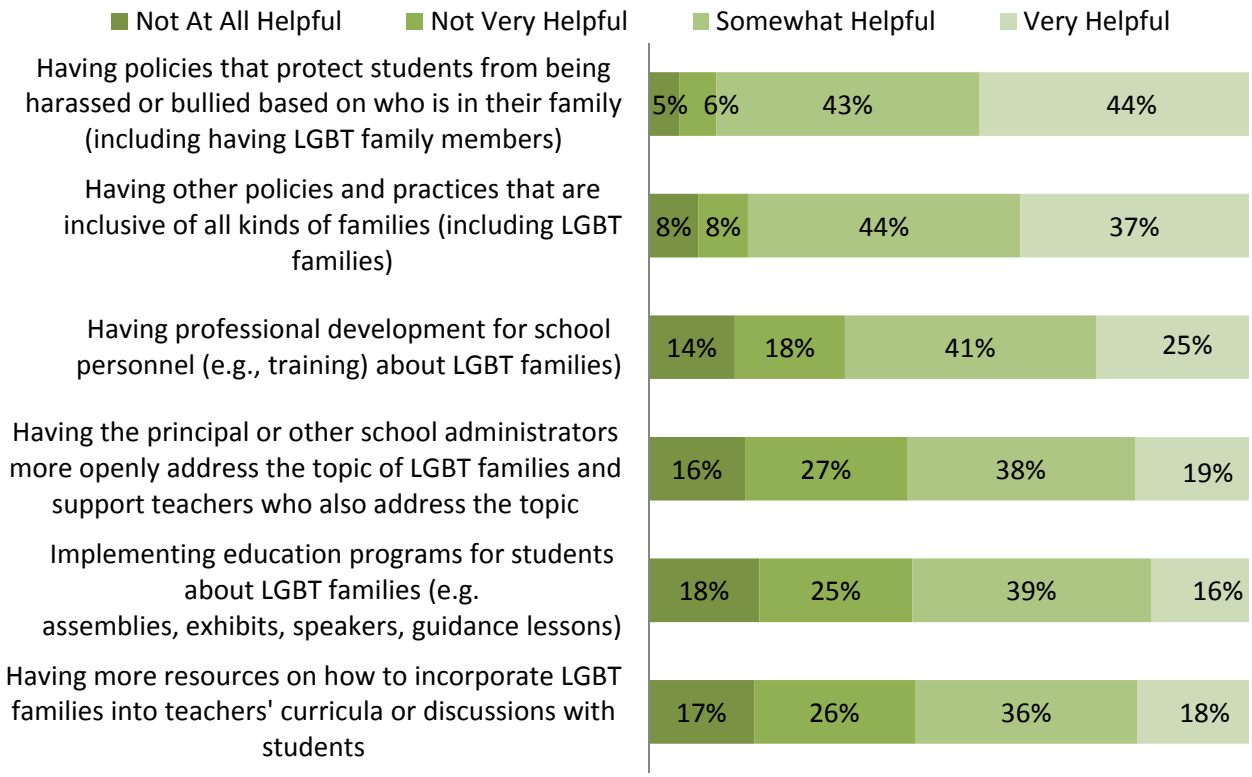
Figure 5.4
Teachers' Sense of Obligation to Ensure a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment for Students with LGBT Parents/Family Members



Q925. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?: Teachers and other school personnel have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents or other family members.

Figure 5.5
Teachers' Perceptions on the Helpfulness of Efforts to Create Safer and More Supportive Schools for Families with LGBT Parents

Base: Those who agree that school personnel have an obligation to a safe and supportive environment for families with LGBT parents (n=1002)



Q930. How helpful would the following efforts be in creating safer and more supportive schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) families?

Teachers' Efforts for Families with LGBT Parents

Although most elementary school teachers agree that they have an obligation to provide a safe and supportive environment for students who are from families with LGBT parents, only around one quarter (24%) say that they have personally engaged in efforts to provide such an environment in their classrooms (see Table 5.7). Teachers who know a student or parent at their school who is LGBT are much more likely to say they have personally engaged in efforts to create a safe and supportive environment for families with LGBT parents (44% vs. 16%). Also, teachers in urban (28%) and suburban (27%) schools are more likely than those in rural schools (17%) to say they have engaged in these types of efforts (see also Table 5.7).

We asked teachers who report engaging in efforts to create a supportive environment for LGBT families what their efforts might include. As shown in Table 5.8, the most common method reported is informally discussing the topic of families with LGBT parents with their students (62%), followed by addressing incidents of bias directed at families with LGBT parents (45%). Fewer teachers report that they incorporate the topic into their teaching curriculum (23%) or advocate for school policies and practices that are inclusive of or protect families with LGBT parents (22%).

Among elementary school teachers who have not specifically made efforts to create a safe and supportive environment in their classrooms for families with LGBT parents, 75% say that the topic has not come up in their classrooms. Nearly three in ten teachers (28%) say that they have not made efforts for families with LGBT parents because they did not feel it was necessary (see Figure 5.6). Others say that they do not have the autonomy to address topics outside of their curriculum (17%), they would not know how to address this topic or know what to do (15%), they do not have the time to fit the topic in with the other things they need to teach (14%), they might face backlash from parents (13%) or they believe the administration would not support such efforts (9%). Few teachers indicated that the reason they have not made an effort to create a safe and supportive environment in their classrooms for families with LGBT parents is because they are opposed to the idea of families with LGBT parents (7%) (see also Figure 5.6). Interestingly, teachers with fewer years of experience are much more likely to say that their administration would not be supportive – 17% of newer teachers say this, compared to 7% of teachers with 6-20 years of experience and 4% of teachers with 21 or more years of experience.

Teachers in rural schools (84%) are more likely than teachers in urban (66%) or suburban (71%) schools to say that they have not engaged in efforts to create a safe and supportive learning environment for families with LGBT parents because the topic has not come up in their classroom. Teachers in both suburban (29%) and rural (34%) schools are more likely than teachers in urban (16%) areas to say that they do not feel that making such efforts for families with LGBT parents in their classroom is necessary (see Table 5.9).

Table 5.7
Teachers Who Have Made Efforts to Create Safe and Supportive Environments for LGBT Families by Knowing an LGBT Student or Parent and School Location

	Total	Knows a Student or Parent at School Who is LGBT		School Location		
		Yes	No	Urban	Suburban	Rural
		A	B	C	D	E
Base:	1099	355	396	353	376	368
Personally engaged in efforts to create a safe and supportive environment for families with LGBT parents	24%	44%[B]	16%	28%[E]	27%[E]	17%

Q950. Have you personally engaged in efforts specifically designed to create a safe and supportive environment in your classroom for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families?

Table 5.8
Efforts Teachers Have Made to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Families with LGBT Parents

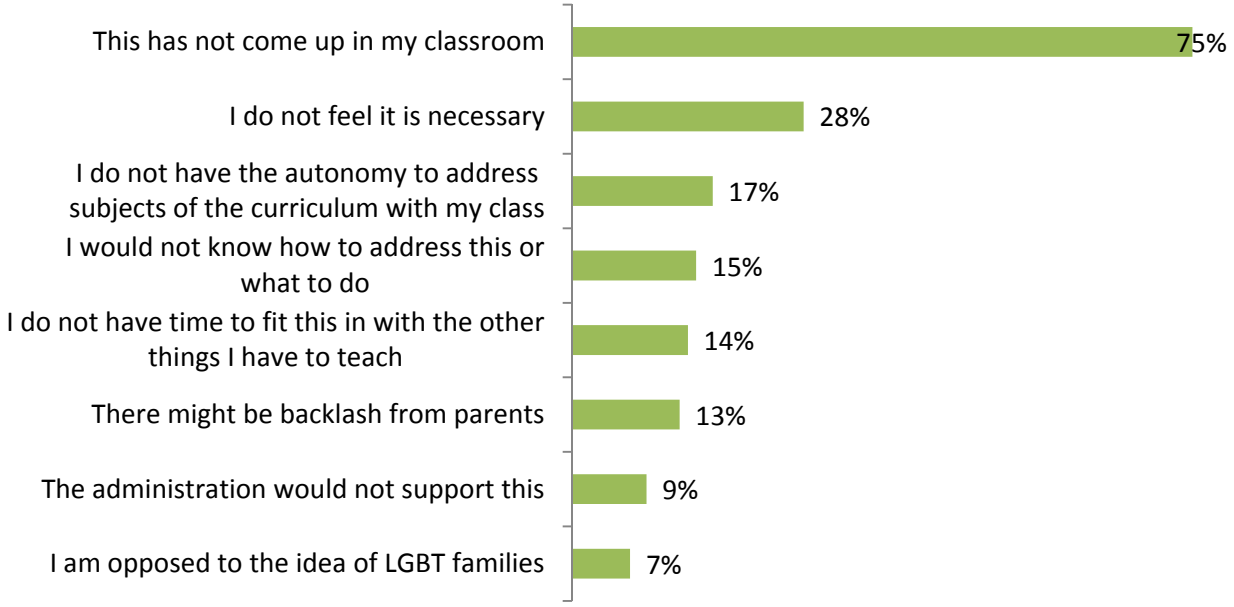
Base: All qualified teachers who have engaged in efforts for families with LGBT parents (n=277)

	Total
Informally discussed the topic with my students	62%
Addressed incidents of bias based on LGBT families	45%
Incorporated the topic into my teaching curriculum	23%
Advocated for school policies and practices that are inclusive of or protect LGBT families	22%

Q955. Which of the following have you done to create a safe and supportive environment in your classroom specifically for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families?

Figure 5.6
Reasons Why Teachers Have Not Engaged in Efforts to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Families with LGBT Parents

Base: All qualified teachers who have not engaged in efforts for families with LGBT parents (n=814)



Q960. What are the reasons why you have not engaged in specific efforts to create safe and supportive environment in your classroom specifically for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families?

Table 5.9
Reasons Why Teachers Have Not Engaged In Efforts to Create a Safe and Supportive Environment for Families with LGBT Parents by School Location

Base: All qualified teachers who have not engaged in efforts for families with LGBT parents (n=814)

	School Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C
Base:	253	265	296
This has not come up in my classroom	66%	71%	84%[AB]
I do not feel it is necessary	16%	29%[A]	34%[A]
I do not have the autonomy to address subjects outside of the curriculum with my class	15%	20%	16%
I would not know how to address this or what to do	15%	13%	16%
I do not have time to fit this in with the other things I have to teach	12%	12%	16%
There might be backlash from parents	10%	12%	17%
The administration would not support this	4%	10%	11%[A]
I am opposed to the idea of LGBT families	5%	6%	10%

Q960. What are the reasons why you have not engaged in specific efforts to create a safe and supportive environment in your classroom specifically for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families?

Teachers' Responses to Bullying, Name-Calling, or Harassment towards Students from Families with LGBT Parents

We also asked teachers how they would respond if they encountered situations when students in their class were being called names, bullied or harassed because they have lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) parents or other family members. As shown in Figure 5.7, the most common way that teachers would address this kind of bullying is to refer the perpetrator to the principal or other administrator (43%). Other methods teachers would use are conducting class discussions about respecting people's differences (38%), educating the perpetrator about why the actions were wrong (36%), conducting class discussions about name-calling and bullying (32%) or talking with the victim (32%). Less than one quarter would talk with the perpetrator and victim together (24%), privately tell the perpetrator to stop (18%), talk with the perpetrator's parents (17%), publicly tell the perpetrator to stop in front of other students (13%), refer the perpetrator and victim to a peer mediator to try and resolve their differences (12%) or talk with the victim's parents (11%) (see Figure 5.7).

It is interesting to note that teachers' responses on how they would address bullying related to a student's family are similar to their responses on how they would address a student's gender non-conforming behavior. One exception is that a higher percentage of teachers say that they would

refer to the administration an incident of bullying related to having an LGBT family (43%) than they would for an incident of bullying related to gender expression (35%). Teachers may feel more equipped to handle bullying related to gender themselves, but prefer to enlist the support of their supervisors when bullying is family-related. Or, perhaps they view family-related bullying as warranting a higher level of intervention, i.e., referral to principal, than bullying based on gender expression.

Not surprisingly, we find that grade level is related to the ways teachers would handle situations of bullying directed at students with LGBT family members. As shown in Table 5.10, teachers of younger grades (K-2nd and 3rd-4th) are more likely to conduct a class discussion about respecting people's differences than teachers of 5th-6th grade. In addition, K-2nd grade teachers are more likely to talk with the perpetrator and victim together compared to teachers of higher grades. Teachers of 5th-6th graders are less likely to talk with the perpetrator's parents, yet somewhat more likely to tell the perpetrator to stop the behavior, either privately or in front of the class (see also Table 5.10).

Years of teaching experience may also be related to teachers' responses to incidents of bullying directed at students with LGBT family members. Teachers with 5 years of experience or fewer are more likely than teachers with 21 or more years of experience to say they would try to educate the perpetrator about why their actions were wrong (44% vs. 27%). Interestingly, teachers with more than 5 years of experience are more likely than newer teachers to say that they would refer the perpetrator to the principal or other administrator (see also Table 5.10).

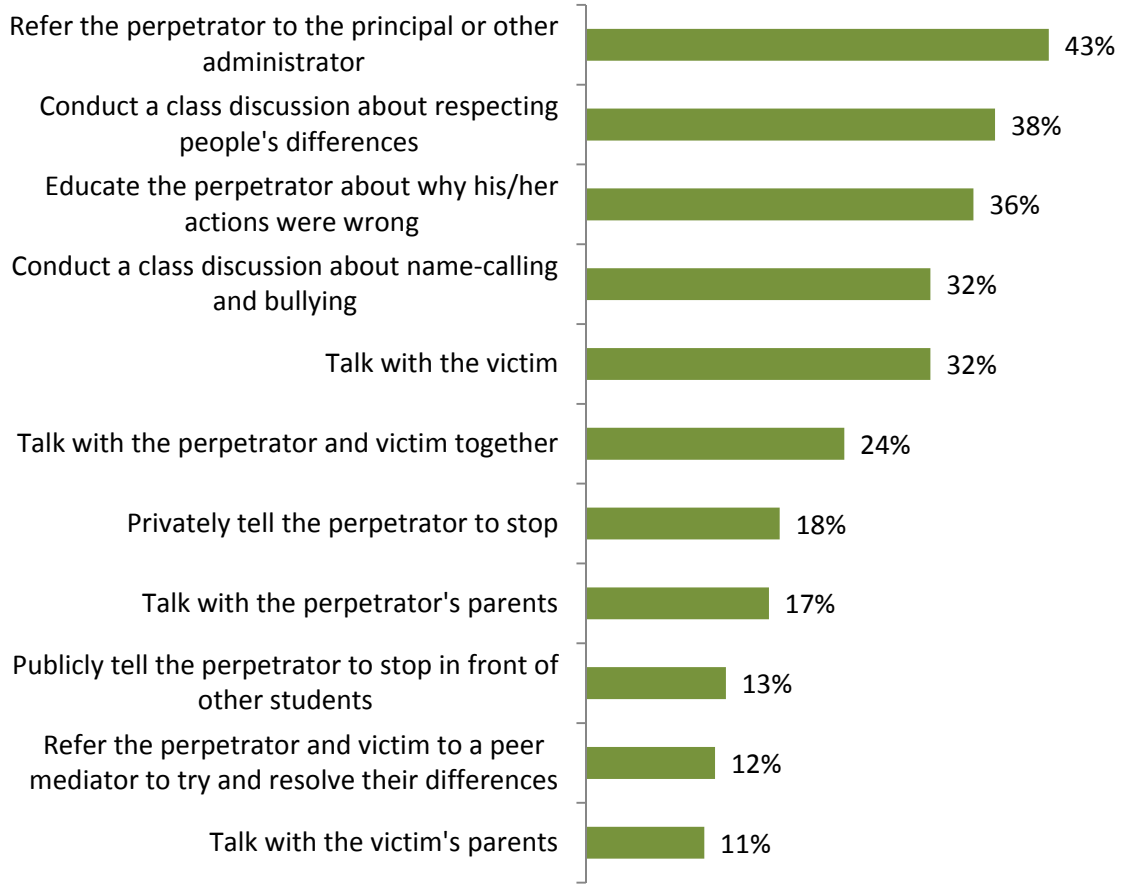
Teachers' response to incidents of bullying directed at students with LGBT family members generally do not differ by school location or school type, with the one exception that public school teachers are more likely than private or parochial school teachers to say that they would refer the perpetrator and victim to a peer mediator to try to resolve their differences (13% vs. 2%).

Teaching and Learning about Different Family Types at School

When families are discussed in the classroom, most teachers include representations that extend beyond the traditional conception of the "nuclear" family with a mother and a father. Nine in ten elementary school teachers say that when the topic of families comes up in the classroom, they include representations of different types of families in their class lessons (89%) (see Figure 5.8). Eight in ten teachers (81%) include representation of families with a single parent, three quarters (76%) include multicultural representations of families and around seven in ten include representations of multi-racial families (70%), representations of adoptive families (67%) or of other kinds of families, such as foster parents or grandparents as the primary caregiver (69%). Inclusion of families with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) parents is much less common. Far fewer teachers say that they include representations of families with lesbian, gay or bisexual parents (21%) or transgender parents (8%) when the topic of families comes up in the classroom.

The types of families that teachers discuss in the classroom appear to be related to school location, proportion of racial/ethnic minority students and grade level taught. Teachers in suburban schools are more likely than teachers in rural schools (but not significantly more than teachers in urban schools) to include multicultural families, multi-racial families and families with gay, lesbian or bisexual parents in their class discussions about families (see Table 5.11). Additionally, when looking at differences by grade level taught, K-2nd grade teachers are more likely than teachers of 5th-6th grade students to mention single-parent families (86% vs. 72%) and multicultural families (80% vs. 66%). In fact, teachers of 5th-6th graders are more likely than K-2nd grade teachers to say they do not discuss any representations of these different families with their classes (22% vs. 6%).

Figure 5.7
Ways Teachers Would Address Incidents in Which Students are Bullied or Called Names for Having LGBT Parents or Other Family Members



Q1118. If a student in your class was being called names, bullied or harassed because he or she had lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender parents or other family members, how would you most likely address the situation?

Table 5.10
Ways Teachers Would Address Incidents in Which Students are Bullied or Called Names for Having LGBT Parents or Other Family Members By Grade Level Taught and Years of Experience

	Grade Level Taught			Years of Experience		
	K-2nd	3rd-4th	5th-6th	5 Years or Less	6-20 Years	21 Years or More
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Base:	280	214	139	171	514	400
Refer the perpetrator to the principal or other administrator	36%	37%	45%	33%	46%D	48%D
Conduct a class discussion about respecting people's differences	40%	46%C	29%	39%	36%	40%
Educate the perpetrator about why his/her actions were wrong	37%	33%	22%	44%F	37%	27%
Conduct a class discussion about name-calling and bullying	34%	37%	38%	31%	32%	35%
Talk with the victim	24%	30%	35%	24%	35%	31%
Talk with the perpetrator and victim together	35%C	25%	19%	27%	22%	27%
Privately tell the perpetrator to stop	11%	15%	26%A	20%	17%	20%
Talk with the perpetrator's parents	20%	25%C	11%	24%F	16%	12%
Publicly tell the perpetrator to stop in front of other students	7%	6%	23%AB	14%	13%	11%
Refer the perpetrator and victim to a peer mediator to try and resolve their differences	13%	14%	9%	14%	11%	12%
Talk with the victim's parents	13%	16%	12%	11%	10%	12%

Q1118. If a student in your class was being called names, bullied or harassed because he or she had lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender parents or other family members, how would you most likely address the situation?
Note: Numbers that are bolded indicate the top three ways in which teachers at each grade level would address the situation.

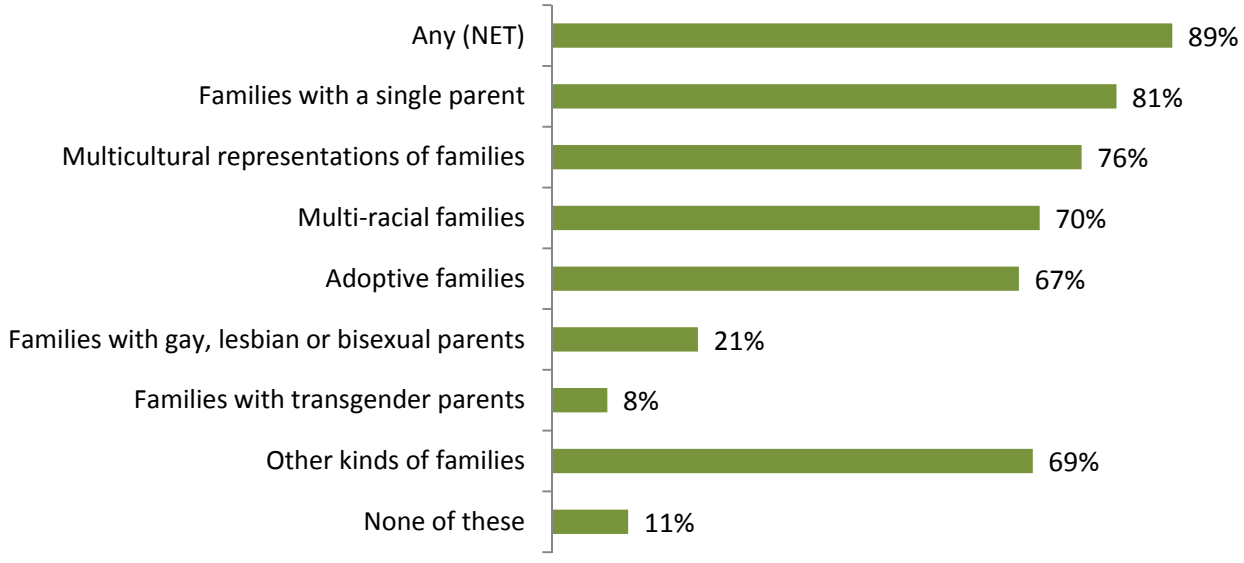
Teachers who know of a parent or student in their school who is LGBT are more likely than those who do not know an LGBT parent or student to include representations of all different types of families, including those with gay, lesbian or bisexual parents (38% vs. 15%) or transgender parents (13% vs. 6%) when they discuss families (see Table 5.12).

Teachers at public and private or parochial schools and at schools of all sizes are equally likely to include representations of these different types of families. Teachers' years of teaching experience are also unrelated to the range of family types represented during these discussions.

We also asked elementary school students whether they had been taught about different types of families in school. As shown in Figure 5.9, the majority of elementary school students (72%) report that they have been taught about different types of families at school, and this finding does not vary by student or school characteristics, such as grade level, school location and school type. Although it is less common for students to say that instruction about family diversity includes families with gay or lesbian parents specifically, nearly a fifth (18%) of students say they have indeed learned about these types of families at school.

Even though it may be rare for teachers to teach about gay and lesbian people in the elementary grades, it is not uncommon for elementary students to know someone who is gay or lesbian. Nearly a quarter of elementary school students (28%) say that they know someone who is gay or lesbian, including 2% who say they have a gay or lesbian parent, 10% who say another person in their family is gay or lesbian and 19% who say they know a gay or lesbian person who is not in their family (see Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.8
Teachers' Reports of the Family Types Represented When the Topic of Families Is Discussed in Classroom



Q920. When the topic of families comes up in your classroom, are representations of the following types of families included? This may be through formal curriculum, videos, pictures, books or informal discussion.

Table 5.11
Teachers' Reports of the Family Types Represented When the Topic of Families is Discussed in Classroom by School Location and Grade Level Taught

	School Location			Grade Level Taught		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural	K-2nd	3rd-4th	5th-6th
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Base:	353	376	368	280	214	139
Any (NET)	89%	97%	91%	94%F	87%	78%
Families with a single parent	78%	82%	82%	86%F	77%	72%
Multicultural representations of families	78%	81%C	70%	80%F	76%	66%
Multi-racial families	72%	75%C	63%	75%	65%	65%
Adoptive families	63%	68%	70%	71%	61%	56%
Families with gay, lesbian or bisexual parents	23%	28%C	15%	17%	18%	15%
Families with transgender parents	11%	8%	5%	7%	3%	6%
Other kinds of families (e.g., grandparents as primary caregivers, foster families)	67%	69%	70%	69%	65%	67%
None of these	11%	13%	9%	6%	13%	22%D

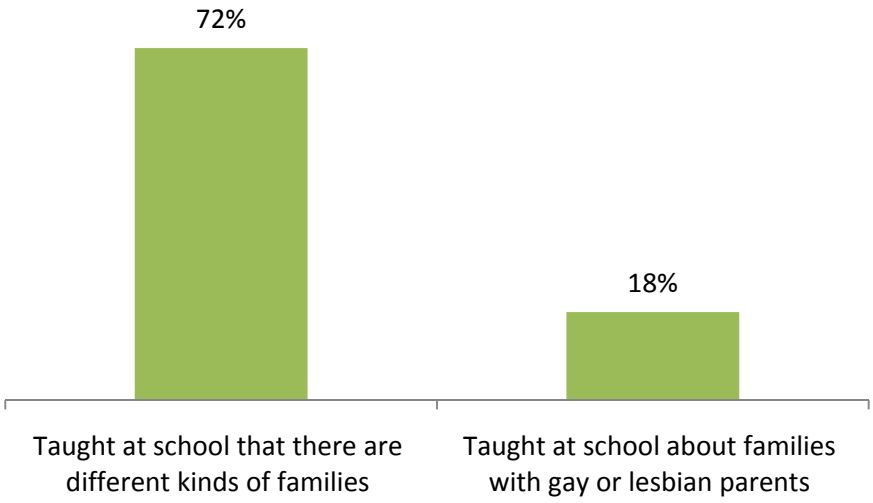
Q920. When the topic of families comes up in your classroom, are representations of the following types of families included? This may be through formal curriculum, videos, pictures, books or informal discussion.

Table 5.12
Teachers' Reports of the Family Types Represented When the Topic of Families is Discussed in Classroom by Knowing LGBT Student or Parent

	Know a Student or Parent at School Who is LGBT	
	Yes	No
	A	B
Base:	355	663
Any (NET)	93%	87%
Families with a single parent	88%B	79%
Multicultural representations of families	84%B	72%
Multi-racial families	81%B	65%
Adoptive families	78%B	63%
Families with gay, lesbian or bisexual parents	38%B	15%
Families with transgender parents	13%B	6%
Other kinds of families (e.g., grandparents as primary caregivers, foster families)	77%B	65%

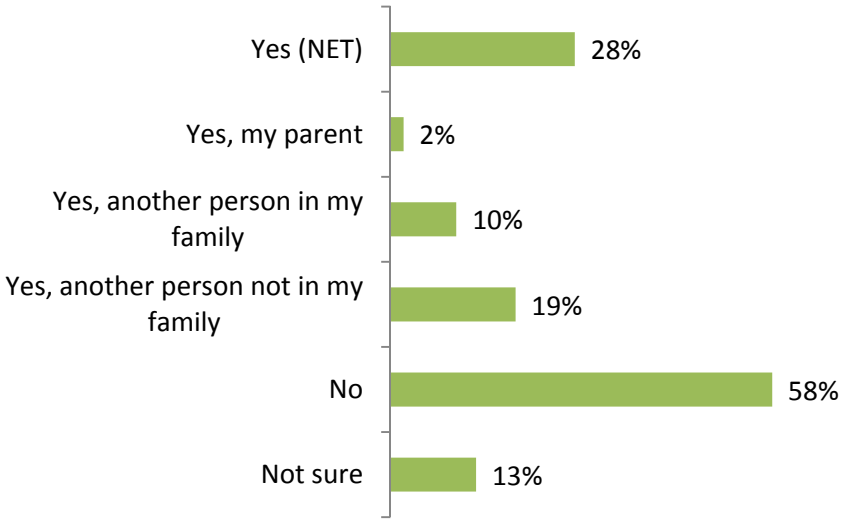
Q920. When the topic of families comes up in your classroom, are representations of the following types of families included? This may be through formal curriculum, videos, pictures, books or informal discussion.

Figure 5.9
Students' Reports of Types of Families They Are Taught About in School



Q1015. At your school have you ever learned about families with gay or lesbian parents (families that have two dads or two moms)?

Figure 5.10
Students' Reports of Knowing Anyone Who is Gay or Lesbian



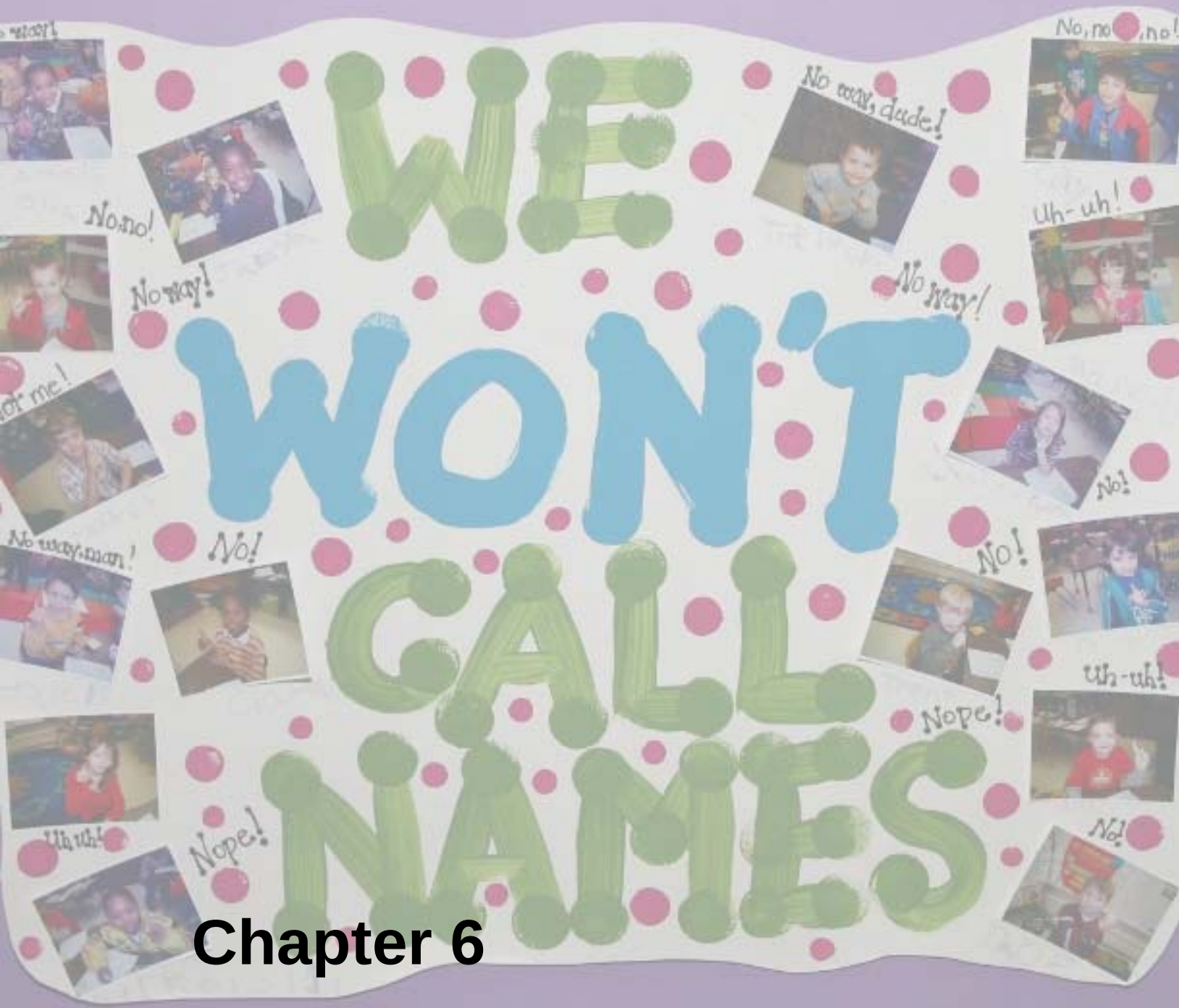
Q1125. Do you know anyone who is gay or lesbian?

The vast majority of elementary school teachers believe that they have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students with LGBT families. Teachers indicate support for a variety of measures to ensure safe and supportive schools for LGBT families, particularly supportive policies and professional development. Most teachers believe that other school personnel would also be supportive of efforts addressing LGBT families, although less than half believe that other members of the school community (i.e., district administrators, school board and parents) would support such efforts. The finding from teachers that school staff are more supportive of LGBT families than are other parents is consistent with LGBT families' experiences documented in our previous research – both children with LGBT parents and LGBT parents themselves report that they are more likely to be mistreated by other parents than by school personnel.[20]

When teaching about the diversity of families, elementary schools include the topic of LGBT families less often. Almost all students and teachers report that different kinds of families are discussed in school, yet only one in five teachers and students indicate that LGBT families are included in class lessons. In fact, despite teachers' endorsement of supportive schools for students with LGBT families, only a quarter of teachers report engaging in any type of effort to create safe and supportive environments for these families. Most teachers who have not done so indicate that it is because the topic has not come up in their classroom, and less than 10 percent say that it is because they are opposed to LGBT families.

Given the lack of proactive efforts, it is not surprising that fewer of half of teachers believe that students with LGBT parents would feel comfortable at their school. In contrast, a majority of teachers believe that LGB parents themselves would be comfortable participating in school activities, such as chaperoning a field trip or joining the PTA. Teachers are less likely to believe that transgender parents would be comfortable engaging in these school activities, with slightly less than half reporting that they would be comfortable.

[20] Kosciw, J. G. & Diaz, E. M. (2008). *Involved, invisible, ignored: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents and their children in our nation's K–12 schools*. New York: GLSEN.



Chapter 6

School-Wide Anti-Bullying and Harassment Efforts

Overview

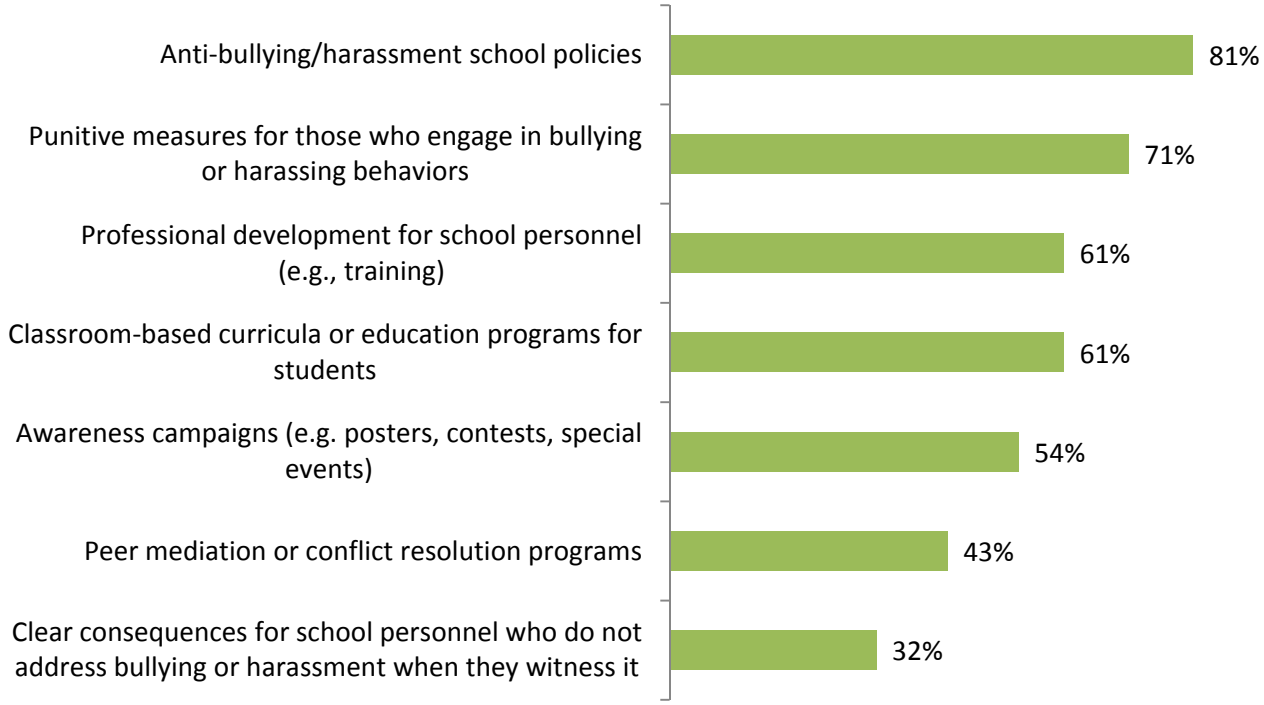
In the preceding chapters we have examined students' and teachers' perceptions of their elementary schools' climate, including the extent to which biased language is used and bullying or name-calling occurs, as well as teachers' and other school community members' attitudes about students with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) parents, students who may be lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) and students who do not conform to traditional gender norms. We have also examined the curricula and teachers practices regarding bullying, gender equality and family diversity. The prevalence of school-wide anti-bullying and harassment efforts at the secondary school level, including policies and prevention programming, have increased over the past two decades. This chapter explores teachers' perspectives on the school-wide efforts that are in place to address these issues in elementary schools.

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Measures at School

We asked teachers about the measures their schools employ to address the problem of bullying and harassment. As shown in Figure 6.1, teachers most commonly say that their school has anti-bullying or harassment policies, as well as that their school takes punitive measures against perpetrators of bullying or harassment. The majority of teachers also report than the school provides professional development on bullying and harassment and provides classroom-based curricula or education programs for students that address bullying. Less than half of teachers say that their schools have peer mediation or conflict resolution programs and clear consequences for school personnel who do not address bullying incidents that they witness.

Teachers report similar frequencies of most types of school efforts regarding bullying and harassment, regardless of school characteristics, including having anti-bullying or harassment policies, instituting punitive measures for students who bully and providing professional development for school personnel (see Table 6.1). However, as also shown in Table 6.1, a pattern emerges such that teachers from private/parochial schools, smaller schools and rural schools are less likely to report some of the other school efforts. For example, teachers at public schools are more likely than those at private or parochial schools to say that their schools have classroom-based curricula or education programs for students (62% vs. 44%) or have peer mediation or conflict resolution programs (45% vs. 25%). Regarding school location, teachers in rural schools are less likely than those in suburban schools to say that their schools have classroom-based curricula or education programs for students (55% vs. 67%) or that their schools have clear consequences for school personnel who do not address bullying or harassment when they see it (25% vs. 38%).

Figure 6.1
Measures Implemented in School Regarding Bullying or Harassment



Q910. Which of the following, if any, have been implemented regarding bullying or harassment in your school?

Table 6.1
Anti-Bullying or Harassment Measures Implemented at School by School Type, School Size and School Location

	School Type		School Size (by number of students)			School Location		
	Public	Private/ Parochial	Fewer than 300	300-499	500 or more	Urban	Sub-urban	Rural
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Base:	945	145	191	324	534	353	376	368
Anti-bullying/ harassment school policies	82%	72%	76%	81%	86%	80%	84%	80%
Punitive measures for those who engage in bullying or harassing behaviors	71%	65%	65%	72%	74%	74%	67%	71%
Professional development for school personnel (e.g., training)	62%	53%	60%	63%	62%	66%	64%	55%
Classroom-based curricula or education programs for students	62%[B]	44%	57%	70%[E]	58%	61%	67%[H]	55%
Awareness campaigns (e.g. posters, contests, special events)	55%	49%	49%	57%	56%	41%	65%[F]	54%[F]
Peer mediation or conflict resolution programs	45%[B]	25%	28%	44%[C]	48%[C]	47%	47%	37%
Clear consequences for school personnel who do not address bullying or harassment when they witness it	32%	34%	27%	26%	36%[D]	34%	38%[H]	25%

Q910. Which of the following, if any, have been implemented regarding bullying or harassment in your school?

Components of School Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies

As previously indicated, 81% of elementary school teachers report that their school has implemented anti-bullying or harassment policies. Teachers whose school has a policy were asked whether the policy certain contains key components. As shown in Figure 6.2, these policies vary in terms of their descriptions and procedures. Among teachers whose school has anti-bullying or harassment policies, most say that their policy includes a description of the consequences that students face when they bully or harass others (76%), has procedures for how students can report incidents (69%), requires staff to report incidents (68%) and mandates professional development for school staff (68%). Fewer teachers, only about four in ten, report that education programs for students are mandated as part of their school's bullying or harassment policy (41%).

We also asked teachers whether their school policies includes protections based on certain personal characteristics, specifically race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression or being associated with a person or group (e.g., having an LGBT family member). As shown in Figure 6.3, less than a fifth of teachers report that their school's anti-bullying or harassment policy does not mention any of these specific characteristics (16%), although a sizable proportion indicate that they are not sure if their policy mentions these characteristics (36%).

The most common characteristic that is specifically mentioned in anti-bullying or harassment school policy is race/ethnicity, with about half (46%) of teachers whose school has such a policy saying that it specifically mentions race/ethnicity (see also Figure 6.3). Over a third of teachers report that their school policies specify religion (39%) and sexual orientation (36%) and around a third report that the school policy mentions gender identity or expression (32%).

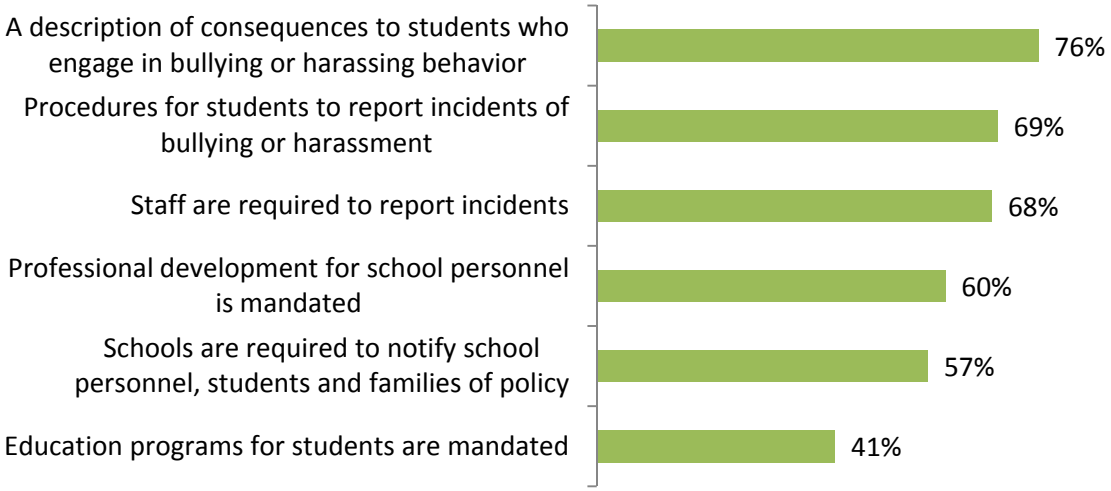
Teachers' reports on the prevalence of policies that specifically mention sexual orientation and gender identity or expression are reflective of levels reported by elementary school principals in our previous research. Among elementary school principals whose school districts had an anti-bullying or harassment policy, 42% indicated that sexual orientation is specifically mentioned and 37% indicated that gender identity or expression is specifically mentioned. However, elementary school principals were more likely than teachers to report that their school district's policy specifically mentions race/ethnicity (63%) or religion (52%).[21]

Protections based on personal characteristics in anti-bullying or harassment policies vary slightly by school location. Teachers in urban schools are more likely than others to say their school's anti-bullying policy mentions gender identity or expression (42% vs. 29% of suburban teachers and 29% of rural teachers). Teachers in urban schools are also more likely than those in rural schools to say their school's policy mentions race/ethnicity (55% vs. 42%), but not significantly more than teachers in suburban schools (43%)(see Table 6.2). Public schools do not differ from private or parochial schools in terms of the characteristics that their policies specify, nor does school size play a significant role.

[21] GLSEN & Harris Interactive (2008). *The principal's perspective: School safety, bullying and harassment, A survey of public school principals*. New York: GLSEN.

Figure 6.2
Components Included in School Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies

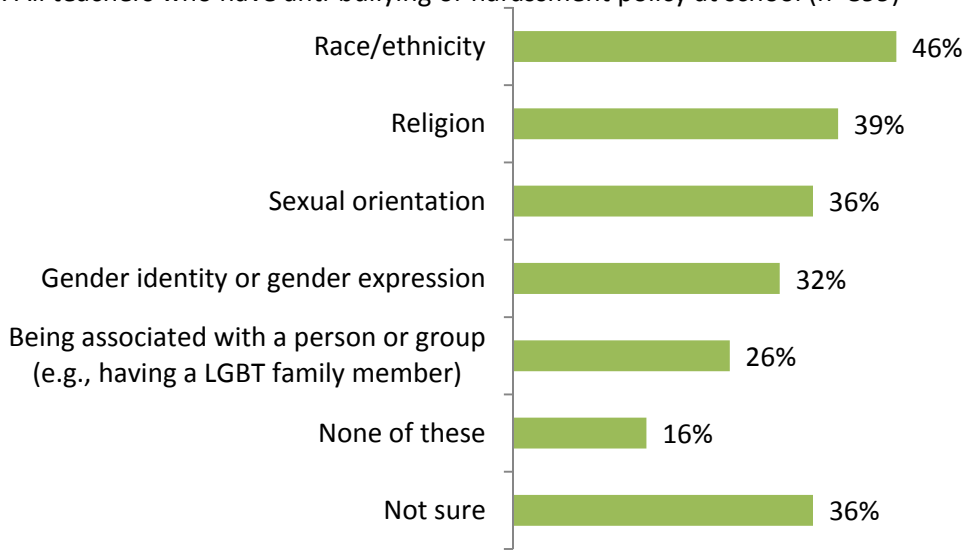
Base: All teachers who have anti-bullying or harassment policy at school (n=899)



Q915. Which of the following is part of your school's anti-bullying or harassment policy?

Figure 6.3
Characteristics Specifically Mentioned in School Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies

Base: All teachers who have anti-bullying or harassment policy at school (n=899)



Q917. Does your school's anti-bullying or harassment policy specifically mention any of the following characteristics?

Table 6.2
Characteristics Specifically Mentioned in School Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies by School Location

Base: All teachers who have anti-bullying or harassment policy at school (n=899)

	School Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
	A	B	C
Base:	273	324	301
Race/ethnicity	55%[C]	43%	42%
Religion	45%	36%	37%
Sexual orientation	43%	34%	31%
Gender identity or gender expression	42%[BC]	29%	29%
Being associated with a person or group (e.g., having a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender family member)	34%	23%	23%
None of these	8%	22%[C]	15%
Not sure	35%	33%	38%

Q917. Does your school's anti-bullying or harassment policy specifically mention any of the following characteristics?

Impact of Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies on Bullying, Name-Calling, Biased Comments and Comfort Level at School

Previous research among secondary school students has shown that comprehensive anti-bullying or harassment policies – those that enumerate protections based on personal characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender identity or gender expression – may provide better protections than generic policies that do not enumerate such protections for students. Specifically, research indicates that comprehensive policies are related to a lower incidence of name-calling, bullying and harassment in secondary schools.[22] Thus, we were interested in examining whether comprehensive policies were also more effective in elementary schools. In this survey of elementary teachers, only a quarter (24%) of teachers indicate that their school's anti-bullying or harassment policy is a comprehensive one that specifically mentions sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Over half (57%) of teachers have a generic anti-bullying/harassment policy at their school that does not specifically address these characteristics (see Figure 6.4).

Teachers in schools with comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies are somewhat more likely to see name-calling and bullying as a more serious problem in their school than teachers in schools with a generic policy or with no policy: 54% of teachers in schools with a comprehensive policy report that name-calling and bullying are very or somewhat serious problems, compared to 44% of teachers in schools with a generic policy and 46% of teachers in schools with no policy at all. Teachers in schools with generic policies also hear biased language less frequently than those in schools with comprehensive policies (see Table

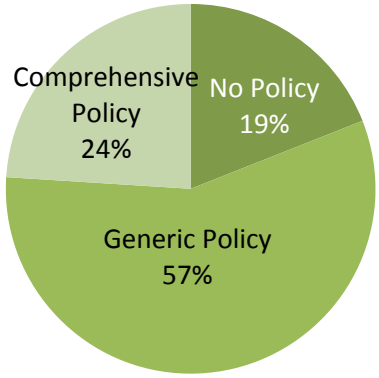
[22] Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, A survey of students and teachers*. New York: GLSEN.

6.3). In addition, teachers in schools with generic policies report lower levels of name-calling and bullying because of their race or ethnicity than those in schools with comprehensive policies or no policies at all. For example, as shown in Table 6.4, 8% of teachers in generic policy schools report that students are frequently bullied because of their race or ethnicity, compared to 16% of teachers in comprehensive policy schools and 12% in schools with no policy. It is possible that comprehensive policies that enumerate protected categories (e.g., sexual orientation) increase teachers' awareness of the role that bias based on personal characteristics plays in the climate of the school. Also, teachers' reports on the characteristics of the school's anti-bullying/harassment policy may not accurately reflect the contents of the actual policy. It is possible that teachers who are not cognizant of bias-based bullying may also be unaware of the protections based on a student's personal characteristics in the school policy. Differences in reports of name-calling, bullying and harassment based on the type of policy might also be a reflection of the need for such a policy. Thus, school communities with greater frequency of bias-based incidents might be more likely to adopt a policy that explicitly prohibits these types of incidents (i.e., a comprehensive policy that enumerates specific protected characteristics).

Teachers in schools that have comprehensive anti-bullying policies are most likely to feel that members of their school community, from administrators to parents, would be very or somewhat supportive of efforts that specifically address families with LGBT parents or issues of gender roles, gender stereotypes and non-traditional gender expression. For example, as shown in Table 6.5, three quarters (76%) of teachers from comprehensive policy schools believe other teachers at their school are very or somewhat supportive of efforts to address gender expression and non-conformity, compared to less than two thirds (62%) of those in schools with a generic policy and less than half (40%) of those in schools with no policy.

Figure 6.4
Teachers' Reports on Type of School Anti Bullying/Harassment Policy

Base: All qualified teachers (n=1099) / Have school policy (n=899)



Q910. Which of the following, if any, have been implemented regarding bullying or harassment in your school? Anti-bullying/harassment school policies
Q917M1 .Does your school's anti-bullying or harassment policy specifically mention any of the following characteristics? Sexual orientation
Q917M2. Does your school's anti-bullying or harassment policy specifically mention any of the following characteristics? Gender identity or gender expression

Table 6.3
Teachers' Reports of Biased Language in School by Type of Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy

	Type of Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policy		
	Comprehensive Policies	Generic Policies	No Policy
	A	B	C
Base:	276	624	199
At your school, how often do you hear students make the following types of remarks? (% Very often/Often)			
The word "gay" used in a negative way	23%	15%	19%
Comments like "spaz" or "retard"	23%[B]	13%	19%
Sexist remarks	15%	8%	18%[B]
Homophobic remarks	13%[B]	6%	10%
Racist remarks	13%[B]	2%	7%
Comments about behavior or appearance that does not conform to traditional gender norms (NET)	7%	3%	5%
Comments about a male acting or looking "too feminine"	6%	3%	5%
Comments about a female acting or looking "too masculine"	4%	2%	4%
Negative religious remarks	3%	*	2%

Q721: At your school, how often do you hear students make the following types of remarks? . . .
Note: An asterisk represents a value greater than zero but less than one

Table 6.4
Teachers' Reports on Bullying in School by Type of Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy

	Type of Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policy		
	Comprehensive Policies	Generic Policies	No Policy
	A	B	C
Base:	276	624	199
At your school, how often are students bullied, called names or harassed for the following reasons? (% Very often/Often)			
The way they look or their body size	36%	29%	29%
Their ability at school (either not doing well or doing very well)	25%	19%	18%
Their family does not have a lot of money	17%	10%	12%
They are a boy who acts or looks ''too much like a girl''	13%	9%	16%
They are a girl who acts or looks ''too much like a boy''	10%	5%	9%
Their race/ethnicity	16%[B]	8%	12%
They have a disability	13%	10%	12%
They are or people think they are gay, lesbian or bisexual	11%	5%	6%
Their religion	7%	3%	6%
They have a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender parent or other family member	6%	3%	3%

Q711. At your school, how often are students bullied, called names or harassed for the following reasons?

Table 6.5
Teachers' Perspective of Supportiveness of School Community on Efforts Related to Gender and LGBT Families (% Very/Somewhat Supportive) by Type of School Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy

	Efforts about Gender Issues			Efforts about LGBT Families		
	Compre-hensive	Generic	No Policy	Compre-hensive	Generic	No Policy
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Base	276	624	199	276	624	199
Other teachers in my school	76%[BC]	62%[C]	40%	70%[F]	60%[F]	33%
Administrators in my school (e.g. principal, assistant principal)	75%[BC]	62%[C]	32%	71%[EF]	57%[F]	29%
Other school staff (other than teachers or administrators)	66%[C]	59%[C]	35%	63%[F]	54%[F]	31%
District-level administration	62%[BC]	47%[C]	29%	60%[EF]	45%[F]	24%
Parents/guardians of students in my school	54%[C]	48%[C]	29%	44%[F]	38%[F]	25%
School board	61%[BC]	45%[C]	27%	59%[EF]	40%[F]	23%
The Parent Teacher Association or Organization	48%[C]	43%[C]	26%	42%[F]	38%[F]	22%

Q1201. In general, how supportive would the following members of your school community be about efforts that specifically address LGBT families?
Q1206. In general, how supportive would the following members of your school community be about efforts that specifically address issues of gender roles, gender stereotypes and non-traditional gender expression?

Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policies and Teachers' Attitudes and Efforts

The presence of anti-bullying or harassment policies can also have a positive impact on teachers' attitudes and efforts. Specifically, they may influence teachers' views and practices related to gender and sexual orientation diversity, such as LGBT families and students who do not conform to traditional gender norms. Teachers from schools with comprehensive anti-bullying policies are more likely than others to say that they have personally engaged in creating a safe and supportive environment for gender non-conforming students and for students from families with LGBT parents. As shown in Table 6.6, teachers from schools with comprehensive policies are more likely to have engaged in efforts to create safe learning environments for gender non-conforming children and children from LGBT-headed families. In addition, teachers from schools with comprehensive policies are more comfortable intervening in LGBT-related bullying. As shown in Table 6.7, teachers from schools with comprehensive policies report higher levels of comfort in addressing bullying and name-calling with these groups of students.

Table 6.6
Teachers' Efforts Related to Gender and LGBT Families by Type of School Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy

	Type of Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policy		
	Comprehensive Policies	Generic Policies	No Policy
	A	B	C
Base:	276	624	199
Personally engaged in efforts specifically designed to create a safe and supportive environment in your classroom for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms	48%[BC]	32%	25%
Personally engaged in efforts specifically designed to create a safe and supportive environment in your classroom for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families	42%[BC]	20%[C]	10%

Q1030. Have you personally engaged in efforts specifically designed to create a safe and supportive environment in your classroom for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms?
Q950. Have you personally engaged in efforts specifically designed to create a safe and supportive environment in your classroom for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families?

Table 6.7
Teachers' Comfort With Addressing Name-Calling, Bullying or Harassment Related to Gender and Sexual Orientation (% Very Comfortable) by Type of School Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy

	Type of Anti-Bullying or Harassment Policy		
	Comprehensive Policies	Generic Policies	No Policy
	A	B	C
Base:	276	624	199
Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because they don't conform to traditional gender roles	74%[BC]	49%	38%
Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because a student is or is believed to be gay, lesbian or bisexual	72%[BC]	51%[C]	37%

Q1121_4. How comfortable would you feel with the following...? 4. Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because they don't conform to traditional gender roles.
Q1121_3. How comfortable would you feel with the following...? 3. Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because a student is or is believed to be gay, lesbian or bisexual.

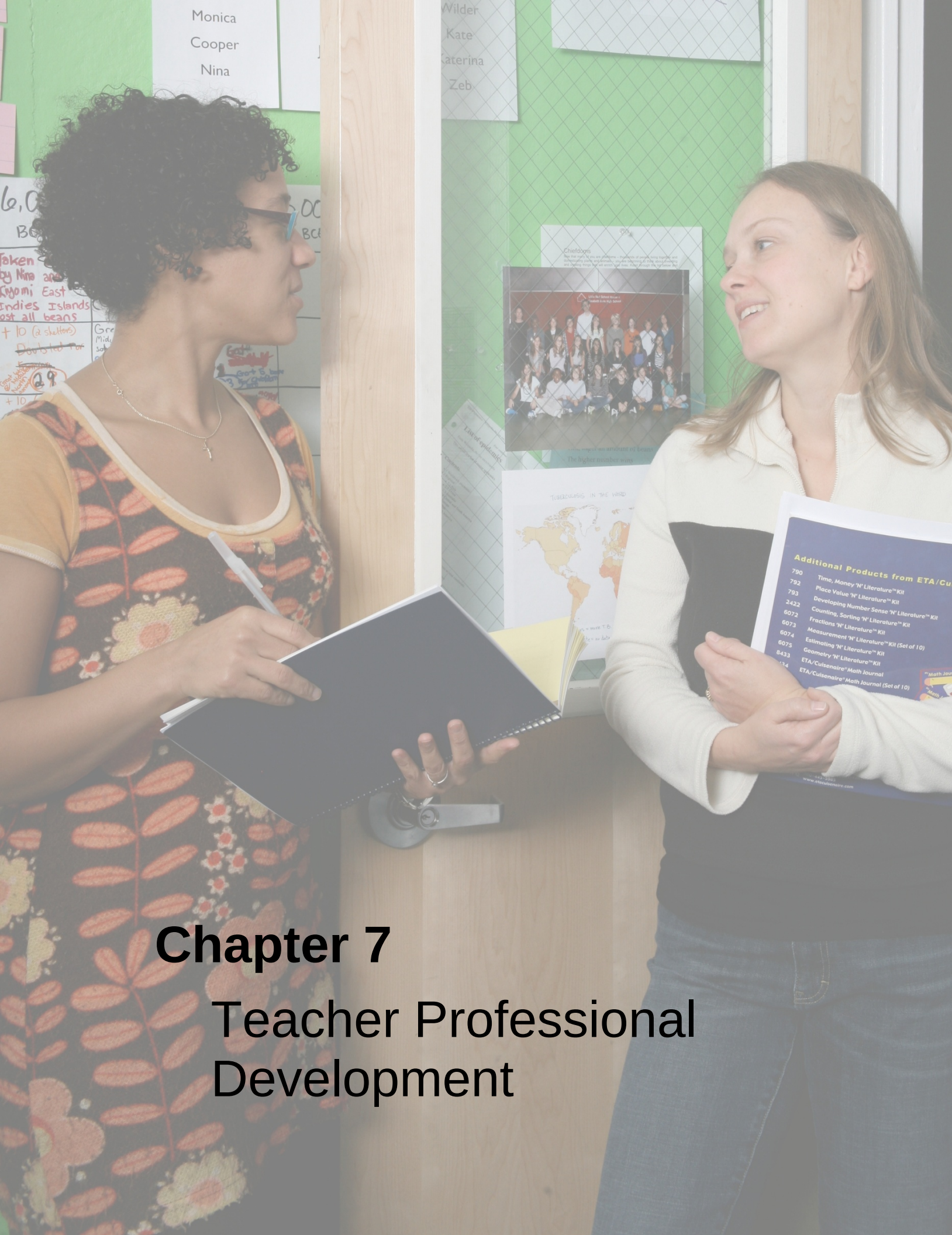
Summary

There is clear evidence that elementary schools are making efforts to confront bullying. The majority of teachers say that their schools adopt various measures to address the issue, some of which include establishing punitive measures toward students who bully or harass others, providing professional development for school personnel, implementing education programs for students on bullying and promoting anti-bullying awareness campaigns. Differences in the implementation of some of these measures are, at times, related to school type, size and location.

Teachers report that anti-bullying/harassment policies are the most common measure enacted by elementary schools to address bullying. Most teachers report that the anti-bullying/ harassment policy at their school includes a description of consequences for those who bully, procedures for reporting bullying and requirements for staff to report incidents of bullying. The type of anti-bullying/harassment policy, according to teachers' reports, does not differ by school characteristics, such as grade level, school type, size or location.

Although most teachers report that their school has an anti-bullying/harassment policy, less than a quarter (23%) say that their school has a comprehensive policy that specifically includes protections for bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, among other characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity).

Anti-bullying/harassment policies may facilitate teachers taking action in their classrooms. Teachers in schools with these policies, particularly with comprehensive policies, are more likely to address incidents of bias and to take proactive steps to ensure that gender non-conforming students and students with LGBT families are safe and supported in school.



Chapter 7

Teacher Professional Development

Overview

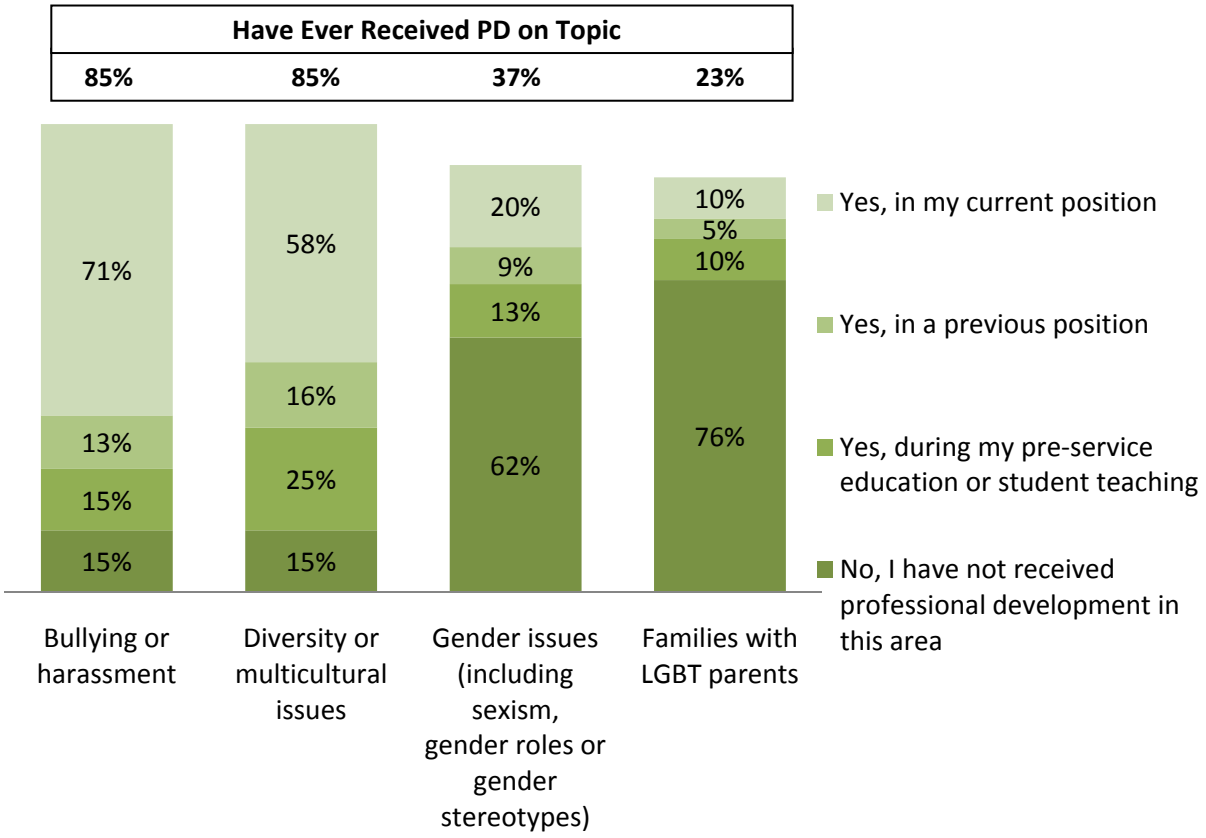
As we have discovered in previous chapters, many teachers recognize that bullying and harassment are serious problems in their schools and most address situations of bullying and name-calling that they observe in their schools. However, these findings also show a need for further focus on teacher support in certain areas. In Chapter 1, we learned that a majority of teachers very often or often address situations in which they hear students make biased remarks. However, comments regarding students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are the type of biased comment least likely to be addressed by elementary school teachers. In Chapter 5, we learned that most teachers say that they would feel very or somewhat comfortable addressing situations in which students are called names, bullied or harassed because they may be lesbian, gay or bisexual, do not conform to traditional gender roles or come from a family with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) parents. Yet, this high level of comfort does not extend to teachers responding to questions from their students about people who are LGBT given that a majority of teachers indicate that they would not feel comfortable doing so. Additionally, teachers and students alike report that representations families with LGBT parents are rarely included.

In light of the gap in teacher actions and comfort levels in areas related to people who are LGBT, including LGBT families, and students who may not conform to traditional gender norms, this chapter focuses on professional development that teachers have received in these areas, as well as in bullying and harassment in general. This chapter also examines areas in which teachers say they need further professional development.

Teachers' Professional Development Background

More than eight in ten (85%) elementary school teachers say that they have, at some point in their career, received professional development (PD) in bullying and harassment. The same proportion of teachers has received PD in diversity or multicultural issues (85%). However, PD in issues surrounding gender, such as those regarding sexism, gender roles or gender stereotypes, and PD related to families with LGBT parents are less common, with only slightly more than one third of teachers (37%) having ever received PD in gender issues and even fewer having received PD about families with LGBT parents (23%). In their current positions, the majority of teachers have received PD in bullying or harassment (71%) and diversity or multicultural issues (58%). Two in ten teachers or less have received PD in their current positions on gender issues (20%) or about families with LGBT parents (10%) (see Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1
Professional Development in the Following Areas Received by Teachers



Q1126.Have you, personally, ever received any professional development (e.g., training) in the following areas? Please select all that apply.

Teachers who work at schools with anti-bullying policies are more likely than teachers at schools without such policies to have received professional development in their current positions on bullying, diversity, gender issues and families with LGBT parents (see Table 7.1). Teachers at schools that have established comprehensive policies (which specifically mention sexual orientation and gender identity or gender expression) are even more likely to have received professional development on these issues in their current positions than teachers at schools with more generic policies that do not specifically mention both of these topics — diversity (77% vs. 57%), gender issues (42% vs. 14%) and families with LGBT parents (24% vs. 7%) (see also Table 7.1).

Schools that have a presence of LGBT students or parents may also be more likely to provide their teachers with professional development. Teachers who know a student or parent at their school who is LGBT are more likely to have had PD in their current position than those who do not know an LGBT student or parent on all of the topics. As shown in Figure 7.3, for example, 74% of teachers who know an LGBT student or teacher have had PD on diversity or multicultural issues, compared to 53% of those who have not. These findings suggest that there may be a relationship between a school's decision to incorporate such policies and the diversity of its community and/or student population (see Table 7.2). It is also possible that teachers who know LGBT people may be more likely to seek out potential opportunities for professional development on these topics.

School location may also be related in the types of PD offered at elementary schools. Teachers in suburban areas are more likely than those in rural areas to say they have received PD in their current positions on diversity or multicultural issues and on families with LGBT parents. Teachers in urban areas are more likely than those in rural areas to have received PD on gender issues.

Table 7.1
Professional Development in Current Position by Type of Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy

	Type of Anti-Bullying/Harassment Policy		
	Comprehensive Policy	Generic Policy	No Policy
	A	B	C
Base:	276	624	199
Bullying or harassment	80%[C]	75%[C]	47%
Diversity or multicultural issues	77%[BC]	57%[C]	40%
Gender issues (including sexism, gender roles or gender stereotypes)	42%[BC]	14%	12%
Families with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) parents	24%[BC]	7%	4%

Q1126. Have you, personally, ever received any professional development (e.g., training) in the following areas? Please select all that apply.
Note: "Comprehensive policies" indicate school anti-bullying/harassment policies that specifically mention sexual orientation and gender identity or gender expression. "Generic policies" indicate school anti-bullying/harassment policies that do not specifically mention both of these characteristics.

Teachers have also been provided training on issues of bullying, diversity, gender and families with LGBT parents during their pre-service education or while they are student teachers. Diversity seems to be highlighted more than the other three topics during this period, with 25% of teachers stating that they have received PD in diversity or multicultural issues during their pre-service education or student teaching, compared to 15% for bullying and harassment, 13% for gender issues and 10% for families with LGBT parents. Additionally, teaching programs may be emphasizing these topics more in recent years, with newer teachers (those with 5 years of experience or less) being more likely than teachers with more experience to have received PD in these areas during their pre-service education or student teaching (see Table 7.3). Of course, it is also possible that newer teachers have greater recall for content covered during their pre-service training.

Table 7.2
Professional Development in Current Position by Knowing an LGBT Student or Parent

	Total	Know a Student or Parent at School Who is LGBT	
		Yes	No
		A	B
Base:	1099	355	663
Bullying or harassment	72%	83%[C]	67%
Diversity or multicultural issues	58%	74%[C]	53%
Gender issues (including sexism, gender roles or gender stereotypes)	20%	29%[C]	17%
Families with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) parents	10%	19%[C]	7%

Q1126. Have you, personally, ever received any professional development (e.g., training) in the following areas [in current position]?

Table 7.3
Professional Development during Pre-Service Education or Student Teaching by Years of Teaching Experience

	Years of Teaching Experience		
	0-5 Years	6-20 Years	21+ Years
	A	B	C
Base:	171	514	400
Bullying or harassment	24%[BC]	12%	9%
Diversity or multicultural issues	40%[BC]	24%[C]	13%
Gender issues (including sexism, gender roles or gender stereotypes)	17%[C]	13%	8%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families	17%[BC]	7%	4%

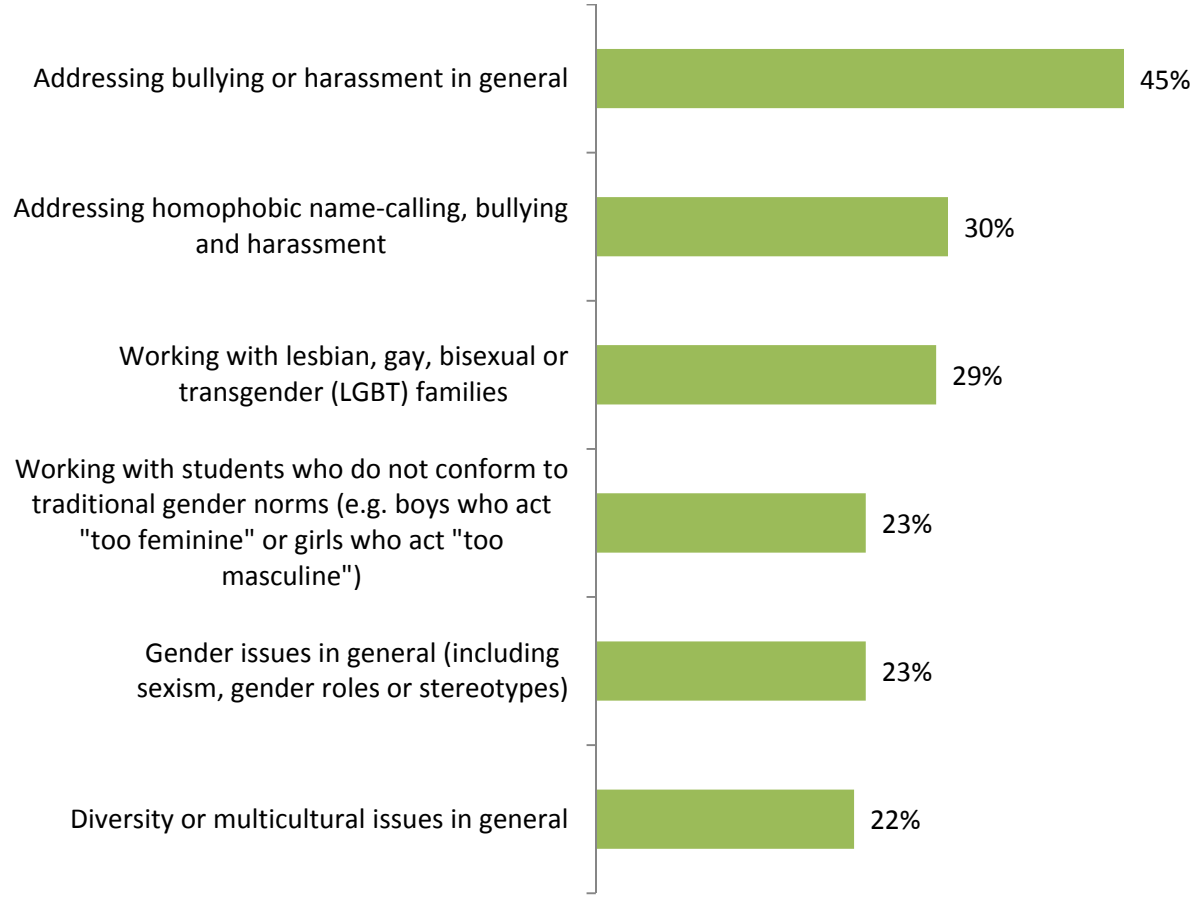
Q1126. Have you, personally, ever received any professional development (e.g., training) in the following areas (during pre-service education or student teaching)?

Areas for Further Professional Development

Many elementary school teachers feel that they need further professional development (PD) in topics related to bullying, diversity, gender and families with LGBT parents. Bullying is one topic on which teachers would like more training. Although more than eight in ten teachers have received PD in bullying or harassment at some point in their careers, almost half (45%) feel they need further professional development in this area. In contrast, despite the finding that teachers are just as likely to receive PD in diversity as they are to receive PD in bullying, there is a sense that teachers may be more at ease with their ability to address general diversity or multicultural issues, with only about two out of ten (22%) teachers expressing a desire for more PD in this area (see Figure 7.2).

Although professional development in issues of homophobic bullying, gender non-conformity and LGBT families is not widespread, teachers express some desire for more training on these topics. Three out of ten teachers believe they need further PD on addressing homophobic name-calling, bullying and harassment (30%) and working with families with LGBT parents (29%), and about one quarter of teachers would like more support on working with students who may not conform to traditional gender norms (23%) and on gender issues in general (23%) (see also Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2
Areas in Which Teachers Feel They Need Further Professional Development



Q1130. Which of the following topics do you feel you need further professional development on? Please select all that apply.

Whereas teachers at schools with comprehensive anti-bullying/harassment policies (which specifically mention sexual orientation and gender identity or gender expression) are more likely than those at schools with generic anti-bullying/harassment policies (which do not specifically mention both of these characteristics) to report that they have received PD in their current positions, teachers in schools without an anti-bullying/harassment policy are most likely to report that they need further PD on addressing bullying or harassment (54%, compared to 46% of teachers in schools with generic policies and 36% of teachers in schools with comprehensive policies).

Although there are few differences by grade level taught in regards to teachers' PD backgrounds, teachers of students in kindergarten through 2nd grades are more likely than teachers of 5th-6th grades to feel they need further training on diversity (25% for K-2nd grade teachers vs. % of 3rd-4th grade teachers vs. 10% of 5th-6th grade teachers), even though they are no less likely to have reported having had previous PD on the topic.

In addition, teachers in rural schools are more likely than those in suburban schools to indicate that they would like more PD on addressing bullying or harassment (rural: 51% vs. suburban: 39% vs. urban: 45%). Teachers in smaller schools are also more likely than teachers at larger schools to say they would like more PD on diversity or multicultural issues (fewer than 300 students: 39% vs. 300-499 students: 24% vs. 500 students or more: 16%).

Impact of Teachers' Professional Development

It appears that professional development (PD) for teachers in gender issues and families with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) parents is beneficial in preparing teachers for addressing these issues at school. Teachers who have received PD in gender issues do not differ in comfort level related to addressing bullying based on gender expression or sexual orientation, but they are more likely to feel comfortable responding to student questions about lesbian, gay and bisexual people (57% vs. 43%) and about transgender people (50% vs. 36%) (see Table 7.4). Similarly, teachers who have received PD about LGBT families are more likely to feel comfortable responding to questions about LGBT people, but do not exhibit different patterns comfort in responding to bullying based on gender expression or sexual orientation (as shown in Table 7.4). Thus, it may be that PD on gender and LGBT family issues increases comfort about general knowledge about LGBT people even if it may not include more general information about LGBT people. Further, this type of PD may not explicitly include information or skill-building about intervention regarding bullying and harassment based on gender expression or sexual orientation, which may explain why teachers do not differ in their comfort with addressing those behaviors.

Table 7.4
Comfort Level Addressing Bullying and Responding to Questions (% "Somewhat" or "Very Comfortable") by Professional Development in Gender Issues and LGBT Families

	Received Professional Development in Gender Issues		Received Professional Development in LGBT Families	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
	A	B	C	D
Base:	451	641	252	832
Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because they don't conform to traditional gender roles	85%	82%	81%	84%
Addressing name-calling, bullying or harassment of students because a student is or is believed to be gay, lesbian or bisexual	85%	80%	83%	81%
Responding to questions from your students about gay, lesbian or bisexual people	57%[B]	43%	62%[B]	44%
Responding to questions from your students about transgender people	50%[B]	36%	55%[B]	37%

Q1121. How comfortable would you feel with the following…?

Prior PD on gender issues or on families with LGBT parents appears to be unrelated to the level of obligation teachers feel toward creating a safe and supportive environment for families with LGBT parents or toward students who may not conform to traditional gender standards. However, teachers who have received PD in these issues are more likely to have personally engaged in efforts to create such an environment for these groups (for students who may not conform to traditional gender norms: 46% vs. 27%; for families with LGBT parents: 31% vs. 19%).

Additionally, teachers who have received PD in families with LGBT parents are more likely to include representations of families with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents in their discussions about families (see Table 7.5). Furthermore, teachers who have received this type of PD are also more likely to include multicultural representations of families and representations of multi-racial families in their class discussions (see also Table 7.5).

Table 7.5
Family Types Represented When Topic of Families Is Discussed in Classroom by Professional Development in LGBT Families

	Received Professional Development in Families with LGBT Parents	
	Yes	No
	A	B
Base:	252	832
Families with a single parent	88%	92%
Multicultural representations of families	91% [B]	84%
Multi-racial families	84% [B]	77%
Adoptive families	79%	75%
Families with gay, lesbian or bisexual parents	41% [B]	20%
Families with transgender parents	14% [B]	7%
Other kinds of families	76%	77%

Q920. When the topic of families comes up in your classroom, are representations of the following types of families included? This may be through formal curriculum, videos, pictures, books or informal discussion.

Summary

Providing elementary school teachers with professional development can have a significant impact in improving the school experience for students who do not conform to traditional gender norms or students who have LGBT parents. Although the majority of teachers have received professional development in bullying and diversity at some point in their careers, training in topics related to gender as well as families with LGBT parents is less prevalent, with about one third or fewer teachers receiving professional development on such issues. However, many teachers express a desire for further professional development in addressing homophobic bullying, learning about issues of gender in general, working with students who do not conform to traditional gender norms and working with families with LGBT parents.

Professional development appears to be beneficial in increasing teachers' capacity, as it is related both to increased comfort in addressing LGBT issues and to greater curricular inclusion of LGBT families. In particular, the findings indicate that when teachers have had professional development on LGBT families, they are not only more likely to include representations of LGBT families in their classes, but are also more likely to include representations of culturally diverse families and multi-racial families.

In that many teachers would seem to welcome more professional development in the areas of gender non-conformity and lesbian and gay parents, schools can work on these issues in order to support not only the students who may not conform to traditional gender norms or who are from families with LGBT parents, but also the overall student population at their schools.

GLSEN®

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
90 Broad Street
2nd Floor
New York, NY 10004
glsen.org