

The 2007 Iowa School Climate Survey

The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and
Transgender Youth in Iowa's Schools



A Report from Iowa Pride Network
www.iowapridenetwork.org

Key Findings

(For comparison purposes, percentages in bold: 2007 ISCS, percentages in italicized parenthesis: 2005 ISCS)

1) Iowa's LGBT students continue to feel unsafe in school and face verbal and physical harassment or assault daily:

- **91%** (92%) of LGBT students in Iowa reported hearing homophobic remarks frequently in their schools.
- **80%** (83%) of LGBT students report being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation.
- **58%** (61%) of students do not feel safe at school because of their sexual orientation.
- **52%** (59%) of LGBT students reported some incident of having their property stolen or deliberately damaged, such as their car, clothing or books.
- **41%** (46%) of LGBT students reported being cyber-bullied (receiving harassing or threatening emails, text messages or instant messages from students at school because of their sexual orientation)
- **36%** (34%) of Iowa LGBT students reported some incident of physical harassment (being pushed or shoved) because of their sexual orientation; while nearly **16%** (18%) of students reported some incident of physical assault (being punched, kicked or injured with a weapon) because of their sexual orientation or gender expression.

2) Iowa schools are unprepared and unresponsive when it comes to helping their LGBT students:

- **63%** (58%) of students reported that their schools had no protective school policies or procedures regarding harassment and assault based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- **75%** (75%) of students report that faculty never or rarely intervene when homophobic remarks are made in their presence.

3) This hostile climate experienced by LGBT students adversely impacts their achievement levels:

- **10%** more students who report frequent verbal harassment do not intend to go to college right after high school
- LGBT students who have faced frequent verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation had GPA's that were **11%** lower than LGBT students who have never or rarely experienced such harassment:
- **10%** more students who report having their property damaged do not intend to go to college right after high school
- LGBT students that who have faced often or frequent cyber-bullying because of their sexual orientation had GPA's that were **14%** lower than LGBT students who have never or rarely experienced such harassment

4) Anti-harassment and non-discrimination policies with enumerated categories such as "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" do work to end bullying, harassment and discrimination in our schools. In schools WITH inclusive policies:

- Students were **3 times** more likely to report never being verbally harassed
- **10%** more students report never being physically harassed
- **12%** more students report never having their property stolen or deliberately damaged
- **17%** more students report never having mean lies or rumors spread about them
- **20%** more students report never being sexually harassed
- **20%** more students report never being physically assaulted
- **37%** more students report never being cyber-bullied

5) Students who have a Gay-Straight Alliance in their school report having decreased absenteeism, lower rates of name calling, harassment and assault. In schools WITH GSAs:

- **25%** are less likely to be verbally harassed because of their gender
- **23%** of LGBT students are less likely to skip class and **15%** are less likely to not attend school because of feeling uncomfortable or unsafe
- **23%** are less likely to be physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation
- **21%** are more likely to report never having been sexually harassed at school
- **12%** are less likely to be physically harassed because of their gender expression
- **12%** are less likely to be physically assaulted because of their gender expression
- **10%** are less likely to be verbally harassed because of their gender expression
- **10%** are less likely to be physically harassed because of their sexual orientation
- **10%** are more likely to report never being cyber-bullied because of their gender
- **8%** are more likely to report being rarely cyber-bullied because of their sexual orientation or gender expression

Recommendations

- School Behavioral Policies must be brought into conformity with the Safe Schools Law
- Create an environment in which students can safely and effectively learn by supporting the creation and sustainability of GSAs and Teacher Trainings
- Create systems for effective implementation and enforcement of Iowa's Safe Schools Law through clear reporting procedures and consequences for failures

The 2007 Iowa School Climate Survey

Iowa Pride Network's Iowa School Climate Survey is the only statewide survey to document the experiences of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) in Iowa's secondary schools. Conducted biennially since 2005, the Iowa School Climate Survey (ISCS) fills a crucial void in our collective understanding of the contemporary high school experience. The results of this survey are intended to serve as a guide for every legislator, educator, school board and community leader concerned with ensuring safe and effective schools for ALL students.

The 2007 ISCS results summarized here continue to track the endemic problem of name-calling, harassment and violence directed at LGBT students, while offering information about the impact of these experiences on academic performance and the effect of interventions designed to address the underlying problem. The 2007 ISCS paints a disturbing picture of the school environments and experiences for LGBT students; while providing further insights into the solutions for creating safer schools for all students.

Methods

The students for this survey were obtained primarily from school based organizations serving LGBT students. The students came from 37 schools across the state. Only Iowa high school students and first year college freshmen who had attended an Iowa high school within the past year were allowed to participate in the survey. The Iowa Pride Network School Climate Survey was available on the internet via Iowa Pride Network's website: www.iowapridenetwork.org. Persons who were interested in taking the survey could go online to take the survey or print out the survey and mail in a copy. A majority of the sample was asked to participate in the survey at GSA meetings where the survey was optional to take. And for the first time, the Iowa Pride Network handed out the survey at Youth and Shelter Services in Ames. Notices about our on-line survey were emailed out to Gay-straight Alliances and youth advocacy organizations.

The survey was made up of ten different sections. In each section the questions pertained to a specific topic, such as specific types of harassment, what type of school the participant attends, and even who the participants are comfortable talking to about their sexual orientation and gender expression, or someone they know who might be LGBT. In order to code the answers Likert-type scales were used such as never (1) to frequently (5) or always (4) on either a four- or five-point scale. Data collection occurred from October 2006 through May 2007.

A total of 180 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or allied (LGBTQA) students completed the survey. (Heterosexual youth were not included in the final statistics). Table 1 lists demographic characteristics of the sample. Out of the 180, 63% were female, 35% were male while 2% of students reported being transgender and .6% reported other. The majority reported being straight/heterosexual (47%), while 19% reported being gay, 15% reported being lesbian, 16% reported being bisexual, and 2% reported that they were questioning. Ages ranged from 12 to 24 with the average being 16 and the majority of the students being in the tenth grade of school. The majority of the sample (92%) reported being White/European American while the other major ethnic group is Hispanic/Latino. The majority of the sample (99%) attends public school and 44% goes to school in a suburban area (Table 2).

For a full comparative analysis of 2005 and 2007 trends for LGBT and straight students please see Appendix A.

Special Thanks

Dr. Peggy Fitch, Professor of Psychology at Central College and Samantha Winebrenner, Junior Psychology Student for compiling the data and statistical information. Iowa's supportive teachers, administrators and specifically advisors of Gay-Straight Alliances, who work endlessly to ensure the safety and affirmation of all students. And, finally, to Iowa's LGBTQA students who took this survey to help us better understand what it is like to be LGBTQA in Iowa's high schools.

Table 1: Demographics of Survey Participants				
	2005 LGBT	2007 LGBT	2005 Straight	2007 Straight
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>				
White	87.4%	91.3%	86.8%	91.6%
African-American/Black	3.9	2.2	2.9	
Latino/a	3.9	2.2	2.9	3.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.9		2.9	2.4
Native American	1.9	1.1	1.5	1.2
Multiracial	1		1.5	
Other race/ethnicity	1	3.3	1.5	1.2
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	38.8	40.9	23.9	28.9
Female	59.2	55.9	76.1	71.1
Transgender	1	1.1	0	0
Trans female to male	0	2.2	0	0
Other gender identities	0	0	0	0
<u>Sexual Orientation</u>				
Gay or Lesbian	61.2	65.6	0	0
Bisexual	28.2	31.2	0	0
Other sexual orientations	10.2	3.2	0	0
Straight/Heterosexual	0	0	100	100
<u>Grade</u>				
8th	8.8	9.7	16.7	7.2
9th	21.6	18.3	25.8	31
10th	29.4	26.9	24.2	27.4
11th	22.5	25.8	28.8	21.5
12th	17.6	6.5	4.5	2.4
<u>Average Age</u>				
	16.5	16.3	15.9	16.8

Table 2: School Characteristics				
	2005 LGBT	2007 LGBT	2005 Straight	2007 Straight
<u>Community Type</u>				
Urban	39.8%	33.3%	53%	25.9%
Suburban	22.4	41.4	18.2	46.9
Small Town	28.6	18.4	25.8	23.5
Rural	9.2	6.9	3	3.7
<u>School Type</u>				
Public	98	100	97.1	98.8
Religious-Affiliated	2	0	1.5	1.2
Other	0	0	1.5	0

Key Findings

(For comparison purposes, percentages in bold: 2007 ISCS, percentages in italicized parenthesis: 2005 ISCS)

Biased Remarks in School

Homophobic Remarks

LGBT Students in Iowa schools were asked how often they heard the expression “That’s so gay” or “You’re so gay” used in their schools. In these expressions, the word “gay” is used to mean something that is considered bad or worthless just as one might use the word “dumb” or “stupid.” **91%** (92%) of LGBT students in Iowa reported hearing the expression frequently or often in their schools and **71%** (85%) reported hearing other homophobic remarks such as “faggot” or “dyke,” frequently or often.

Students were also asked who made homophobic remarks, whether it was students, faculty/staff or both.

- Almost all students reported hearing homophobic remarks from other students – **76%** (87%) reported hearing such remarks often or frequently from other students.
- Incidents of homophobic remarks often go unchallenged. Three-quarters of the students surveyed reported that faculty/staff were only some of the time or never present when homophobic remarks were made and **75%** (75%) of students reported that faculty/staff only some of the time or never intervened when they were present.
- Students were less likely to intervene when homophobic remarks were made. Almost all the students in our survey reported that other students never intervened or only intervened some of the time when homophobic remarks were made **89%** (97%).

Anecdotal reports suggest that most non-LGBT students and some school district officials and educational policymakers maintain that the expression “that’s so gay” does not directly denigrate gay or lesbian people and therefore should not be seen as harmful or offensive. For this reason we asked students who heard this expression used in their schools the degree to which hearing such expressions distressed them. The majority of students **62%** (67%) reported they were pretty much or extremely distressed when hearing the words “gay” or “queer” used in a derogatory way (such as “That’s so gay”).

Changes in Homophobic Remarks Over Time

While the usage of the expression of “That’s so gay” or “You’re so gay” has been virtually unchanged since 2005, the number of students hearing other homophobic remarks such as “faggot” or “dyke,” frequently or often has dropped 14%. Additionally, students reporting hearing homophobic remarks often or frequently from other students saw an 11% drop, while there was an 8% increase in the number of students intervening when homophobic remarks are made. The number of teachers making homophobic remarks was cut in half from 14% in 2005 to 7% in 2007. Unfortunately, 75% of the time faculty/staff only some of the time or never intervene when homophobic remarks are made in their presence, a number that remains unchanged since 2005.

Racist Remarks

As with other students, LGBT students may also feel unsafe in their schools because of other personal characteristics, such as race or ethnicity. Well over a third **43%** (37%) of Iowa’s LGBT students reported hearing racist remarks (such as “nigger,” “kike,” “gook,” used in a derogatory manner) frequently or often in their schools.

Students also reported that **45%** (38%) of racist comments frequently or often come from other students. When these racist comments are made, faculty and staff are only present (most of the time or always) **24%** (17%) of the time. Additionally, faculty or staff intervened only half the time **50%** (49%) when racist remarks were made in their presence.

Changes in Racist Remarks Over Time

There were slight increases (6 to 7%) in the number LGBT students reporting hearing racist remarks frequently or often in their schools and hearing them frequently or often from other students. Students did report an increase in the presence of faculty and staff when racist remarks are made, but reported no change in the amount of intervention since 2005.

Sexist Remarks & Negative Remarks about Gender Expression

The majority of Iowa's LGBT students **79%** (77%) have heard sexist remarks (such as someone being called "bitch" in a derogatory way or comments about girls' bodies or talk of girls being inferior to boys) in their schools. **18%** (31%) of students reported hearing sexist remarks from teachers or school staff some of the time. The majority **64%** (59%) of teachers or staff only some of the time or never intervened when sexist remarks were made.

In our survey we also asked students how often they heard remarks about a person not acting in traditionally gender-specified ways, i.e., not acting "masculine" or "feminine" enough. LGBT students frequently reported hearing comments about masculinity more than femininity in their schools. Whereas **55%** (45%) of students reported frequently or often hearing comments about students not acting "masculine" enough in their schools, only a quarter of students **27%** (25%) reported frequently or often hearing comments about students not acting "feminine" enough.

Iowa LGBT students also reported that teachers or staff were inactive when it came to remarks about gender expression. **88%** (77%) of teachers or staff intervened only some of the time or never when comments about students' not acting "masculine" or "feminine" were made.

Changes in Sexist Remarks & Negative Remarks about Gender Expression Over Time

The majority of Iowa's students continue to hear sexist remarks at levels unchanged since 2005. However, there has been a substantial 13% decrease in the number of students reporting that their teachers or staff sometime saying sexist remarks themselves. Unfortunately, there has been no significant change in the number of teacher intervention regarding sexist remarks made in their presence. Students reported a 10% increase in frequently or often hearing comments about students' not acting "masculine" enough in their schools. In 2007, there was a 9% decrease in the number of teachers and staff intervening when comments about students' not acting "masculine" or "feminine" were made in their presence.

Overall Safety in School

To assess overall feelings of safety in school, we asked students whether they felt unsafe in their schools because of their sexual orientation, gender expression, gender, race/ethnicity, because of an actual or perceived disability and/or because of their religion or the religion they are presumed to be.

Students most commonly reported that they felt unsafe in their schools because of their sexual orientation or their gender expression:

- **58%** (61%) felt unsafe in their school because of their sexual orientation
- **43%** (39%) felt unsafe in school because of how they express their gender
- **7%** (10%) felt unsafe in their school because of their gender
- **4%** (5%) felt unsafe in their school because of their race/ethnicity
- **2%** (2%) felt unsafe in their school because of an actual or perceived disability
- **15%** (14%) felt unsafe in school because of their religion or because people think they are of a certain religion

For LGBT students, feeling that school is a hostile or unsafe place may interfere with their ability to learn. We asked students in our survey how many times they had missed a class or missed a full day of school in the past month because they felt uncomfortable or unsafe in school. **29%** (21%) had skipped class at least one or more days in the past month because they felt unsafe in that class. **25%** (14%) had missed at least one or more days of school in the past month because they felt unsafe in school or on the way to school.

Changes in Overall Safety Over Time

The number of students who felt unsafe in their schools because of their sexual orientation remained unchanged while the number of students reporting feeling unsafe in their schools because of their gender expression saw a slight increase. Overall, the number of students feeling unsafe because of race, gender, etc. remained virtually unchanged. There was an increase in the number of LGBT students reporting missing a class (8% increase) or a full day of school (11% increase) in the past month because they felt uncomfortable or unsafe in school.

Experiences of Harassment and Assault in School

We asked students in our survey how frequently in the past school year had they been verbally and physically harassed, physically assaulted or sexually harassed.

Verbal Harassment

The majority **80%** (83%) of LGBT students in Iowa reported at least some experience with verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation or because of their gender expression

Physical Harassment & Assault

Over a third **36%** (34%) of Iowa LGBT students reported some incident of physical harassment (e.g., being pushed or shoved) in school because of their sexual orientation and over a quarter **31%** (27%) of students reported such harassment because of their gender expression. Given the extreme nature of physical assault (being punched, kicked or injured with a weapon), it is not surprising that fewer students reported being assaulted in school than reported being verbally or physically harassed. Nevertheless, nearly **16%** (18%) of students reported some incident of physical assault in the past year because of their sexual orientation and **11%** (17%) of students reported having been assaulted because of their gender expression.

Sexual Harassment

The majority of Iowa LGBT students **69%** (67%) reported some incident of sexual harassment (such as sexual remarks made toward them or someone touching their body inappropriately) at their school.

Cyber-Bullying & Threats

41% (46%) of students have reported some incident of having received harassing or threatening emails, instant messages or text messages from students at their school because of their sexual orientation in the past year. The majority of LGBT students **83%** (91%) reported some incident of having had mean rumors or lies spread about them in their school. **52%** (59%) of students reported some incident of having their property stolen or deliberately damaged such as their car, clothing or books.

Changes in Experiences of Harassment and Assault in School Over Time

The number of students who experienced verbal, physical and sexual harassment in their schools because of their sexual orientation or gender expression remained relatively unchanged. Students experiencing physical assault based on their sexual orientation also remained the same while students who were assaulted because of their gender identity saw a slight decrease. Students reporting some incident of cyber-bullying (receiving harassing or threatening emails, instant messages or text messages) from students at their school because of their sexual orientation in the past year remained unchanged; while slight decreases were seen in the number of students reporting having mean rumors or lies spread about them or having their property stolen or deliberately damaged.

LGBT Resources and Support in School

Another dimension of school climate for LGBT students is the availability of positive resources, about LGBT-related issues and supportive faculty or staff. Thus, we asked the students in our survey about certain school supports, such as school policies or procedures for reporting incidents of harassment or assault, and the inclusion of LGBT people, history or events discussed in classroom curricula.

School Policies & Procedures for Reporting Harassment or Assault

63% (58%) of students either don't know or do not have school policies or procedures for reporting incidents of harassment or assault that specifically mention sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Inclusion of LGBT People, History or Events Discussed in Classroom Curricula

The majority **82%** (78%) of students have never been taught about LGBT people, history or events in any of their classes, while over three-fourths **84%** (77%) of Iowa students' textbooks contain no information about LGBT people, history or

events. **59%** (49%) of students reported being able to use school computers to access websites about LGBT people, history or events.

Supportive School Staff and Other LGBT Peers

40% (31%) of LGBT students reported knowing more than 10 teachers or other school staff at their school who are supportive of LGBT students; while **24%** (13%) of students reported knowing at least one teacher or other school staff person who is open about being LGBT. **51%** (41%) of students reported knowing more than 10 other LGBT students at their school. Students reported having talked with their school teacher between two and five times in the previous year regarding LGBT issues—a 10% increase since 2005 (**41%**) (31%). Additionally, a 10% increase was seen in the number of students describing these interactions as very to somewhat positive (**88%**) (77%).

Changes in LGBT Resources and Support in School Over Time

Students reporting having inclusive policies and never being taught about LGBT people, history or events remained statistically unchanged. There was a slight increase in the number of students reporting that their textbooks contain no information about LGBT history or events. However, there was an increase (10%) in the number of students being allowed to use school computers to access websites about LGBT people, history or events. In regards to supportive school staff, a 9% increase was seen in the number of teachers who students feel are supportive of LGBT students and nearly a quarter of students surveyed said they know of a least one school staff person who is open about being LGBT—a 10% increase since 2005. Additionally, about half of the students reported knowing more than 10 other LGBT students at their school—also a 10% increase since 2005. Students reported talking with their teachers more about LGBT issues and having those experiences be very to somewhat positive—both increases of 10%.

Achievement & Comfort Levels in School

We asked students to describe their grades, if they are planning to attend at least two or more years of college, if they plan to finish college and if they were heading to college right after high school. We also asked how comfortable students feel talking one-on-one with teachers or schools staff about LGBT issues, taking dates of the same gender to prom and raising LGBT issues in their classes.

Achievement Levels

15% (21%) of students described their grades in the past school year as mostly A's. Nine percent **9%** (6%) reported that they planned to take at least two or more years of college while **30%** (36%) expected to finish college. Three-quarters **74%** (76%) planned on going to college right after high school.

Comfort Levels

The majority (**70%**) (57%) of LGBT students stated that they would feel comfortable talking one-on-one with their teachers about LGBT issues. **78%** (64%) of students reported that they would feel very to somewhat comfortable taking a date of the same gender to a school dance or prom, while 28% (24%) had actually done so. The majority (**71%**) (75%) of students also reported that they would feel very so somewhat comfortable raising LGBT issues in their classes; while three-quarters (**74%**) (77%) reported having done so at least once.

Changes in Achievement & Comfort Levels in School Over Time

Students reporting that they planned to take two or more years of college or planned on going to college right after high school remained unchanged. Slight decreases were seen in the number of students describing their grades as mostly A's and those students who expected to finish college. In regards to comfort levels, significant increases were seen in students who reported feeling comfortable talking one-on-one with their teachers about LGBT issues (13% increase); and those reporting that they would feel very to somewhat comfortable taking a date of the same gender to a school dance or prom (14% increase). Percentages of students feeling comfortable raising LGBT issues in class and taking dates of the same gender and those actually doing so remained unchanged since 2005.

Diminished Achievement Levels

We examined how school climate was related to school performance, grade-point average (GPA) and college aspirations for LGBT students. **Overall, the GPA of LGBT students is 2.85 vs. 3.25 for straight heterosexual students, an 11% achievement gap.** The school performance and college aspirations are significantly diminished for LGBT students who experience harassment.

LGBT students who are frequently the target of rumors or lies had GPA's that were 5% lower than LGBT students who never or rarely experienced such harassment:

- Average GPA for LGBT students who report being frequently the target of rumors or lies: **2.80**
- Average GPA for LGBT students who report rarely being the target of rumors or lies: **3.07**

LGBT students who have faced frequent verbal harassment because of their sexual orientation had GPA's that were 11% lower than LGBT students who have never or rarely experienced such harassment:

- Average GPA for LGBT students who report frequent verbal harassment: **2.75**
- Average GPA for LGBT students who report only rare or less frequent verbal harassment: **3.19**

LGBT students who have faced often or frequent cyber-bullying because of their sexual orientation had GPA's that were 14% lower than LGBT students who have never or rarely experienced such harassment:

- Average GPA for LGBT students who report often or frequent cyber-bullying: **2.00**
- Average GPA for LGBT students who report rarely or never experiencing cyber-bullying: **2.90**

Diminished Future and Educational Aspirations

The majority of Iowa's LGBT students (**74%**) (76%) plan to go to college right after high school. However, those who don't report more frequent harassment. Students who experience frequent verbal harassment and cyber-bullying because of their sexual orientation are less likely than other students to plan to attend college:

- 10% more students who report frequent verbal harassment do not intend to attend college right after high school
- By contrast:**
- 10% more students who report never experiencing verbal harassment do intend to go to college right after high school

A similar pattern was found for students who reported experiencing having their property, such as their car, clothing or books deliberately damaged because of their sexual orientation:

- 10% more students who report having their property damaged do not intend to attend college right after high school
- By contrast:**
- 28% more students who report never experiencing property damage do intend to go to college right after high school

Inclusive School Policies make a Difference

Having a policy or procedure for reporting incidents of harassment in school is an important tool for making schools safer for all students. When such policies or procedures exist and are *enforced*, schools are sending a message to the student population that victimizing behaviors will not be tolerated.

Students were asked whether their schools had a policy or procedure for reporting incidents of harassment or assault that specifically mentions sexual orientation or gender identity. Less than half **37%** (42%) of LGBT students reported that their schools have a policy protecting them. **27%** (20%) of LGBT students reported having no policy in place to protect them and a sizeable percentage of students **37%** (39%) reported that they did not know whether their schools had a policy or not.

It is important to note that student reports on the existence of policy may not necessarily reflect the extent to which individual schools or school districts actually have policies. Since most of the students for this survey were obtained primarily from school based organizations serving LGBT students; it would follow that they would report a higher number of existent policies. However, the decrease in the number of students reporting having policies suggest that LGBT students have become more aware of their right to safe and healthy learning environments.

It is clear that given that such a sizeable portion did not know of a policy indicates that school officials either do not have an inclusive policy or may not be doing an adequate job of informing their students about school policies regarding harassment and assault based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Results clearly indicate that schools that adopt and enforce policies that include sexual orientation or gender identity/expression have a healthier and more affirming school climate than those that do not:

- **75%** of LGBT students in schools without inclusive policies reported feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, compared with **46%** of students in schools that had inclusive policies.
- In schools without inclusive policies, twice as many students skipped class or did not attend school within the past month because they felt unsafe compared with those that had an inclusive policy.

In schools WITH inclusive policies:

- Students were **3 times** more likely to report never being verbally harassed
- **10%** more students report never being physically harassed
- **12%** more students report never having their property stolen or deliberately damaged
- **17%** more students report never having mean lies or rumors spread about them
- **20%** more students report never being sexually harassed
- **20%** more students report never being physically assaulted
- **37%** more students report never being cyber-bullied

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) decrease absenteeism, name-calling, harassment and assault

GSAs are an alliance of LGBT and straight allied students who work to end homophobia and transphobia in Iowa's high schools. These student-led organizations seek to end violence, harassment, discrimination and isolation of LGBT students. From 2005 to 2007 there was a 12% increase in the number of reported GSAs.

It is important to note that student reports on the existence of GSA may not necessarily reflect the extent to which individual schools actually have GSAs. Since most of the students for this survey were obtained primarily from school based organizations serving LGBT students; it would follow that they would report a higher amount of existent GSAs. Currently, less than 20% of Iowa high schools have a Gay-Straight Alliance—a disappointing number, considering the positive impact such groups have on school climates and students:

In schools WITH GSAs:

Absenteeism:

- **23%** of LGBT students are less likely to skip class and **15%** are less likely to not attend school because of feeling uncomfortable or unsafe

Name-calling:

- **10%** are less likely to be verbally harassed because of their gender expression

- 25% are less likely to be verbally harassed because of their gender

Harassment:

- 10% are less likely to be physically harassed because of their sexual orientation
- 12% are less likely to be physically harassed because of their gender expression
- 21% are more likely to report never having been sexually harassed at school

Cyber-bullying:

- 10% are more likely to report never being cyber-bullied because of their gender
- 8% are more likely to report being rarely cyber-bullied because of their sexual orientation or gender expression

Assault:

- 23% are less likely to be physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation
- 12% are less likely to be physically assaulted because of their gender expression

Summary

The results from the Iowa Pride Network School Climate Survey clearly show that for many LGBT students in Iowa, school can be an unsafe and even dangerous place. The majority of Iowa LGBT students **91%** (92%) frequently heard homophobic remarks, **58%** (61%) felt unsafe in their school because of their sexual orientation and **80%** (83%) reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation or their gender expression. A large number of students also reported incidents of physical harassment **36%** (34%) and physical assault **16%** (18%). Faculty and school staff often did not intervene when homophobic remarks were made **75%** (75%) and were even less likely to intervene **88%** (80%) when hearing negative comments about someone's gender expression.

Conclusion:

Iowa's Safe Schools Law must be implemented by all schools and Gay-Straight Alliances are needed to create the kind of learning environment that allows Iowa LGBT students to succeed academically.

Recommendations

Our results indicate much work must be done in Iowa schools to create safer climates for all students, including LGBT students. The following recommendations, if adopted, will help make a major difference across Iowa in providing a safe learning atmosphere for all students.

1. **School Behavioral Policies must be brought into conformity with the Safe Schools Law** by including: "age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status"
 - a. This language must be routinely included in material that describes behavioral expectations of students and staff which is distributed to students, staff and parents, such as the student handbook.
2. **Create an environment in which students can safely and effectively learn** by implementing the following:
 - a. Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA)
 - i. Schools should support the creation and sustainability of GSAs
 - ii. Schools should treat GSAs fairly and equally and avoid imposing barriers on the formation or activities of GSAs not imposed on other students groups, as mandated by the Federal Equal Access Act

- iii. Schools should make available LGBT resources so that GSAs have access to age-appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBT people, history and events
 - b. Trainings of all staff, faculty, and administration should include
 - i. Basic information about LGBT persons
 - ii. Specific information about the experiences of and issues faced by LGBT students
 - iii. Specific information on the legal rights of LGBT students and how to implement law and school policies
 - iv. Specific instruction on how to intervene when rights are violated
- 3. Create systems for effective implementation and enforcement of Iowa's Safe Schools Law** by providing punitive consequences in line with other types of harassing behavior. Such systems include:
 - a. Reporting Protocols
 - i. Develop, implement and provide training on equitable policies and processes for reporting
 - ii. Protocols must be clear and students, faculty and staff must understand how to report incidents of harassment
 - iii. Schools must accurately report data on LGBT harassment as they would any other state-reported data regarding harassment
 - b. Punishment/Consequences
 - i. Ensure that students, faculty and staff understand the consequences of harassing behavior
 - ii. Schools not in compliance with the Safe Schools Law should face the same punitive consequences as they would if they did not abide by other state laws

About Iowa Pride Network

Iowa Pride Network empowers students to fight homophobia and transphobia in high schools and colleges by supporting gay-straight alliance (GSA) clubs and providing leadership opportunities and organizing projects centered on social justice.

Iowa Pride Network Vision

Our vision is to educate Iowa LGBT students on their rights and available resources, end the isolation that many LGBT students face, empower students to build successful futures and transform Iowa into a state that is affirming and inclusive.

APPENDIX A

Comparative Analysis of 2005 and 2007 Trends for LGBT and Straight/Heterosexual Students

	2005 LGBT	2007 LGBT	2005 Straight	2007 Straight
Biased Language in School				
Homophobic Remarks				
Reported hearing homophobic remarks (such as "That's so gay," "You're so gay," faggot," "dyke," or "queer") frequently or often in their schools.	92%	91%	94%	91%
Reported hearing homophobic remarks from teachers of school staff at least some of the time.	14%	7%	18%	7%
Reported they were pretty much or extremely distressed when hearing the words "gay" or "queer" used in a derogatory way (such as "That's so gay").	67%	62%	57%	60%
Reported that teachers only some of the time or never intervene when homophobic remarks were made in their presence.	75%	75%	72%	76%
Reported that students only some of the time or never intervene when homophobic remarks were made in their presence.	97%	89%	96%	95%
Racist Remarks				
Reported hearing racist remarks (such as "nigger") used frequently or often in their schools.	37%	43%	37%	25%
Reported having heard racist remarks from teachers or school staff.	33%	25%	30%	30%
Reported faculty or staff intervene only some of the time or never when racist remarks were made in their presence.	51%	50%	61%	51%
Reported that students only some of the time or never intervene when racist remarks were made in their presence.	77%	80%	81%	77%
Sexist Remarks				
Heard sexist remarks often or frequently (such as someone being called "bitch") used in their schools.	77%	79%	81%	77%
Reported hearing sexist remarks from teachers or school staff some of the time.	31%	18%	15%	22%
Reported faculty or staff intervened only some of the time or never when sexist remarks were made in their presence.	59%	64%	76%	72%
Reported that students only some of the time or never intervened when homophobic sexist were made in their presence.	64%	88%	93%	85%
Negative Remarks about Gender Expression				
Reported hearing comments about not acting "masculine" enough often or frequently	45%	55%	43%	38%
Reported hearing comments about not acting "feminine" enough	25%	27%	27%	26%
Reported hearing remarks from teachers or school staff at least some of the time.	21%	19%	5%	14%
Reported faculty or staff intervened only some of the time or never when comments about students' not acting "masculine" or "feminine" were made in their presence.	90%	88%	83%	83%
Reported that students only some of the time or never intervened when negative remarks about gender expression were made in their presence.	94%	94%	96%	95%
Overall Safety in School				
Skipped class at least once in the past month because of feeling uncomfortable or unsafe in that class	21%	29%	6%	13%

Skipped school at least once in the past month because of feeling uncomfortable or unsafe in school or on the way to school	14%	25%	3%	8%
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Felt unsafe at school because of...				
your sexual orientation	61%	58%	3%	1%
your gender identity/expression	40%	43%	18%	17%
your gender	10%	7%	6%	1%
your race or ethnicity	5%	4%	10%	5%
your disability or because people believe you have a disability	2%	2%	4%	1%
your religion or because people think you are of a certain religion	14%	15%	10%	12%

Experiences of Harassment and Assault in School

Reported some experience with verbal harassment (name calling, threats, etc.) because of...				
your sexual orientation	83%	80%	12%	22%
your gender identity/expression	60%	66%	24%	29%
your gender	46%	41%	30%	24%
your race or ethnicity	20%	13%	14%	17%
your disability or because people believe you have a disability	12%	7%	9%	11%
your religion or because people think you are of a certain religion	35%	32%	29%	31%

Reported some experience with physical harassment (being pushed or shoved) because of...				
your sexual orientation	34%	36%	10%	7%
your gender identity/expression	27%	31%	10%	13%
your gender	21%	16%	7%	11%
your race or ethnicity	9%	3%	6%	7%
your disability or because people believe you have a disability	5%	1%	0%	5%
your religion or because people think you are of a certain religion	5%	3%	3%	6%

Reported some experience with physical assault (being punched, kicked or injured with a weapon) because of...				
your sexual orientation	18%	16%	0%	4%
your gender identity/expression	17%	11%	3%	6%
your gender	13%	7%	0%	4%
your race or ethnicity	5%	1%	5%	4%
your disability or because people believe you have a disability	4%	1%	3%	2%
your religion or because people think you are of a certain religion	3%	3%	3%	4%

Reported some experience with receiving harassing or threatening emails, instant messages or text messages from students at school because of...				
your sexual orientation	46%	41%	4%	2%
your gender identity/expression	21%	24%	4%	3%
your gender	14%	15%	3%	4%
your race or ethnicity	8%	4%	7%	5%
your disability or because people believe you have a disability	1%	2%	2%	1%
your religion or because people think you are of a certain religion	9%	13%	6%	6%

Sexual Harassment				
Reported some incident (rarely-frequently) of sexual harassment (such as sexual remarks made toward them or someone touching their body inappropriately) at their school.	67%	69%	46%	46%

Threats				
Reported some incident of having had mean rumors or lies spread about them in school	91%	83%	66%	72%

Reported some incident of having their property stolen or deliberately damaged such as their car, clothing or books.	59%	52%	43%	48%
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Who students talk to most of the time or always when experiencing harassment or assault in school (regardless of whether it's tied to race, gender, etc.)

Principal, teacher or staff person	17%	21%	11%	5%
Parent or guardian	23%	20%	25%	20%
Family member (other than a parent or guardian)	20%	15%	16%	13%

Percent of parents/guardians/family members who always talk to a teacher, principal or school when their student has experienced harassment or assault

Parent or guardian	11%	10%	12%	6%
Family member (other than a parent or guardian)	0%	6%	4%	4%

Resources and Support in School

School has policy or procedure for reporting incidents of harassment or assault in school	80%	73%	73%	71%
School has policy or procedure for reporting incidents of harassment or assault that specifically mentions sexual orientation or gender identity/expression	42%	37%	49%	30%
Reported being taught about LGBT people, history or events.	22%	18%	24%	23%
In classes where LGBT topics were taught, representations of LGBT people, history or events were very to somewhat positive	91%	64%	71%	72%
Reported textbooks containing information about LGBT people, history or events.	23%	16%	13%	25%
Reported that the school library contains books or other resources that contain information about LGBT people, history or events	52%	57%	37%	35%
Reported being able to use school computers to access websites about LGBT people, history or events	49%	59%	53%	54%
School has a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) or other type of club that addresses LGBT student issues	73%	85%	81%	89%
Attend GSA meetings frequently or often.	76%	70%	74%	55%
Attends a program or group for LGBT youth outside of school frequently or often	24%	25%	12%	13%

Number of teachers or other school staff persons at your school who are supportive of LGBT students...

None	1%	4%	7%	5%
One	4%	7%	5%	8%
Between 2 and 5	43%	31%	36%	29%
Between 6 and 10	21%	18%	29%	30%
More than 10	31%	40%	24%	29%

Number of teachers or other school staff persons at your school who are open about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender...

None	67%	47%	59%	56%
One	13%	24%	16%	15%
Between 2 and 5	13%	19%	13%	23%
Between 6 and 10	1%	4%	8%	1%
More than 10	6%	6%	5%	4%

Besides yourself, how many other LGBT students are there in your school?

None	3%	2%	51%	6%
One	4%	4%	10%	13%
Between 2 and 5	21%	19%	30%	18%
Between 6 and 10	32%	24%	6%	21%
More than 10	41%	51%	3%	42%

How many times did you talk to your school Teacher about LGBT issues in the previous school year?

None	30%	22%	51%	54%
One	18%	11%	10%	12%

Between 2 and 5	31%	41%	30%	24%
Between 6 and 10	8%	11%	6%	8%
More than 10	13%	15%	3%	3%

When talking with your school Teacher, how positive or negative was the interaction?

Very to somewhat positive	77%	88%	75%	85%
Somewhat to very negative	23%	12%	25%	15%

How many times did you talk to your school Principal about LGBT issues in the previous school year?

None	68%	63%	95%	93%
One	14%	15%	2%	4%
Between 2 and 5	10%	17%	0%	3%
Between 6 and 10	2%	1%	2%	0%
More than 10	6%	5%	2%	0%

When talking with your school Principle, how positive or negative was the interaction?

Very to somewhat positive	70%	52%	100%	75%
Somewhat to very negative	30%	48%	0%	25%

How many times did you talk to your school Guidance Counselor about LGBT issues in the previous school year?

None	57%	49%	81%	86%
One	13%	17%	6%	7%
Between 2 and 5	12%	17%	3%	7%
Between 6 and 10	4%	8%	2%	1%
More than 10	13%	9%	8%	0%

When talking with your school Guidance Counselor, how positive or negative was the interaction?

Very to somewhat positive	79%	85%	80%	100%
Somewhat to very negative	21%	15%	20%	0%

How many times did you talk to your school Psychologist about LGBT issues in the previous school year?

None	85%	71%	92%	93%
One	2%	2%	2%	3%
Between 2 and 5	6%	13%	3%	4%
Between 6 and 10	5%	11%	0%	0%
More than 10	1%	2%	3%	0%

When talking with your school Psychologist, how positive or negative was the interaction?

Very to somewhat positive	80%	75%	50%	100%
Somewhat to very negative	20%	25%	50%	0%

How many times did you talk to your school Nurse about LGBT issues in the previous school year?

None	99%	91%	97%	95%
One	1%	4%	2%	4%
Between 2 and 5	0%	2%	0%	0%
Between 6 and 10	0%	1%	0%	1%
More than 10	0%	1%	2%	0%

When talking with your school Nurse, how positive or negative was the interaction?

Very to somewhat positive	100%	86%	50%	100%
Somewhat to very negative	0%	14%	50%	0%

How many times did you talk to your school librarian or other staff person about LGBT issues in the previous school year?

None	87%	82%	91%	91%
One	9%	10%	6%	4%
Between 2 and 5	2%	6%	0%	5%
Between 6 and 10	1%	0%	0%	0%
More than 10	1%	2%	3%	0%

When talking with your school librarian or other staff person, how positive or negative was the interaction?

Very to somewhat positive	72%	87%	83%	100%
Somewhat to very negative	28%	13%	17%	0%

Achievement Levels in School

Describe their grades in the past school year as mostly A's.	21%	15%	31%	36%
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Report that they will be attending at least two or more years of college.	6%	9%	12%	11%
Expect to finish college.	36%	30%	44%	33%
Plan on going to college right after high school.	76%	74%	85%	87%

Comfort Levels in School

In general, how comfortable would you be talking to your teachers, one-on-one about LGBT issues?

Very to somewhat comfortable	57%	70%	69%	79%
Somewhat to very uncomfortable	43%	30%	21%	21%

How comfortable would you be talking to your school principal about LGBT issues?

Very to somewhat comfortable	42%	39%	45%	50%
Somewhat to very uncomfortable	58%	61%	55%	50%

How comfortable would you be talking to your counselor or school psychologist about LGBT issues?

Very to somewhat comfortable	67%	74%	63%	74%
Somewhat to very uncomfortable	33%	26%	37%	26%

How comfortable would you be talking to your school nurse about LGBT issues?

Very to somewhat comfortable	40%	45%	43%	42%
Somewhat to very uncomfortable	60%	55%	57%	58%

How comfortable would you be talking to your school librarian about LGBT issues?

Very to somewhat comfortable	40%	40%	43%	36%
Somewhat to very uncomfortable	60%	60%	57%	64%

How comfortable would you be taking a date of the same gender to a school dance or prom?

Very to somewhat comfortable	64%	78%	42%	47%
Somewhat to very uncomfortable	36%	22%	58%	53%

How many times have you taken a date of the same gender to a school dance or prom?

None	59%	53%	84%	86%
One	24%	28%	3%	9%
Between 2 and 5	15%	15%	11%	4%
More than 5 times	2%	4%	2%	1%

How comfortable would you be raising LGBT issues in your classes?

Very to somewhat comfortable	75%	71%	69%	68%
Somewhat to very uncomfortable	25%	29%	31%	32%

How many times have you raised LGBT issues in your classes?

None	23%	26%	32%	44%
One	20%	14%	26%	21%
Between 2 and 5	40%	42%	35%	28%
Between 6 and 10	18%	18%	6%	7%

How "out" at school are you about your being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?

I am "out" to everybody at school	6%	9%	47%	46%
I am "out" to most people at school	28%	17%	11%	9%
I am "out" only to a few people at school	27%	30%	5%	5%
I am not "out" to anyone at my school	40%	44%	37%	41%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM IOWA PRIDE NETWORK'S 2007 IOWA SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY (ISCS)

Changes in Homophobic Remarks Over Time

While the usage of the expression of "That's so gay" or "You're so gay" has been virtually unchanged since 2005, the number of students hearing other homophobic remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke," frequently or often has dropped 14%. Additionally, students reporting hearing homophobic remarks often or frequently from other students saw an 11% drop, while there was an 8% increase in the number of students intervening when homophobic remarks are made. The number of teachers making homophobic remarks was cut in half from 14% in 2005 to 7% in 2007. Unfortunately, 75% of the time faculty/staff only some of the time or never intervene when homophobic remarks are made in their presence, a number that remains unchanged since 2005.

Changes in Racist Remarks Over Time

There were slight increases (6 to 7%) in the number LGBT students reporting hearing racist remarks frequently or often in their schools and hearing them frequently or often from other students. Students did report an increase in the presence of faculty and staff when racist remarks are made, but reported no change in the amount of intervention since 2005.

Changes in Sexist Remarks & Negative Remarks about Gender Expression Over Time

The majority of Iowa's students continue to hear sexist remarks at levels unchanged since 2005. However, there has been a substantial 13% decrease in the number of students reporting that their teachers or staff sometime saying sexist remarks themselves. Unfortunately, there has been no significant change in the number of teacher intervention regarding sexist remarks made in their presence. Students reported a 10% increase in frequently or often hearing comments about students' not acting "masculine" enough in their schools. In 2007, there was a 9% decrease in the number of teachers and staff intervening when comments about students' not acting "masculine" or "feminine" were made in their presence.

Changes in Overall Safety Over Time

The number of students who felt unsafe in their schools because of their sexual orientation remained unchanged while the number of students reporting feeling unsafe in their schools because of their gender expression saw a slight increase. Overall, the number of students feeling unsafe because of race, gender, etc. remained virtually unchanged. There was an increase in the number of LGBT students reporting missing a class (8% increase) or a full day of school (11% increase) in the past month because they felt uncomfortable or unsafe in school.

Changes in Experiences of Harassment and Assault in School Over Time

The number of students who experienced verbal, physical and sexual harassment in their schools because of their sexual orientation or gender expression remained relatively unchanged. Students experiencing physical assault based on their sexual orientation also remained the same while students who were assaulted because of their gender identity saw a slight decrease. Students reporting some incident of cyber-bullying (receiving harassing or threatening emails, instant messages or text messages) from students at their school because of their sexual orientation in the past year remained unchanged; while slight decreases were seen in the number of students reporting having mean rumors or lies spread about them or having their property stolen or deliberately damaged.

Changes in LGBT Resources and Support in School Over Time

Students reporting having inclusive policies and never being taught about LGBT people, history or events remained statistically unchanged. There was a slight increase in the number of students reporting that their textbooks contain no information about LGBT history or events. However, there was an increase (10%) in the number of students being allowed to use school computers to access websites about LGBT people, history or events. In regards to supportive school staff, a 9% increase was seen in the number of teachers who students feel are supportive of LGBT students and nearly a quarter of students surveyed said they know of a least one school staff person who is open about being LGBT—a 10% increase since 2005. Additionally, about half of the students reported knowing more than 10 other LGBT students at their school—also a 10% increase since 2005. Students reported talking with their teachers more about LGBT issues and having those experiences be very to somewhat positive—both increases of 10%.

Changes in Achievement & Comfort Levels in School Over Time

Students reporting that they planned to take two or more years of college or planned on going to college right after high school remained unchanged. Slight decreases were seen in the number of students describing their grades as mostly A's and those students who expected to finish college. In regards to comfort levels, significant increases were seen in students who reported feeling comfortable talking one-on-one with their teachers about LGBT issues (13% increase); and those reporting that they would feel very to somewhat comfortable taking a date of the same gender to a school dance or prom (14% increase). Percentages of students feeling comfortable raising LGBT issues in class and taking dates of the same gender and those actually doing so remained unchanged since 2005.