



# Mission Statement

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*Safe Schools South Florida's mission is to create safer schools where all students can learn and thrive, regardless of real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression – their own or those of their family members.*

# Safe Schools South Florida - History



Co-Founder & Program  
Director, Robert Loupo

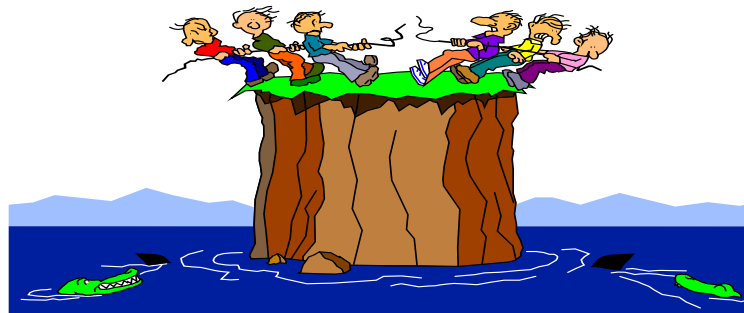
- Founded in 1991 as South Florida Educators' Group
  - Worked for protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) students and educators
  - Helped change Miami-Dade schools policies and United Teachers of Dade contracts
- Joined GLSEN, Inc. in 1996 as GLSEN Miami-Dade



# Issues facing students

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- Isolation
- Education issues
- Family issues
- Health issues

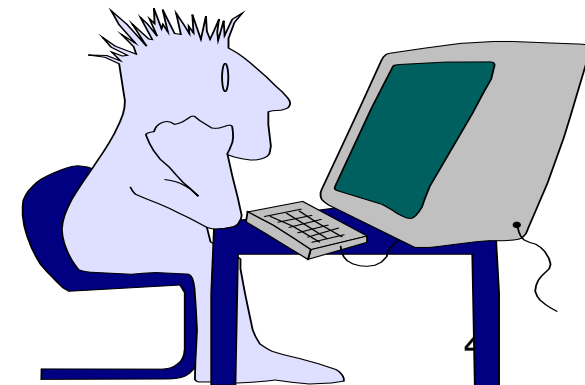




# Isolation

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- A sense of difference
- Social isolation/loneliness
- Rejection by family
- Invisibility
- Misunderstanding
- Lack of information
- Lack of role models





# Family issues

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- Repercussions of coming out
  - 25% of all gay youth are thrown out of their homes when parents learn they are gay
- Family and the coming out process
  - When the child comes out... the family goes into the closet
  - Even supportive families need to learn to deal with their own reactions to a gay child
- LGBT parents and family members
  - Students harassed and bullied for having same-sex parents and siblings
  - Gay parents fearful of coming out to teachers and administration



## Health issues

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- Protection - HIV and other STDs
- Drug/alcohol
- Smoking
- Victimization/assault
- Suicide risks
- Prove not gay/lesbian



# Terminology – use their words

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- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Intersex
- Queer
- Questioning
- Transgender



Don't use...

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Homosexual  
Sexual preference  
Lifestyle





# The Riddle Scale

(Eight levels of attitudes toward differences)

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- One neutral response:
  - Acceptance – implies that one needs to make accommodations for another's differences; does not acknowledge that another's identity may be of the same value as one's own

developed by Dorothy Riddle, PhD, psychologist from Tucson, AZ. as "Scale of Homophobia."



# The Riddle Scale

(Eight levels of attitudes toward differences)

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- Four positive responses:



- Support – works to safeguard the rights of those who are different
- Admiration – acknowledges that being different in our society takes strength
- Appreciation – values the diversity of people and is willing to confront insensitive attitudes
- Nurturance – assumes the differences in people are indispensable in society

developed by Dorothy Riddle, PhD, psychologist from Tucson, AZ. as "Scale of Homophobia."



## Out of 1000 youth

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- 4 - 10% are gay or lesbian 40 - 100
- 4 - 10% of siblings are gay/lesbian 60 - 150  
(assuming 1.5 siblings each)
- 1 - 2% have a gay/lesbian parent 20 - 40
- Total youth affected 120 - 290
  
- In a class of 30 4 - 9

# Mean age of coming out

	Males	Females
1971	19.3	-----
1980	16.3	-----
1982	15.0	20.0
1987	14.0	-----
1993	13.1	15.2
2005	13.4	13.4

*Sources of data are available on the handout entitled "Did you know..."*

# Paradigm of sexuality: sexual orientation



- Sexual **orientation** seems to be formed at a very early age
- Adolescence and early adulthood are an unfolding of that orientation
- The development of sexual orientation does not seem to be a choice

# Paradigm of sexuality: gender identity

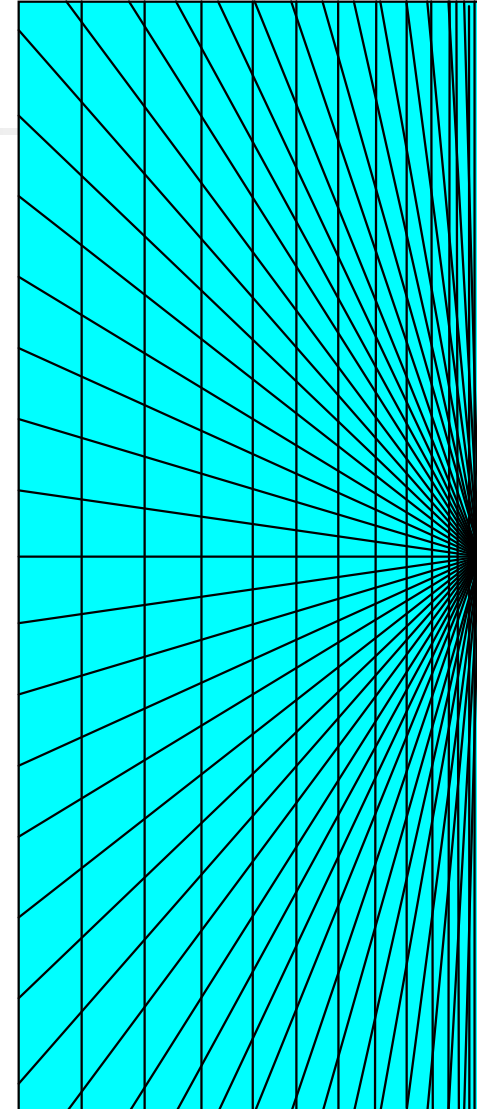


- **Gender identity** is similar to sexual orientation
- It seems to be formed at a very early age
- Does not seem to be subject to choice
- It is the sense of “I am male” or “I am female”
- Gender identity is revealed by fantasies, dreams, feelings about one’s body and genitals

# Sexual orientation: developmental stages of identity

- Confusion
- Comparison
- Tolerance
- Acceptance
- Pride

*Beyond Tolerance*, by N. Evans & V. Wall, Cass (1979)





## Research tells us

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- There are over 3 million LGBTQ youth in the U.S.
- Bisexual and lesbian teens have twice the number of unwanted pregnancies as straight teens
- Gay or lesbian youth account for 30% of youth suicides
- Gay and lesbian youth are 3 TIMES more likely to attempt suicide







## Research tells us

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- Up to 40% of LGBTQ youth have run away from home at least once
- 25% of LGBTQ youth are thrown out by parents when they learn their children are gay
- Up to 50% of homeless children identify as LGBT
- 20% of lesbians and 50% of gay males have been harassed, threatened, or physically assaulted in secondary schools
- LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to miss school because of feeling unsafe



# 2005 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey

## - Violence

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- LGBTQ students were significantly more likely to have
  - Carried a weapon (26% vs. 15%)
  - Been in a physical fight (42% vs. 28%)
  - Been in a gang (19% vs. 9%)
- They were
  - Over 4 times more likely to skip school because they felt unsafe (13% vs. 3%)
  - Twice as likely to have been bullied (44% vs. 23%)



## 2005 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey - Suicide

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- LGBTQ students' suicidality rates were double their heterosexual peers
- LGBTQ students were more likely to have
  - Hurt themselves on purpose (44% vs. 17%)
  - Seriously considered suicide (34% vs. 11%)
  - Made a suicide attempt in the past year (21% vs. 5%)

# What to do?

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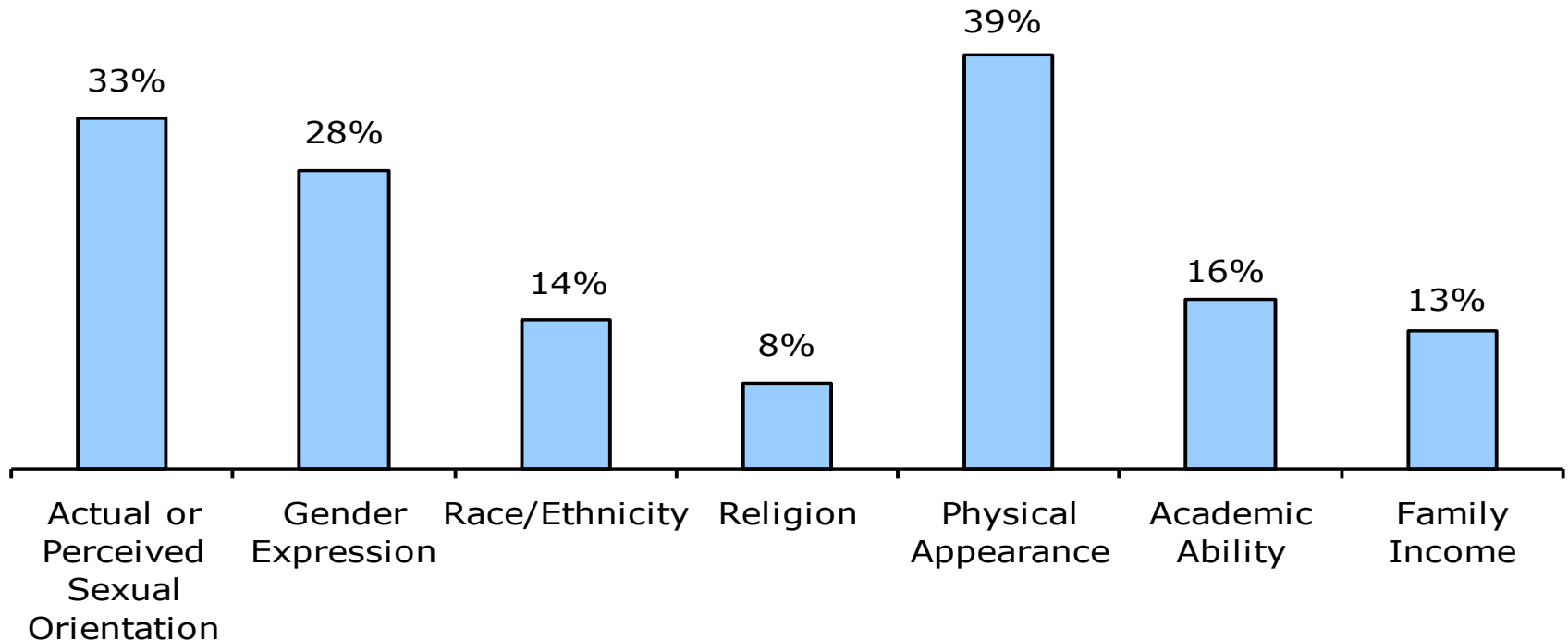
## First, Do No Harm

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- LGBTQ youth have three possible places for support and help
  - Home
  - Faith community
  - School
- They spend most of their time in school
- They are entitled to safety and a place where they can learn

# Common reasons for bullying and harassment in school

**Most common reasons students were bullied and harassed in school:** % Often/Very Often



Source: From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America, A Survey of Students and Teachers



# Utilizing resources

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# Gay-straight alliances (GSAs)



Over 400 youth and sponsors attended the 2006 Youth Empowerment Conference

- GSAs are student-organized social clubs for LGBTQ students and their allies
  - Like other social clubs on middle and high school campuses
  - Require an adult sponsor
  - Help create an awareness of LGBTQ issues
  - Help reduce fear and misunderstanding
- Often get resistance from faculty, administration and some parents
  - Must be allowed by law (Equal Access Act) if other non-curricula clubs are permitted
  - Frequently called something other than GSA
    - Diversity Club
    - Rainbow Society





# LGBTQ support groups

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- Many middle schools and high schools in Miami-Dade provide group support programs for LGBTQ students under the supervision of a counselor
- Meetings are held weekly during different class hours so students may attend anonymously
- Weekly meetings include conflict resolutions, identity development, bibliotherapy, family support, coming out

# School Safety & Sexual Minority Issues © 2008



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