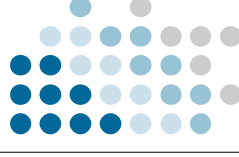


Homophobic Language and Verbal Harassment in North Carolina High Schools



Safe Schools NC is a statewide partnership of organizations and individuals dedicated to eliminating bullying, harassment, and discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity in North Carolina schools.



Safe Schools NC
65 Finch's Way
Pittsboro, NC 27312
info@safeschoolsnc.com
(919) 619-2167
www.safeschoolsnc.com

Recommendations for Safer Schools for All Students

1. Train school personnel on how to intervene and prevent harassment, bullying, and discrimination of LGBTQ students
2. Include sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in school policies against harassment, bullying, and discrimination
3. Assist and support students and teacher advisors in creating or maintaining Gay-Straight Alliances in schools
4. Provide information and resources related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression to students and school personnel
5. Assess the prevalence of homophobic language and harassment of LGBTQ students regularly and implement school safety improvement strategies

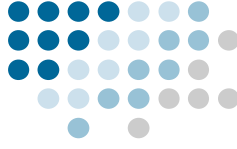
Conclusion

This study indicated that homophobic language and verbal harassment occur with alarming frequency in high schools. Harassment against any student denies them the fundamental right to learn in a safe environment. Safe Schools NC calls upon all school personnel to create safe learning environments by interrupting all forms of harassment, bullying, and discrimination based upon sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. This will require swift and consistent interruption of verbal harassment, intimidation, or assault whether perpetrated by students, school personnel, or parents. To this end, Safe Schools NC pledges to serve as a partner and a resource for students, school personnel, administrators, parents, and school boards throughout the state of North Carolina.

To obtain a copy of the full report of our findings, please contact Safe Schools NC.

Thanks to Terri Phoenix, Will Hall, Melissa Weiss, Jana Kemp, Robert Wells, and Andrew Chan for making this study possible.

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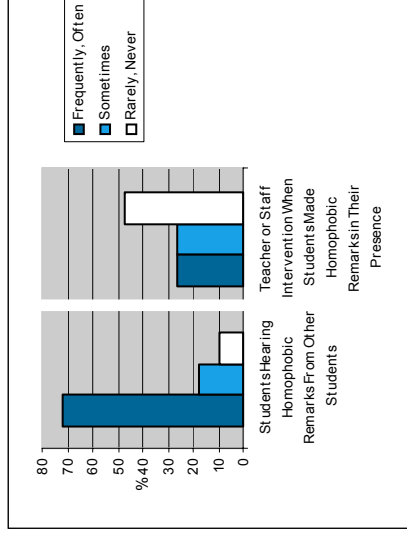


Students who are or who are presumed to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) their sexual orientation or gender identity are often the brunt of verbal and physical harassment.

In 2004, Safe Schools NC conducted a study surveying 904 students in six high schools in Durham, Orange, and Wake Counties. Here are some key findings:

- 68.9% of students reported hearing the phrases “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” frequently or often in school
- 64.2% of students reported hearing homophobic remarks such as “faggot,” “dyke,” or “queer” frequently or often in school

- When a homophobic remark was made in the presence of a teacher or staff member, students reported that the teacher or staff member intervened frequently or often only one-quarter (26.4%) of the time and rarely or never almost half (47.0%) of the time



- In schools whose non-harassment policies did not include sexual orientation 38.1% of students reported that teachers or staff never or rarely intervened when hearing homophobic remarks as compared to 8.9% of students in schools whose policies did include sexual orientation

Specific School Area	Percent of students who heard homophobic remarks frequently or often in specific school areas
Hallways	62.5%
Cafeteria	52.5%
Buses	43.4%
Classes	38.9%
Locker room/gym	35.5%
Bathrooms	24.3%

Studies have shown that LGBTQ youth often feel unsafe in their schools and become extremely distressed when hearing homophobic remarks in their learning environment. As a result of being harassed and feeling unsafe, LGBTQ students may skip school, perform poorly, or drop out. Studies have also shown that verbal harassment left unchecked can escalate into physical intimidation, pushing, hitting, and shoving.

- In schools whose non-harassment policies did not include sexual orientation 55.4% of students heard “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” frequently or often as compared to 13.5% of students in schools whose non-harassment policies did include sexual orientation
- In schools whose non-harassment policies did not include sexual orientation 52.9% of students heard homophobic remarks such as “faggot,” “dyke,” or “queer” frequently or often as compared to 11.4% of students in schools whose policies included sexual orientation