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Study: LGBT Parents More Involved In Schooling

by 365Gay.com Newscenter Staff

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(New York City) A study of LGBT parents has found they are more likely to be involved in their children's K-12 education than the general parent population.

It found that the parents were more involved in school activities and were more likely to have consistent communication with school personnel. In addition, both LGBT parents and children of LGBT parents often report harassment because of their family structure.

The report, "Involved, Invisible, Ignored," was prepared by GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, in partnership with the Family Equality Council and COLAGE.

It examined school experiences of LGBT-headed families using results from surveys of LGBT parents of children in K-12 schools and of secondary students who have LGBT parents.

Compared to data from the National Center for Education Statistics LGBT parents are more likely to attend a parent-teacher conference in the past year (94 percent to 77 percent) and more likely to volunteer (67 percent to 42 percent).

Current estimates indicate there are more than seven million LGBT parents with school-age children in the United States.

"Family and education are two of the most important aspects of children's lives," said GLSEN Executive Director Kevin Jennings.

"This report casts doubt on schools' inclusion of different kinds of families in our education system. LGBT parents are actively engaged in their children's education yet are often not accepted by school communities. Further, their children are often harassed in school simply because of the makeup of their families. All families in a school community should be valued and respected as equals."

More than half of LGBT parents described various forms of exclusion from their school communities: being excluded or prevented from fully participating in school activities and events, being excluded by school policies and procedures, and being ignored and feeling invisible.

In addition, LGBT parents reported mistreatment from other parents in the school community and even from their children's peers at school. Twenty-six percent of LGBT parents in the survey reported mistreatment from other parents and 21 percent reported hearing negative comments about being LGBT from students.

Parents whose child's school had a comprehensive safe school policy that protected students from bullying and harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender expression/identity reported the

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lowest level of mistreatment and that there were no differences between the no-policy and generic-policy groups.

"This report shows when schools have anti-bullying policies that are inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity, the rates of harassment are lowered dramatically," said Jennifer Chrisler, executive director of the Family Equality Council.

"These policies and comprehensive diversity curricula are tools that can curb mistreatment and bolster participation from all families. Knowing what works is a start, but schools have a long way to go and much left to do in putting them to the best and fullest use for our kids."

The study found that nearly a quarter of students felt unsafe around other students at school due to others' negative attitudes toward people with LGBT parents.

Forty-two percent said they had been verbally harassed at school in the past year because their parents were LGBT. Over a third reported that they had been verbally harassed because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and nearly a third had experienced verbal harassment because of the way in which they expressed their gender.

Additionally, the report said that nearly a quarter of students said that a teacher, principal or other school staff person had discouraged them from talking about their family at school, and more than a third had felt that school personnel did not acknowledge their LGBT family. Furthermore, 28 percent said they heard teachers or other school staff make negative comments about LGBT families.

The report was released in advance of The National Day of Silence, when students observe a vow of silence to bring attention to bullying and harassment of LGBT students. It will be held on April 25 this year.

The observance will be dedicated to the memory of 15 year old Lawrence King. ([story](#))

The openly gay eighth-grader was shot by a fellow student in front of classmates in February in Oxnard, California. He died after being declared brain dead and life support was removed.

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