Ideally, I would like my research to provide a comprehensive look at the effectiveness of current anti-bullying policies and procedures present in a single North Texas school district.

If I had to pick one single school to research, I would choose to focus on the high school level, because it is where many students are trying to adhere to the prevailing sexual codes of the LGBTQIA community. This harassment has become so commonplace that it has come to be seen as part of the “adolescent rite of passage” for youth. Russell et al. (2011) found that long-term effects of bullying include higher risk for STD or HIV infection, depression, suicidal tendencies or attempts, internalized homophobia (which creates feelings of self-loathing and worthlessness), and a weaker correlation to long-term substance abuse.

Often, identified bullying and harassment is allowed to continue due to adult denial of existence of gay youth, parental or religious attempts to “fix” or “cure” gay youth, a fear of criticism or backlash from peers for supporting gay youth, a lack of queer role models for youth, or the standing belief that bullying and harassment is a “rite of passage” for LGBTQIA youth (Haskell & Burtch, 2010; Mishna et al., 2009).

Proposed Solutions

Several solutions to homophobic bullying and harassment have been suggested by researchers, who both synthesize their own solutions and rely on the advice and opinions of individuals who work closely with victims of homophobic bullying and harassment (Haskell & Burtch, 2010; Mishna et al., 2009). The inclusion of gay issues and queer history into school curricula would help to combat the cloud of silence surrounding many current homophobic perceptions of the LGBTQIA community, and would reduce the feelings and beliefs that homosexuality is a taboo subject.

More funding and support for gay and lesbian youth programs, such as in-school Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) would help provide victimized students a feeling of social support and sanctuary that they desire. Schools should also adopt zero-tolerance policies for bullying and harassment of identified or perceived LGBTQIA students, and once an issue is acknowledged, there should be immediate action and intervention (Haskell & Burtch, 2010; Mishna et al., 2009).

Simply telling students not to bully is not enough – it takes the support and education of an entire community to ensure that GLBTQIA students are protected from homophobic bullying and harassment, and that they have available to them the needed resources and support in order to have a good quality of life until a reduction or elimination of bullying is achieved.

Bibliography


Proposed Research Method

Research Topic

I will be researching bullying and harassment policies in schools as they pertain to their protection of identified and perceived LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual/Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersexed and Ally) students, and whether or not the policies in place are sufficient to protect students from homophobic bullying and harassment.

Research Question

How effective are the anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies in North Texas school districts at protecting their students from homophobic bullying and harassment?

Interview Phase

After the surveys are conducted, I would use the information gained from the responses to the surveys to determine what kinds of questions should be asked in the one-on-one surveys. I would like to recruit participants for the one-on-one surveys by making an announcement to teachers and students of the school that I am studying that I am looking for students who identify as members of the LGBTQIA community, staff who identify as members of the LGBTQIA community, and other students and staff who do not identify but wish to participate as well. I would like my participant group to be diverse, ideally including members who are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. Some of the interview questions will be formulated after analyzing the survey responses while the rest of them will be centered on finding out whether or not the current anti-bullying policy in place at the school is working successfully to prevent and intervene in homophobic bullying of identified and perceived LGBT students. If the participants feel the policies are inadequate, I will ask them for suggestions on how to improve the policy and support for LGBTQIA students.

While my study would aim to identify a faulty or well-functioning anti-bullying policy and system in place, it will not seek to provide a plan to “revamp” or correct any discrepancies. If it is found that the schools are not adequately protecting their LGBTQIA students, it will be up to them to correct their errors and find ways to make sure that their schools are a welcoming, nurturing, and supportive environment for all students, regardless of actual or perceived sexual or gender orientation.