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# School-based Supports for Trans Youth in Ontario

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Running head: SUPPORTS FOR TRANS YOUTH

School-based Supports for Trans Youth in Ontario

by

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BA Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2013

THESIS

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### Abstract

Trans youth are some of the most marginalized youths in schools. In 2012, the Ontario Government passed two legislations, one of which was the Accepting Schools Act, strengthening supports for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) students in schools. The other was Toby's Act, an amendment to the Ontario Human Rights Code including protection from discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how these two acts have created a political context supporting trans youth in schools. A comprehensive mixed-methods approach was used to examine provincial trends of trans-specific policies in Ontario, while using two school systems in the Waterloo Region as a case study. Overall, there were three sources of data: results from a national survey, policies from the school boards, and interviews with school administrators, staff and a trans youth. Analyzing these data, I met two research objectives: 1) understanding how school board policies support trans youth within schools and 2) contributing to a practical understanding of what other supports are needed to assist trans youth in schools. The results revealed that not all school districts have implemented policies protecting trans youth. Among the public and Catholic school districts, the Catholic school districts had lower compliance rates with adhering to the Accepting Schools Act. Some factors to increase likelihood of trans supports are: devoted gay-straight alliances (GSA) leaders, supportive senior administrators, trans-inclusive policies, framing trans issues in an appropriate way, and staff sharing successful bullying intervention strategies.

*Keywords: LGBTQ policy, school interventions, Accepting Schools Act, Toby's Act, bullying prevention, trans youth, gay-straight alliances*

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## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>III</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>VII</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b> .....	<b>IX</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Approach .....	<b>6</b>
General Experiences of Trans Youth.....	<b>7</b>
<i>Transphobia.</i> .....	<b>7</b>
<i>Trans youth in schools</i> .....	<b>9</b>
School Interventions and Programs .....	<b>10</b>
<i>Professional development</i> .....	<b>10</b>
<i>Gay-straight alliances</i> .....	<b>12</b>
<i>School policies</i> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>ONTARIO’S POLICY ENVIRONMENT</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Ontario’s Provincial Education Policies .....	<b>16</b>
<i>Accepting Schools Act:</i> .....	<b>16</b>
Catholic Opposition .....	<b>20</b>
<i>Respecting Differences.</i> .....	<b>21</b>
Toby’s Act.....	<b>22</b>
<i>Toby’s Act and the Accepting Schools Act</i> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>CURRENT STUDY</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Research Objectives.....	<b>24</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>25</b>
Reflexivity .....	<b>25</b>
<i>Standpoint.</i> .....	<b>26</b>

<b>Research Paradigm</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Methodological Framework</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Research Design</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Sampling</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<i>The Inventory</i> .....	31
<i>Interviews</i> .....	32
<i>Policy documents</i> .....	33
<b>Materials</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<i>The Inventory</i> .....	34
<i>Interviews</i> .....	35
 <i>Procedure</i> .....	36
<i>The Inventory</i> .....	36
<i>Interviews</i> .....	36
<b>Data Coding</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<i>The Inventory</i> .....	37
<i>Interviews</i> .....	38
<i>Policy documents</i> .....	39
<i>Establishing credibility and trustworthiness</i> .....	40
<b>ETHICAL CONCERNS</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>RESULTS</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>Trans-specific School Board Policies and Resources in Ontario</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<i>Trans-specific policies</i> .....	42
<i>Outcomes of trans-specific policies</i> .....	45
<i>Provincial trans-specific resources for staff</i> .....	46
<i>Outcomes of trans-specific resources</i> .....	47
<b>Waterloo Region District School Board</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<i>Implementation of the Accepting Schools Act</i> .....	50
<i>Protections for trans youth</i> .....	51
<b>Waterloo Catholic District School Board</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<i>Implementation of the Accepting Schools Act</i> .....	52
<i>Protections for trans youth</i> .....	55
<b>Experiences in Schools</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<i>Implementation of the Accepting Schools Act</i> .....	56
<i>Protections for trans youth</i> .....	60

<b>What are barriers and facilitators for trans-inclusive practices within schools? .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<i>Devoted GSA leader .....</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>Administration support/legislation: .....</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>How the message is framed .....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Professional development.....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Conflation of sexuality and gender identity.....</i>	<i>70</i>
<b>DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Accepting Schools Act and Effective School Interventions.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Policy .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<i>Toby's Act.....</i>	<i>75</i>
<b>Professional development.....</b>	<b>785</b>
<b>Gay-straight alliances.....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Experiences of Trans Youth .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Policy Systems .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<u>Policy adoption .....</u>	<u>82</u>
<u>Policy implementation.....</u>	<u>84</u>
<u>Policy evaluation.....</u>	<u>85</u>
<b>Implications .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Strengths and Limitations.....</b>	<b>88</b>
<i>Limitations .....</i>	<i>90</i>
<i>Nature of the survey data .....</i>	<i>90</i>
<i>Sample size for interviews .....</i>	<i>91</i>
<i>Lack of perspectives from trans youth. ....</i>	<i>91</i>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>APPENDIX B .....</b>	<b>110</b>

### List of Tables

Table 1. Research Objectives, Research Questions and Corresponding Research Method	24
Table 2. The School Board Policies Retained for Discourse Analysis	34
Table 3. School Districts that have Trans-specific Policies by School System	42
Table 4. School Districts that have Trans-specific Resources by School System	46
Table 5. List of WRDSB Policies	50
Table 6. List of WCDSB Policies	52



### List of Figures

Figure 1. Achieved Results of Trans-specific Policies	45
Figure 2. Achieved Results of Trans-specific Resources	48

## Glossary

**Bullying:** “bullying means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil where:

- (a) the behaviour is intended by the pupil to have the effect of, or the pupil ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of,
  - (i) causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the individual’s reputation or harm to the individual’s property, or
  - (ii) creating a negative environment at a school for another individual, and
- (b) the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education” (The Accepting Schools Act, 2012, S (1)).

**Felt gender:** an individual’s intrinsic sense of their gender. This term is used to differentiate between the gender assigned to them at birth and the gender they identify as.

**Gender identity:** is based upon the relationship between one’s felt gender and the sex assigned to them at birth. One’s gender identity can be dependent on their intrinsic sense of ‘womanhood’, ‘manhood’, a combination of both or neither.

**Sexual orientation:** who people are attracted to, which is distinct from their gender identity.

**Transgender:** an umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity is not aligned with the sex assigned to them at birth. This term is often shortened to ‘trans’.

**Transphobia:** aversion to or prejudice directed towards people because of their gender identity (Serano, 2003).

## **Safe Schools for Trans Youth: School-based Supports for Trans Youth in Ontario**

### **Background: Trans youth in Ontario**

Recently, there have been media stories regarding the suicides of transgender (trans) youth, especially in the United States (US). One particular story was of Blake Brockington, who made national news in 2014 as the first trans man in North Carolina to be crowned homecoming king (Jeltsen, 2015). He died by suicide a year later, in March of 2015. Brockington was seen as a leader in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) movement. There have been numerous similar stories in the US (for more, see: Bielski, 2015; Brydum, 2015; Dennison, 2015), however, recent research suggests that trans youth in Canada also struggle with mental health difficulties. A national study from the University of British Columbia has found that 72.5% of trans youth have self-harmed at least once in the past 12 months, 31% have reported self-harming 20 or more times, and 27% have had at least one suicide attempt (Veale, Saewyc, Frohard-Dourlent, Dobson, & Clark, 2015). These findings are similar to a study conducted within Ontario, which found 47% of trans youth (ages 16-24) have considered suicide, with 19% indicating they had at least one attempt (Scanlon, Travers, Coleman, Bauer, & Boyce, 2010).

Among trans youth, rates of suicidality, as measured by suicidal thoughts and attempts, increase with the severity of harassment they have experienced (Scanlon et al., 2010). A research team in Ontario found that among individuals who reported they have considered suicide, 26% have received no verbal or physical harassment, 33% had received verbal harassment and 47% had experienced physical or sexual assault. Similarly, among those who had at least one suicide attempt, 4% had experienced no sexual or physical violence, 8% had experienced verbal harassment or threats, and 29% had experienced physical and/or sexual assault. These findings

further highlight the vulnerability of trans youth. These authors did not analyze incidences of harassment and assault by age; however, another national Canadian study has found that trans youth have the highest rates of victimization among LGBTQ youth (Taylor et al., 2011). Thus, trans youth need more support and empowerment than any other group of young people.

Unfortunately, the death of prominent trans people can be the impetus for legal change. One example is Toby Dancer, who was a Torontonion musician who led the gospel choir at the Emmanuel Howard Park United Church (Benzie, 2012; Zagria, 2010). During Dancer's time there, she was counseled by the then-minister, Cheri DiNovo, who later became New Democratic Party's Member of Provincial Parliament. After Dancer's untimely death to a drug overdose in 2004, DiNovo proposed a bill to amend the Ontario Human Rights Code to include gender identity and gender expression as protected grounds from discrimination (Benzie, 2012; Milloy, 2012; Zagria, 2010). Named after Dancer, Toby's Act was first introduced in 2007 and became law in 2012; a victory for the trans rights movement as the first law to recognize trans individuals (Segal, 2013).

There has been growing concern about youths' experiences of bullying in Canada, especially after the publicity of recent youths' suicides (Anderson, 2014). In Ontario, one particular youth's suicide, Jamie Hubely (for more, see: Boesveld, 2011) became a catalyst for school-level policy changes (Talaga, 2012). In Hubely's last online blog before his death, he recounted his experiences of homophobic bullying, suggesting it was too much for him to bear (Anderson, 2014). He died on October 14, 2011 and was the fourteenth student to take his own life since September 2011 (Anderson, 2014). As a way to address bullying and suicides among youth, Dalton McGuinty, then premier of Ontario (2003-2013) introduced the Accepting Schools Act, which successfully passed on June 12, 2012 (Government of Ontario, n.d.), the same week

as Toby's Act. The Accepting Schools Act provides a new definition of bullying, and guidelines and training for how staff should address it in schools. Of the many changes the Accepting Schools Act provides, one in particular is the legal obligation schools have to allow students to create clubs devoted to LGBTQ issues. These clubs are usually called gay-straight alliances (GSAs) and are social clubs within schools created to promote resiliency and peer support among LGBTQ youth (Taylor et al., 2011) GSAs are student led and their activities range from providing youth with a safer space for them to connect with each other to hosting and promoting events that bring awareness to LGBTQ issues within the broader school context (Griffin, Lee, Waugh, & Beyer, 2004). GSAs started appearing in schools in the 90s and have become increasingly popular since (Herriot, 2011). The increased support for GSAs was considered necessary by McGuinty because Hubey was a member of his school's GSA, illustrating the need for schools to do more than implement gay-straight alliances to reduce suicidal behaviour caused by discrimination and harassment (Government of Ontario, n.d.)

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of GSAs for mitigating aversive mental health issues faced by LGBTQ students. Taylor and colleagues (2011) conducted a national Canadian study, asking every school board to implement a survey about homophobia in their schools. They found that students who belonged to schools with GSAs were more likely to report that they were more willing to discuss LGBTQ- related topics with peers and faculty, their school was accepting of LGBTQ youth in general, and had supportive faculty. Other studies have found GSAs increased school acceptance (Blumenfeld, 1993; Hamby, 2007; Watson, Varjas, Meyers, & Graybill, 2010), decreased victimization and harassment (Greytak, Kosciw, & Boesen, 2013; Mayberry, Chenneville, & Currie, 2013), and increased the well-being of LGBTQ students (Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, & Russell, 2011). The presence of GSAs has also been associated

with lower rates of risky sexual behaviour, suicidal thoughts and depression, smoking and alcohol use (Poteat, Sinclair, DiGiovanni, Koenig, & Russell, 2013). Researchers speculated that GSAs provided youth with a peer support system, allowing them to work through some of the issues that the youth faced (Blumenfeld, 1993; Greytak et al., 2013; Mayberry et al., 2013; Poteat et al., 2013).

A Canadian research team analyzed data collected through a province-wide adolescent health survey to examine the long-term effects of GSAs (Konishi, Saewyc, Homma, & Poon, 2013; Saewyc, Konishi, Rose, & Homma, 2014). The authors found that students in schools that had established explicit anti-homophobic bullying policies and GSAs for three or more years were associated with lower rates of problem drinking in lesbian and bisexual females (Konishi, Saewyc, Homma, & Poon, 2013). Another study using the same data found established GSAs were associated with lower rates of discrimination, suicidal thoughts and attempts for LGB boys and girls, as well as heterosexual boys (Saewyc, Konishi, Rose, & Homma, 2014).

Despite the promising research on GSAs, a recent, national study in the US has found that LGBTQ students still face discrimination, victimization and depression. The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) 2014 national report on LGBTQ youths' experiences found that they still face high rates of depression, even when they have experienced lower levels of victimization and discrimination. For example, about 37% of LGBTQ youth experience depression when they experience low levels of victimization due to their gender expression or sexual orientation. Among those youth who reported high levels of victimization, 70% reported depression. Also, the researchers found that being out about their gender identity or sexual orientation was associated with higher levels of victimization.

LGBTQ youth experiences in Ontario would appear to be similar to GLSEN's results.

Even though the initial implementation of the Accepting Schools Act started in September 2012, with a full implementation mandated by February 2013, there has still been media stories of LGBTQ suicides. One that hits close to home was Eric Davidson, from the Waterloo Region. He was described as an out-going, proud and friendly person and was an active member of his GSA (Latif, 2014). However, in the summer of 2014, Eric took his own life.

Researchers have argued that even explicit, legal rights do not always protect people as promised. Nussbaum (2003) argues that there is a difference between the rights people are provided through legal means and their daily experiences. Although Ontario has human rights protection for LGBTQ people at the provincial and federal levels, LGBTQ youth are still struggling with mental health. Due to recent celebrities, such as Caitlyn Jenner and Laverne Cox, talking about transgender identity has increased awareness to the experiences of transgender people. The increased media attention of these celebrities, coupled with the media attention surrounding the deaths of young trans youth, has increased advocacy for their rights (Bielski, 2015; Dennison, 2015).

Given the research demonstrating trans youth's high rates of depression and suicide, more research is needed on how schools can help mediate these aversive experiences. The purpose of this study is to understand how current school board policies are providing supports for trans youth. Firstly, I will examine how the Accepting Schools Act is being implemented, and secondly, I will examine current school-based supports for trans youth in light of these new legislative developments. Results from this study will help provide schools and educators with necessary information regarding how trans-inclusive high schools are. Specifically, my findings will be distributed to the Waterloo Region District School Board, which will help inform future goals for staff and policy developments.

## Literature Review

### Approach

In order to situate the importance of my study, the aim of my literature review was three-fold: to understand the experiences of trans youth in schools, to examine the literature on school bullying interventions and supports, and to examine the literature on the Accepting Schools Act and Toby's Act. Accomplishing these three aims will help situate my study and to provide a rationale for why it is necessary.

Since trans issues are studied across a variety of disciplines, with both qualitative and quantitative studies, I will be using a methodologically inclusive research synthesis (MIRS). In a MIRS, the researcher should: a) orient their review within a philosophical and theoretical framework, b) identify an appropriate purpose, c) search for relevant evidence, d) evaluate, interpret and distil evidence, e) synthesize understandings, and f) communicate with an audience (Suri & Clarke, 2009). After determining the key research objectives of my study, I chose the following key words: 'trans', 'transgender', 'trans identity', 'trans youth', 'LGBTQ youth', 'gay-straight alliances', and 'LGBTQ in high school', 'Accepting Schools Act', 'LGBTQ curriculum', 'LGBTQ bullying intervention', 'bullying policy' and 'Toby's Act'. Some key words were combined in searches, such as 'trans youth' with 'gay-straight alliances' or with 'bullying policy'. As I expected less research on Toby's Act and the Accepting Schools Act, these key words were used individually.

The two databases I searched were PsycINFO and Google Scholar. PsycINFO is a comprehensive database for the field of psychology and related disciplines, such as education, social work, health sciences and youth and children's studies. This database includes abstracts, journal articles, dissertations, reports, books, and book chapters from the year 1806 to the



present. Google Scholar strives to include every paper published on the internet, thus has a wider range of articles in its database. I used this database to ensure that my literature search was more comprehensive.

### **General Experiences of Trans Youth**

**Transphobia.** In the following section, experiences of trans youth will be demonstrated to be unjust as a result of transphobia. Transphobia is the discrimination of, and aversion to people whose gender or gender expressions are outside societal norms (Serano, 2009).

In order to understand how transphobia affects the justice of trans youth, I will draw on Nussbaum's (2003) framework for evaluating social justice. She argues that if a society were to be just, individuals should have the ability to: a) live, b) have bodily health, c) have bodily integrity, d) have senses, imaginations, and thought (freedom of expression), e) have emotions towards others, f) control one's life, g) live with others and have self-respect, h) live with other species, i) play, j) have control over one's environment. These ten abilities are referred to as capabilities, which distinguishes between what people can legally do versus what they are actually capable of. For example, her framework highlights the discrepancy between individuals' right to live and the higher rates of suicide among marginalized groups. Although they are not prohibited from living to the full extent of their lives, they have substandard quality of life that has made living unbearable. In the following paragraphs, it will be demonstrated how despite new legal protections of trans people, they are still experiencing social inequalities.

Trans youth can experience transphobic hostility from their families and rates of abuse from parents have been found to be highest for youth who identified as trans before the age of 13 (Grossman, D'Augelli, Salter, & Hubbard, 2006). In an Ontario-wide survey, parental support for a child's trans identity had a significant impact on the youth. Those who had unsupportive

parents were more likely to have depressive symptoms (75% vs. 23%), and low self-esteem (13% reported high self-esteem vs. 64%) compared to youth with supportive parents (Travers, et al., 2012).

Lack of parent support could also lead to inadequate housing (55% vs. 0%) (Travers, et al., 2012). Inadequate housing was defined as being currently homeless, in precarious living situations or experiencing difficulty paying rent. These living situations may also be suggestive of economic instability as many trans people report having difficulties finding employment (Garofalo, Deleon, Osmer, Doll, & Harper, 2005; Grant, et al., 2011). Economic instability may provide trans youth with little alternatives to involvement with sex trade work or drug sales, which then makes youth vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and involvement with police and the criminal justice system (Garofalo, et al., 2005; Lombardi, Wilchins, Priesing, & Malouf, 2002). In a study examining risk factors for trans women contracting HIV/AIDS, those aged 18-25 who were exposed to transphobic harassment and assault, had 3.2 times higher odds of engaging in unprotected receptive anal intercourse (Sugano, Nemoto, & Operario, 2006). Homeless trans youth are more likely to drop out of school to financially support themselves (Grossman, et al., 2006; Stieglitz, 2010; Stotzer, 2009), increasing their risk for unstable employment, homelessness, and poverty (Stotzer, 2009).

Research has been consistently demonstrated that trans youth are vulnerable to suicidal thoughts and attempts (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar & Azrael, 2009; Clements-Nolle, Marx, & Katz, 2006; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; Scanlon, Travers, Coleman, Bauer, & Boyce, 2010). Almost half of trans youth have thought about suicide (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; Scanlon et al., 2010), with the majority indicating it was because of their trans identity. Rates of suicidality increase with rates of harassment and assault

(Clements-Nolle et al., 2006; Scanlon et al., 2010), rates of physical abuse from parents (Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007), experiences of drug/alcohol use, forced sex and incarceration (Stieglitz, 2010).

Trans youth have reported having few spaces they feel safe as even homeless shelters can be inaccessible to trans youth because of their protocol to segregate youth based on sex. Even within the LGBTQ community, some trans youth experience rejection based on their racial background and/or gender identity, leaving them with little or no spaces that are safe for them (Stieglitz, 2010).

**Trans youth in schools.** There have only been a handful of studies assessing trans youths' experiences in schools. Trans youth are more likely to report feeling unsafe in their schools (Toomey, McGuire, & Russell, 2012) compared to cisgender youth, due to their higher rates of physical and sexual harassment, and assault (Taylor et al., 2011).

GLSEN (2014) found that the rates of harassment have not changed since their 2012 report (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012). For example, rates of verbal harassment due to sexual orientation, and gender expression have roughly remained the same. The authors also found that 42.2% of trans youth had been prevented from using their preferred name, 59.2% had been required to use the bathroom or locker room of their legal sex and 31.6% had been prevented from wearing clothes because they were considered inappropriate based on their legal sex.

Going against the school's dress code could lead to severe consequences, as some American LGBTQ youth are falling prey to the school-to-prison pipeline, a collection of rigid policies that punish students for minor school-related offences with suspensions, expulsion, arrests or legal detainment (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2010; Irvine, 2010; Kosciw, Greytak,

Palmer, & Boesen, 2014; Mitchum & Moodie-Mills, 2014). Among all LGBTQ students, those who had experienced discriminatory policies and practices at school were three times as likely as their peers to have been involved with the criminal or juvenile justice system as a result of school-related infractions; they were also more likely to have received detention or been suspended or expelled from school (Kosciw et al., 2014). School-related infractions can include fines and court sanctions for absences from school. Transgender and other gender variant students were more likely to have received detention, been suspended and experience forms of contact with the criminal justice system (appeared before a court, served time or been arrested) than cisgender youth (Kosciw et al., 2014).

### **School Interventions and Programs**

To combat the negative experiences of LGBTQ youth in schools, researchers have examined school intervention strategies to discover which ones are effective. School-wide programs or interventions have been consistently found to be the most effective at decreasing bullying behaviour (Oakes, Lane, & Germer 2014; Mishna, 2008; Nickerson et al., 2013; Russell et al., 2010). Some common, recommended components of school-wide programs are professional development for school staff, GSAs, and anti-bullying policies. Each one of these components will be discussed in greater detail below.

**Professional development.** One of the most important aspects of professional development for school staff is the content it contains. Case and Meier (2014) recommend that facilitators conducting professional development workshops should offer real world responses relevant to the roles of school administrators. This will facilitate educators' learning by increasing their practical skills necessary for intervening in bullying incidents (Case, & Meier, 2014; Greytak, Kosciw, & Boesen, 2013; Payne, & Smith, 2011). Other studies have found

teachers' self-reported likelihood to intervene in bullying incidents were associated with higher levels of self-efficacy (Collier, Bos, & Sandfort, 2015; Greytak, & Kosciw, 2014), as measured by their confidence to intervene in bullying incidents, and their perception of the outcome of intervening (Collier, et al., 2015).

Similarly, researchers have recommended including trans people's voices in professional development workshops (Case, & Meirer, 2014; Gonzalez, & McNulty, 2010; Greytak, et al., 2013). Including their voices can be done by inviting a trans person to help facilitate the workshop or by showing videos or documentaries showcasing trans youths' experiences. Research examining predictor variables for teachers' intervention in bullying incidents found that knowing an LGBTQ student was a significant predictor, but knowing an LGBTQ co-worker was not (Greytak, & Kosciw, 2014). However, Payne and Smith (2011) argue that workshops need to have a balance between trans narratives and statistics or research, especially research comparing their experiences to their straight counterparts. The use of statistics gives the workshop more credibility and provides a comparison population.

At the beginning of a professional development workshop, researchers recommend to find common ground within the school community (Case, & Meier, 2014; Gonzalez, & McNulty, 2010). The most common example for common ground was the belief that all students deserve to be safe in their schools. This belief allowed facilitators to acknowledge possible difference in values while emphasizing trans students still have the right to be safe and teachers have a responsible to keep them safe (Case, & Meier, 2014). Payne and Smith (2011) also recommend having common ground between the recipients of the workshop and the facilitator. During their program evaluation of a professional development seminar, participants reported the effectiveness of the workshop was related to the facilitator also having experience as a teacher.

The facilitator's experience was also effective in swaying conservative teachers' opinions that LGBTQ education issues were not as legitimate.

A final recommendation was to approach these professional development workshops sensitively. Case and Meirer (2014) recommended normalizing confusion as workshop attendees conflate terms together, such as 'gender identity' and 'sexual orientation'. Similarly, Cooper and colleagues (2014) argued that as allies become more aware, they will experience feelings of guilt, anxiety, shame and fear of being discriminatory. They argued that safe places for discussion are necessary to address these feelings in order for allies to be willing to take action and challenge social constructions of inequality. Lastly, Payne and Smith (2011) recommended that facilitators frame teachers as supports for LGBTQ students and not present the workshop from a blame perspective. The authors argued the use of shocking statistics or reliance on legal obligation could be perceived as threatening, reducing the effectiveness of the professional development.

**Gay-straight alliances.** Gay-straight alliances are student clubs where LGBTQ youth and heterosexual allies can seek support and discuss LGBTQ-related challenges (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012; Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak, 2013; Poteat et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2011). GSAs can help increase acceptance of LGBTQ issues in a school through hosting events or advocacy campaigns (Schindel, 2008). Having a GSA within a school can influence people to stand up for themselves (Currie, Mayberry, & Chenneville, 2012) or others when witnessing incidences of bullying (Fazel, 2011).

Schools with GSAs are reported to be safer for LGBTQ youth, and students from schools with GSAs are more likely to be open about LGBTQ-related issues with friends (Taylor et al., 2011). GSAs allow LGBTQ youth to gain peer support from each other, connect to the broader

LGBTQ community, and design awareness campaigns in their school (e.g. anti-homophobic bullying assemblies) (St. John et al., 2014). GSAs can also provide youth opportunities to develop leadership skills through: becoming mentors to younger LGBTQ youth, being the student leader of the GSA or attending workshops at local LGBTQ resources (St. John et al., 2014).

***Trans youth and GSAs.*** Only four articles directly assessed gay-straight alliances and their ability to meet the needs of trans youth, three of which were set in the US. An American quantitative study examined the benefits of LGBT-related school resources, GSAs, supportive educators, LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, and comprehensive anti-bullying policies. All four resources were related to less absenteeism among trans youth due to safety concerns (Greytalk, Kowciw, & Boesen, 2013). Lower levels of transphobic victimization were associated with the presence of GSAs in schools, supportive educators, and inclusive curricula. Most significant, the presence of those three school resources had a greater impact on trans youth compared to LGB youth. The presence of comprehensive anti-bullying policies were not associated with lower levels of transphobic victimization.

McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, and Russell (2010) found similar results when they used a mixed method design to examine school experiences among American trans youth and the impact of school responses. In their first study, which was quantitative, the authors found that connections to school personnel mediated the relationship between school protective factors (e.g. GSAs, anti-homophobic bullying policies) and students' feelings of safety. This relationship was further explained in their second study, which involved focus groups. School personnel were described as advocates, supporting trans youth transitioning in schools, helping with physical needs such as access to gender neutral washrooms, and changing school records to reflect

preferred name and pronouns.

There are shortcomings regarding the ability of GSAs to address the needs of trans youth. Prior research has found that conversations about trans issues may be dependent upon an out trans student initiating them (Davis et al., 2014; McGuire et al., 2010). Even LGB students in GSAs are not always aware of trans terminology or trans issues (Davis et al., 2014; Schindel, 2008). This can further isolate trans youth as GSAs are the designated space for them to receive peer support, which is contradictive if trans youth are victimized by LGB peers (Grossman, & D'Augelli, 2006; Schnidel, 2008).

Waiting until students initiate discussion about trans issues puts the onus on trans youth to be out and vocal to receive support (Davis et al., 2014). In a previous study, Davis et al. (2014) found that GSA advisers provided two main reasons for not discussing trans issues: 1) they did not perceive themselves to be knowledgeable enough, and 2) they did not think it was necessary. This pattern is a form of erasure, which can be defined as institutional procedures that erase people's identities and remove their voice (Namaste, 2000). The absence of trans-related conversations within GSAs can be detrimental as it could further silence trans youth.

**School policies.** The final school intervention that was recommended is having anti-bullying policies and protocols for supporting trans youth in schools. Researchers recommended having policies implemented before they are needed (Coolhart, & MacKnight, 2015; Payne, & Smith, 2014). Payne and Smith examined school administrators' and teachers' initial response to their trans students in their elementary schools. The authors describe the participants' response as fear based in: lack of being prepared, lack of policies, lack of procedures, and community backlash. None of their 12 participants had any training in LGBTQ educational issues and many had never worked with a trans child before. The lack of clear protocols caused some school



administrators to panic as many of them did not know how to help their students. The authors described how some teachers went so far as to avoid the students or school events to avoid having to decide how to accommodate their trans student (i.e., avoid attending swim days to avoid deciding which change room the child should use).

Payne and Smith's (2014) study also highlights the importance of combining policies with professional development. A study examining teacher's self-reported frequency to intervene in bullying incidents found self-efficacy was a predictor variable for how often teachers intervened, but a sense of obligation (as measured by their beliefs that school staff are obligated to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment) to students was not significant (Greytak, & Kosciw, 2014). This finding suggests that teachers and staff may need guidance understanding what constitutes transphobic bullying and how to intervene when they witness it.

### **Ontario's Policy Environment**

This section outlines Ontario's provincial education policies and how they may affect regional school board policies. It is first necessary to provide a brief explanation of the governing hierarchies in the education system. The Ministry of Education is a body of the Ontario government responsible for all aspects of publicly funded education, such as government policy, funding, and curriculum planning (People for Education, 2011). In Canada, there are two main school systems, the public and Catholic school systems. The public school system is secular in nature, whereas the Catholic school system is faith-based. Each school system is responsible for adhering to the mandates of the Ministry of Education.

Under the Ontario Ministry of Education, there are 72 district school boards, which operate at the regional level (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2015). School boards (also known as school districts) are responsible for operating their schools in accordance with both the

provincial legislation and the needs and priorities of the local community (Ontario Public School Boards' Association [OPSBA], 2014). School trustees, who are elected members of a school board, act as a liaison between local communities and the school board by bringing forth issues from the community (MOE, 2009).

School boards are also responsible for day-to-day activities of their schools, such as hiring school staff, maintaining school buildings, and monitoring the achievements of their students. In order to manage these tasks, each school board has a head office that oversees all administrative tasks. These tasks can include policy development, creating professional development workshops, and curriculum development. Within these head offices there are many job roles that which are overseen by the Director of Education. Other important actors are superintendents, who supervise several schools and act as an intermediary between head office and principals.

### **Ontario's Provincial Education Policies**

**Accepting Schools Act.** Bill 13, the Ontario Accepting Schools Act (ASA) is a comprehensive anti-bullying legislation that passed in June 2012 (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2012). The changes detailed in the ASA required the Ministry of Education to revise their policy/procedure memorandums (herein referred to as 'memorandums'). The four main memorandums relevant to gay-straight alliances, bullying interventions or creating safer spaces are:

- “Policy/Procedure Memorandum No. 119 - Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools” (PPM119) (MOE, 2013)
- “Policy/Procedure Memorandum No. 128 - The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct” (PPM128) (MOE, 2012c)
- “Policy/Procedure Memorandum No. 144 - Bullying Prevention and Intervention” (PPM144) (MOE, 2012a)
- “Policy/Procedure Memorandum No. 145 - Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour” (PPM145) (MOE, 2012b)

All of these policy/program memorandums were issued between December 5 2012 and April 22, 2013. They instruct schools to promote positive, safe schools using whole-school and evidence based approaches, and provide responsibilities that school boards, principals, parents and students have in achieving their specific goal (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2012a; Ministry of Education, 2012b; Ministry of Education, 2012c; Ministry of Education, 2013).

PPM 128 outlines the responsibilities school boards have for creating, implementing and reviewing their codes of conduct (MOE, 2012c). There are seven main purposes of a code of conduct which are to: “1) ensure that all members of the school community are treated with respect and dignity, 2) promote responsible citizenship, 3) maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility, 4) encourage the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict, 5) promote the safety of people in the schools, 6) discourage the use of alcohol and illegal drugs, and 7) prevent bullying” (MOE, 2012c, p. 4).

These seven objectives are further addressed in the memorandum’s ‘Standards of Behaviour’ section. This section provides standards for the school community with regards to two main areas: ‘Respect, Civility, and Responsible Citizenship’ and ‘Safety’ (MOE, 2012c, p. 4). The first area outlines the rights each member of the school community has to be treated equally and with dignity. With respect to trans youth, there is a specific clause dictating that all members must “respect and treat others fairly, regardless of, for example, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability” (MOE, 2012c, p. 4). Under the safety section the memorandum states that all school members must not engage in: bullying, harming others, alcohol, illicit drugs, robbery, violence or sexual assault.

School boards are to create policies that include these standards of behaviours from the Provincial code of conduct, while including their specific local needs and concerns. Consistent with the Ministry of Education's 'whole-school' approach, the Provincial Code of Conduct outlines the Standards of Behaviour that school boards, principals, teachers, staff, students and parents are responsible for to ensure the policies are successful:

Implementation of a whole-school approach needs to occur at all levels – the board, school, class, individual, family, and community. It involves the development of respectful and caring relationships between staff, between students, and between staff and students. All aspects of school life are included in a whole-school approach, such as curriculum, school climate, teaching practices, policies, and procedures. To improve the school climate, members of the school community need to share information to develop an awareness of factors that have an impact on the school climate and to provide information about the effectiveness of prevention and intervention strategies, practices, and programs in their school. A whole-school approach is also valuable in addressing such issues as racism, intolerance based on religion or disability, bullying, homophobia, and gender-based violence. (MOE, 2012b, p.2)

With regards to promoting a safe school climate and bullying prevention programs, school boards are responsible for creating policies that adhere to the PPM 144 and 145. PPM 144 outlines the new definition of bullying, as stated in the Accepting Schools Act, as well as the new process to suspend students for bias, hate or discriminatory motivated bullying (MOE, 2012a). School boards are mandated to create policies that address bullying and implement bullying intervention strategies. These tasks should be conducted in alignment with their school board's code of conduct, the Provincial code of conduct (PPM 128), and all applicable legislation, such as the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The PPM 144 lists nine policy components and implementation strategies: 1) policy statement , 2) the definition of bullying , 3) prevention and awareness raising , 4) programs, inventions and other supports, 5) notifying parents, 6) reporting to the principal, 7) professional development strategies for administrators, teachers and other school staff, 8) communications and outreach strategies, and 9) monitoring and review (MOE, 2012a). Components 1 and 2,

ensure a consistent definition of bullying and policy against bullying in all schools, while 3 and 4 promote building capacity among staff and students to prevent bullying and providing supports for youth who bully and are bullied. The fifth and sixth components provide staff with procedures for reporting bullying incidents to parents and principals, whereas component 7 provides procedures for annual staff development on bullying prevention strategies. The remaining two components contain protocols for communicating these bullying prevention strategies to all staff, students, parents and community groups, as well as evaluating how effective their policies and procedures are.

Section 3) also instructs schools to conduct a school climate survey at least every two years for staff and parents to complete (MOE, 2012a). Parents are asked about their child's comfort in school, experiences of bullying, and whether their child has been taught about different community groups (i.e. women's rights, LGBTQ community). Staff are asked the following questions: what are students' experiences of bullying?, whether certain forms of bullying are a concern in their schools?, what more their school might do to prevent bullying (e.g. information, staff training, etc.)?, whether implementation of policies are working, have the policies been evaluated?, and what results and responses they are seeing as a result of anti-bullying programs? (Government of Ontario, n.d.)

In the spirit of promoting a safe and inclusive school, the Ministry of Education has also revised PPM119 to ensure diversity and equity were respected within schools (MOE, 2013). This memorandum provides school boards with criteria and strategies necessary to achieve the following three goals: eliminate discrimination through the identification and removal of biases and barriers, support positive learning environments that are respectful and welcoming to all, and be accountable and transparent with ongoing progress. One strategy is to provide inclusive

curriculum. The PPM 119 states the following:

Students need to feel engaged in and empowered by what they are learning, supported by teachers and staff, and welcome in their learning environment. To this end, boards and their schools will use inclusive curriculum and assessment practices and effective instructional strategies that reflect the diverse needs of all students and the learning pathways that they are taking. Schools must provide students and staff with authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives. Students should be able to see themselves represented in the curriculum, programs, and culture of the school. Also, since schools have a pivotal role in developing the work force of tomorrow, students should be able to see themselves represented in the teaching, administrative, and support staff employed at the school. (MOE, 2013, p. 6)

The most controversial change mandated by the ASA is that schools must support all school-based groups that help to foster “a safe and inclusive learning environment, acceptance of and respect for others, and the creation of a positive school climate” (MOE, 2012b, p. 3). The controversial nature of this change is the clause that “neither the board nor the principal shall refuse to allow a student to use the name ‘gay-straight alliance’ or a similar name for an organization” (Davis et al., 2014; MOE, 2012b, p. 3) Catholic schools, which have an official opposition to GSAs have been opposed to clubs being called such.

### **Catholic Opposition**

Some common barriers to policy implementation in schools are the behaviours and attitudes of principals and teachers, specifically, in regards to whether they support new policy changes (Mishna, 2008). The search of follow-up studies examining the Accepting Schools Act in Ontario found two documents, both editorials, one written by Catholic Insight staff to rally dissent for Bill 13 (Catholic Insight, 2011). The editorial claims that Bill 13 pretends to be about anti-bullying but it is actually ‘a radical, sexualized agenda’, which will influence children to turn away from their religious beliefs. This editorial illustrates the potentially hostile school environment within Catholic schools. Transgenderism and homosexuality were also perceived to be identical in the editorial:

...also expects teachers to promote the concept of ‘gender fluidity’, i.e. that a child’s gender is not connected to their anatomy and that it is perfectly normal for little boys to think they are little girls, and vice versa. This bill has a **radical agenda to get kids to reject the religious beliefs held by their families** regarding the homosexual lifestyle (Catholic Insight, 2011, p. 1, emphasis in the original)

In September of 2013, another editorial followed up on the implementation of the act in Catholic schools illustrating the continued opposition against the Accepting Schools Act within Catholic schools (Lapointe & Kassen, 2013). Lapointe and Kassen’s (2013) editorial on the Accepting Schools Act highlights the need for a more rigorous examination of how schools are implementing this Act.

**Respecting Differences.** In response to the changes in the ASA, the Ontario Catholic Trustees Association (OCSTA, 2012) put forth *“Respecting Differences”*: *A Resource for Catholic Schools in the Province of Ontario*, which is a guideline for implementing the Accepting Schools Act within the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Similar to the aforementioned memorandums, the “Respecting Differences” resource contains topics regarding bullying prevention strategies and procedures for student-led anti-bullying groups or activities, such as GSAs.

The “Respecting Differences” document also has the aim to provide guidelines to foster a “loving and positive learning environment” for students and staff (OCSTA, 2012, p. 1). However, this document has guidelines that are inconsistent with the memoranda developed by the Ministry of Education, as well as inconsistencies with their own clauses. For example, the “Respecting Differences” resource states, “Groups formed to address the care and safety needs of students dealing with issues related to gender identity or same-sex attraction will be supported by school administration.<sup>2</sup>” but the note further explains, “While there will be groups established to address the care and safety needs of students dealing with issues related to gender identity or

same-sex attraction, GSA clubs, per se, are not acceptable in Catholic schools...” This clause is in conflict with PPM145’s stance that boards cannot prevent students from calling their groups ‘GSAs’ (MOE, 2012b).

Although the above quotes indicate that groups addressing issues of gender identity and sexual orientation will be established, the resource later states:

Issues of gender identity, like those of sexual attraction, can be complex, delicate and highly personal. Pupils wrestling with such questions may well be in vulnerable psychological or spiritual conditions and may be exposed to unhelpful group pressure. For this reason such matters are best dealt with privately and confidentially with proper counselling and chaplaincy staff. “Peer counselling” in such a forum as a student-led group is inappropriate for such a dialogue and could, in fact, put students at risk. Confidentiality and respect limit what can properly be discussed in a group setting and supervisors should limit discussions of this sort. (OCSTA, 2012, p. 11)

Bialystok (2014) argues that the resource does not grant respect to LGBTQ students as their sexual and/or gender identities are not validated or recognized. Preventing students from discussing their identities also renders students incapable of exercising their autonomy, while undermining the purpose of these groups. According to Nussbaum’s (2003) theory on social justice, removing one’s autonomy is a social injustice.

### **Toby’s Act**

Tam (2013) argues that transphobia is systematic as organizations’ practices and policies can prevent trans people from accessing numerous social resources. Namaste (2000) argues that this discrimination leads to the erasure of trans people; since they cannot access services, these services do not see a need to become more trans-inclusive. Many trans activists and researchers have been advocating for legal protection of trans people since Toby’s Act was proposed in 1999 (Ahmed, & Jindasurat, 2014; Clements-Nolle, Marx, & Katz, 2006; Lombardi, Wilchins, Priesing, & Malouf, 2002; Tam, 2013). Toby’s Act, an amendment to the Ontario Human Rights Code with respect to gender identity and gender expression, ensures transgender and gender



variant people have a right to equal treatment without discrimination in the Province of Ontario. The act was originally proposed in 1999 and was finally accepted into legislation in June of 2012 (Segal, 2013), making Ontario one of the first jurisdictions in the world to do so.

**Toby's Act and the Accepting Schools Act.** All the memorandums created by the Ministry of Education refer to the Ontario's Human Rights Code. Consequently, the revisions to the PPM119-145 have also included adding 'gender identity' and 'gender expression' as grounds against discrimination and bullying (MOE, 2012a; MOE, 2012b; MOE, 2012c; MOE, 2013). For example, in PPM 145 when discussing how schools should support student-led organizations, the memorandum states:

Every board shall support students who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote a safe and inclusive learning environment, acceptance of and respect for others, and the creation of a positive school climate, including activities or organizations that promote gender equity; antiracism; the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people with disabilities; or awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities,<sup>8</sup> (MOE, 2012b, p.3)

In the 'Background' section of PPM119 the history of various revisions of the memorandum were explained (MOE, 2013). The memorandum explicitly mentions that the current revision of the PPM119 takes into consideration both the Accepting Schools Act and Toby's Act:

This memorandum brings No. 119 (2009) up to date so that it is in accordance with amendments to the Education Act; that is, school boards are now required to develop and implement an equity and inclusive education policy. This memorandum also updates No. 119 (2009) to reflect the fact that gender identity and gender expression are dimensions of diversity under the Ontario Human Rights Code. (p.3)

Although the passing of Toby's Act is seen as a victory for trans people, there currently has been no research on the impact of Toby's Act. One report indicated that discrimination of trans people has remained the same one year following the Act, however, the report did not provide any data research to validate the authors' claims (Segal, 2013).

## Current Study

### Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is to investigate the supports and protections provided to trans youth in Ontario provincial schools in light of the implementation of the Accepting Schools Act and Toby's Act. With the emergence of these two provincial acts there has been legal recognition and (ostensibly greater) support for LGBTQ students in schools

Research into the impacts of the practices in schools as they relate to trans youth has yet to be done. This study will contribute much needed knowledge by examining three different sources of data: provincial results from the National Inventory of School District Interventions in Support of LGBTQ Student Wellbeing (herein referred to as 'the Inventory'), school boards policies from both the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB), and interviews from school representatives from these two school boards as well as one trans student. Together, these different data will provide an overview of how the ASA and Toby's Act are being implemented within schools, while using data from the Waterloo Region as a case study. My research objectives, research questions, and the methods to support them, are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. *Research Objectives, Research Questions and Corresponding Research Methods*

Research Objectives	Research Questions	Research Methods
Understand how school board policies support trans youth within schools in the context of the shifting policy environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do current school board policies offer in terms of supports for trans youth in schools?</li> </ul>	Survey questions: 12a-n, 13a-u Interview questions:2,3,4,5 Policy documents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the situation for trans youth in Waterloo Region schools in the context of the current provincial policy environment?</li> </ul>	

Contribute to a practical understanding of what other supports are needed to assist trans youth in schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are barriers and facilitators for trans-inclusive practices within schools?</li> <li>• What recommendations can be made to reduce these barriers?</li> </ul>	Survey Questions: 12c,f,i,l,m, 13d,h,l,t,v Interview questions: 4, 5
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## Methodology

### Reflexivity

Reflexive analysis can be described as the conscious self-awareness of how we construct our knowledge, before and during the research process (Finlay, 2002; Malterud, 2001). This analysis also involves examining the researcher-participant dynamics and how the research topic is being negotiated by both parties. Finlay (2002) asserts reflexivity is more than a reflection; it is essential for qualitative researchers to practice at all stages of their study as it is a tool to increase the trustworthiness and integrity of their research.

Since I am a trans researcher, I am an insider to the community I will be working with. Insider researchers belong to the community they choose to study and because of this have epistemic privilege aiding them in the research process (Finlay, 2002). My insider knowledge can challenge my objectivity in my research process (Malterud, 2001) and it is important for me to not confuse my intuitive knowledge with knowledge emerging from my data. In order to maintain objectivity, researchers should be transparent with their preconceptions and maintain a research journal to have an audit trail of the research process (Padgett, 2011). In addition to keeping a research journal, I will also be verifying my analyses with my thesis supervisor.

Another element of reflexivity is acknowledging how the researcher affects the research process (Malterud, 2001). My insider perspective will be an advantage to gaining rapport with

my trans youth participant, as well as having insight into his experiences. However, my insider perspective might have disadvantages with my school representative participants. They might be less likely to be as honest with me concerning trans youths' visibility in schools if the information is negative. Breen (2007) recounts similar experiences in her study examining grief following fatal car crashes; she was seen as an insider to bereavement participants, which granted her easy rapport and trust, but was an outsider to her stakeholder participants. This difference in perspective influenced the way her participants talked to her and thus the data she gathered from them. The dynamics between my participants and I will be recorded in my research journal.

Stating one's positionality allows other researchers to understand how one approaches their data and consequently make sense of it (Finlay, 2002; Malterud, 2001). In the case of my own research, it is important for me to note how my lived experience informs my research process.

**Standpoint.** This research study hits a personal chord with me. As I am a trans individual, I have lived experience with the confusion and distress associated with not understanding how to relate to one's assigned gender. I was a member of my high school GSA, but like other trans youth, I did not receive the resources I needed and consequently, my overall experience was quite negative. I also experienced mental health difficulties, conflated by my inability at the time to identify what was troubling me; all I knew was I could not emotionally relate to the reflection in the mirror nor my peers.

It was not until I conducted my undergraduate thesis, examining trans identity development that I came to terms with my gender identity. I have known and been friends with trans people before. I watched them go through their transitions, yet I still did not believe that what they were experiencing and what I was experiencing were similar. It was not until most of

my participants mentioned they also had doubts that they were trans because they could not relate to the stereotypical portrayals and definitions of trans people that it occurred to me I was harbouring similar sentiments. For most of us, it was learning the definition of ‘genderqueer’ and realizing that people were comfortable and happy living within the binary of the genders that made us realize we too could identify as such. Gates (2010) defines genderqueer individuals as gender variant or those who have non-gendernormative identities. There is no universal definition of ‘genderqueer’, perhaps as resistance to concrete categories as trans identities have historically been pathologized. Thus, genderqueer people remain somewhere within the binary of ‘woman/man’, and can identify as any combination of gender and sexual orientation (straight, gay, bisexual, or lesbian) or none of them at all.

Although my experience in my GSA was negative, I believe that GSAs are an important preventive intervention for LGBTQ youth. The idea that youth can come together and tackle issues that will help them figure out who they are, is a necessity, and this cannot be stressed enough.

### **Research Paradigm**

My research is informed by critical theory, which focuses on explaining the social and political world as already formed (Castro-Gomez, 2001; Cox, 1981). Critical theory is a departure from traditional theory, the prominent theoretical framework analyzing social order in the early 1900’s (Gonzalez, Moskowitz, & Castro-Gomez, 2001). Traditional theorists perceived sociopolitical contexts to be cosmologically predetermined, granting them legitimacy in their objective nature (Gonzalex et al., 2001). However, theorists started arguing against this seemingly neutral stance claiming theories of the social order need to lay bare their concealed perspectives (Cox, 1981; Hoffman, 1987). Therefore, critical theory primarily focuses on

critiquing hegemonic ideologies and the sociopolitical contexts that created them (Cox, 1981; Hoffman, 1987).

One of the strengths of critical theory is it does not take power relations for granted, rather it makes them the focus of critique (Cox, 1981). Such critiques are concentrated on the origins of social relations, power relations and how they fit into the larger picture of what is currently being studied. With a strong foundation in emancipatory action, it is not surprising that Johnson (1995) argues that the adequacy of critical theory rests upon theories being explanatory, practical and normative. Using these three criteria, critical theory must be able to explain what is wrong with the current social reality, be able to identify the actors necessary to change it, and provide both clear rationales as well as achievable goals for social transformation. This is what makes this paradigm ideal for my study since it will involve policy analysis.

Modern critical theory encompasses many critical emancipatory theories and is sometimes referred to as a 'transformative paradigm' (Prilleltensky, & Nelson, 2010) or the 'critical-emancipatory' paradigm (Humble & Morgaine, 2002). Critical emancipatory paradigms operate with the same underlying assumption that individuals who develop insight into the way their lives are being oppressed by systematic forces can achieve emancipation through individual or collective action (Humble & Morgaine, 2002). This definition has a direct action orientation and calls for system-level change.

Feminists, queer and critical race theorists have situated their work within these paradigms, theorizing how gender, sexuality and race are constructed through power relations and social institutions within a society (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Even though feminist theory focuses on inherent power dynamics underlying gender, traditional feminist theory has not been able to fully incorporate trans issues (Hines, 2006; Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010; Namaste,

2000; Serano, 2007; Serano, 2013). I will be situating my research within a trans feminist perspective, which is a subset of feminist theory examining gender and power relations inclusive of transgender issues (Enke, 2012).

Trans feminist theory conceptualizes one's identity to be "fluid, embodied and socially and self-constructed", while analyzing how these aspects relate to one another (Nagoshi, & Brzuzy, 2010, p. 432). Incorporating fluidity into concepts of identity legitimizes trans identities, as it expands either/or binary notions of gender (Enke, 2012; Serano, 2013). Notions of fluid identities also expands intersectionality by perceiving gender and sexual orientations on a continuum, intersecting in various different combinations (Serano, 2013).

### **Methodological Framework**

My methodology is informed by trans feminism, involving grounded theory methodology for analyzing interviews, and a critical discourse analysis for analyzing school policies. I am incorporating both methodologies given the different sources from which my data are gathered.

Grounded theory is a systematic methodology utilized to develop or expand theory (Corbin, & Strauss, 1990). Birks and Mills (2011) state grounded theory is appropriate when: "1) little is known about the area of study, 2) the generation of theory with an explanatory power is a desired outcome, and 3) an inherent process is embedded in the research situation that is likely to be explicated by grounded theory methods" (p. 16). As there is limited research on trans-inclusive school board policies, grounded theory is an appropriate methodology for my study.

The grounded theory methodology is also informed by a case study approach. According to Yin (2003), one application of a case study "is to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies" (p. 15). For the purposes of this study, data from the Waterloo Region will be the case study. By doing so, an

explanatory theory on the implementation of trans-inclusive school board policies will be generated. Cook and Fonow's (1986) principles of recognizing the pervasive influence of gender, acknowledgement of ethical considerations, and the empowering nature of feminist research will also be adopted to inform the theory generated from my analysis.

Critical discourse analysis is a methodology analyzing text and language to examine production of dominance, power, and social inequalities (Van Dijk, 1993). Discourse is involved in the production of dominance through two dimensions: 1) through texts and talk in specific contexts, and 2) indirectly influencing the opinions of others (Van Dijk, 1993). Utilizing critical discourse analysis, I examine how and when trans youth are included in school board policies.

Cox (1981) argues that the starting point of critical theory is understanding the human experience that gives rise to a need for theory and, for the purposes of my research, the most appropriate way to understand human experience is through the use of qualitative methodologies. These methodologies are compatible with critical theory, and aid in building theory necessary for social change.

### **Research Design**

The current study has a mixed-methods design, incorporating data from the following three sources: national survey, qualitative interviews and school board policies. Creswell (2013) argues that mixed-method designs can lead to enhanced results as the use of multiple methods can cancel the biases inherent in the other method. Despite his claim that mixed-methods can provide a richer understanding of the research problem, Creswell also states that researchers using mixed-methods need to provide a rationale for why both quantitative and qualitative methods are necessary to answer their research problem. In the section below, I explain a mixed-method design is necessary to answer my four research questions.



To answer my first research question, ‘what do current school board policies offer in terms of supports for trans youth in schools?’, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of what trans supports are present in schools across Ontario. Since the Inventory was distributed to all school districts in Canada, thus all school districts in Ontario had the opportunity to participate in the survey.

My second research question, ‘what is the situation for trans youth in Waterloo Region schools in the context of the current provincial policy environment?’ warrants the use of qualitative methods. In order to answer this question, I need to fully understand the political situation in the Waterloo Region. This knowledge can be gained by examining both school board policies, as well as teachers’ and a student’s experiences in schools. Using two forms of qualitative methods is called triangulation, which has been argued to be most rigorous when the use of methods is complementary (Jick, 1979). These two forms of data are complementary because they neutralize the other’s limitation. For example, analyzing school board policies cannot provide how the policies are executed within schools, which interviews with teachers and school administrators can provide.

Data triangulation can enhance research studies by providing richer data (Jick, 1979). Mathison (1988) argues that triangulation results in “convergent, inconsistent and contradictory evidence that must be rendered sensible” (p. 13), creating a more complex picture of the social phenomenon. The emerging themes and patterns from all three forms of data will inform my last two research questions: ‘What are barriers and facilitators for trans-inclusive practices within schools?’ and ‘What recommendations can be made to reduce these barriers?’.

### **Sampling**

**The Inventory.** Ontario data from the National Inventory of School District Interventions

in Support of LGBTQ Student Wellbeing study were used in this study. These data were taken from a larger, ongoing study involving a national research team that my supervisor is a member of (for more, see: Taylor, Peter, & Edkins, n.d.). The survey was distributed to all 433 school districts in Canada via emails to their superintendents. The survey was offered in English and French and all responses in French were translated into English. The survey was opened between February and June 2014 and 146 (33.7%) districts participated from across Canada.

For the purposes of this study, only the Ontario data was used. Out of 80<sup>1</sup> school districts, superintendents from 29 districts (36%) in Ontario responded to the Inventory. Ten of these districts were Catholic, and altogether there were four rural and 25 were urban districts.

**Interviews.** Given (2008) states stakeholder sampling strategy “involves identifying who the major stakeholders are who are involved in designing, giving, receiving, or administering the programme or serve being evaluated, and who might otherwise be affected by it” (p. 697). I have identified the major stakeholders for this research study to be school board administrators, teachers, other staff GSA leaders, and trans students. Collectively, these stakeholders can offer insights into the experiences of trans students in the school environment and/or implementation of school board policies.

Advertisements for my research study were sent to community organizations in the Waterloo Region such as: LGBTQ youth groups, GSA listservs, teacher associations, LGBTQ-friendly resources (i.e. Rainbow Health Ontario), and prominent trans advocates in the school system. Four school representatives (two Catholic) and one trans student were interviewed. All participants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure their confidentiality.

The trans student, William, identified as male and was 15 years of age. William attended

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor and colleagues (n.d.) state they sent the Inventory to all 80 school districts in Ontario, however, there are only 72 districts according to the Ministry of Education.

a rural school in the WRDSB and was in tenth grade. The four participants worked for either the WRDSB or the WCDSB. To protect the anonymity of my adult participants, I will not disclose their demographic information, including what their specific occupation was. However, I will refer to participants as ‘school administrator’ if they held a senior position (i.e., principal, vice principal, or senior administrator staff), and ‘school staff’ if they were a teacher, guidance counsellor, Chaplin, child and youth worker, mental health worker or other staff member.

My sample included two school administrators, Jessica and Claire, and two school staff, Rebecca and Josh. Both districts had a school administrator and staff representative; Claire and Josh were from the WCDSB. The participants were from four different secondary schools and had been in their positions for at least two years.

**Policy documents.** The school board policies were retrieved from their board’s website, after my interviews. The search for policies began with ones mentioned in the interviews. Policies were retrieved after the interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of which policies were being utilized by school administrators and staff. Conducting the interviews first would reduce the interviewer’s preformed biased regarding which policies are most effective for protecting trans students. This order also allowed for an understanding of the participants’ working knowledge of current policies.

For the WCDSB, the first policy was APC041 –Supporting Sexual Minority Youth, and or the WRDSB, the initial policy was Board Policy 6000 Safe Schools. Additional policies listed in the ‘reference’ section were also collected. I continued subsequent rounds of policy retrieval until the policies collected referenced no new policies. A total of eight additional WCDSB policies were collected and 42 WRDSB policies were collected.

Policies were excluded if they did not refer to promoting positive school behaviour,

equity and inclusion strategies, or bullying prevention. Five policies remained from the WCDSB and seven from the WRDSB. One additional policy from each board was removed because both policies contained procedural instructions for suspending students, which was not relevant to this study. The policies that were included in the analysis are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. *The School Board Policies Retained for Discourse Analysis.*

	Policy Title
Waterloo Region District School Board	BP1008 <sup>a</sup> – Equity and Inclusion
	BP6000 – Safe Schools
	BP6001 – Code of Conduct
	BP6008 – Student Discipline
	BP6009 – Student Bullying Prevention and Intervention
	AP1200 <sup>b</sup> – Student Bullying Prevention and Intervention
Waterloo Catholic District School Board	APC018 <sup>c</sup> -Code of Conduct
	APC034-Bullying Prevention and Intervention
	APC037-Equity and Inclusive Education
	APC042-Supporting Students of a Sexual Minority

Notes: a ‘BP’ refers to board policy

b ‘AP’ refers to administrative procedure

c ‘APC’ refers to how the policies are named by the school board

## Materials

**The Inventory.** The Inventory asked respondents whether their school districts had the following interventions: LGBTQ inclusive policy, components of inclusive policy, generic policy, GSAs, LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, anti-bullying events, staff resources, student resources, transgender harassment, transgender-specific professional development, transition support, and support for LGBTQ staff (see Appendix B for survey). If respondents answered ‘yes’ to an intervention, they were then asked whether their districts had implemented the

particular intervention and at what level (e.g., senior only, all schools). They were also asked to “check all that apply” in a list of possible ‘hoped for’ and ‘somewhat achieved’ outcomes in implementing the intervention. Outcomes included harassment-related benefits (reduced use of that’s gay/t’es gai, reduced harassment, reduced cyberbullying, increased reporting when harassed), psychological benefits (improved self-esteem, mental health, reduced suicidality), behavioural benefits (less high risk behaviour, improved performance/attendance), and social benefits (more attached, more inclusion, peer support, staff support). Respondents could check “Other” and specify.

Respondents who answered “no” to an intervention question were asked to “check all that apply” in a list of possible reasons for not implementing the intervention, including projected opposition (i.e., from parents, staff, community or religious groups), personal disapproval on religious grounds, not wanting to imply approval of homosexuality, believing that homophobic harassment does not warrant special attention, believing there are no or few such incidents in their districts, and believing generic policy is adequate. Respondents could check “Other” and specify.

For the purposes of this study, only questions pertaining to trans youth and trans specific resources were included, which meant answers from question 12, ‘does your district have any policies that protect freedom of gender expression or transgender identity?’ and 13, “does your district provide any resources for staff on gender expression or transgender identity?”

**Interviews.** Interviews are appropriate for my study as they allow for intensive exploration of personal narratives (Padgett, 2012). This method allowed me to question school representatives about the sociopolitical context of their employment, and how it affects the ability of their schools to implement legislation. By asking participants these types of questions

directly, I gained a comprehensive understanding of individual factors, ones that are unique to participants and their work environments.

The interviews were constructed to understand whether the current policy environment in Ontario has impacted the experiences of trans youth in schools (see Appendix A). Interviews with the school staff and representatives were focused on their perception of how new policies have generated supports for trans youth in schools. I specifically asked participants how effective they perceived the implemented of the ASA, how inclusive their school was to trans youth, and if they were familiar with Toby's Act. These interviews were focused on better understanding structural barriers that prevented the effectiveness of legislation.

While the interview guide was semi-structured, it also allowed for flexibility as new topics emerge. Since my participants worked in different positions at different schools, it is important to have flexibility in my interviews to allow for diverse experiences. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore new individual or general themes by asking questions that are not in the interview guide (Erlandson et al., 1993).

## **Procedure**

**The Inventory.** The Inventory was launched in December 2013 and a link to the survey was sent to representatives of every publicly-funded school district in Canada. In February 2014, follow-up reminder emails were sent to districts that had not yet responded and the survey closed in June 2014. Out of the 146 (33.7%) responses from across Canada, 29 were used in this study. Since these data come from a larger national study, the data were de-identified prior to being shared with me.

**Interviews.** Participants were recruited for interviews between March and June of 2015. Two participants were recruited through advertisements and the remaining two were recruited

through word of mouth. The interviews were conducted by me in coffee shops or on Wilfrid Laurier University campus. The school administrators were not offered any honoraria but the trans student was offered a \$25 gift card for his participation.

Participants were electronically sent a copy of the information letter prior to the interview. Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview beginning. The interviews were digitally recorded and I also took notes during and after the interviews. I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews, ensuring I removed all identifying information and assigning participants a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Wherever necessary, minor details in participants' interviews were modified to protect to ensure their anonymity.

The desired sample for interviews was originally 20 participants, with 10 school representatives and 10 trans youth. Since the Accepting School's Act and Toby's Act are provincial policies, a neighbouring region was chosen to compare to the Waterloo region. The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) was chosen for two reasons: 1) it has a higher population of trans people as roughly 30% of trans people in Ontario live within the GTA (Bauer et al., 2010), and 2) it is within a reasonable driving distance from Waterloo region. I was unsuccessful in both attempts; I was not able to make meaningful connections with organizations in the GTA to increase interest in my study. I was only able to recruit one trans youth, although I was referred to several more. Many of the youth withdrew their interest prior to meeting me, describing feeling too overwhelmed to do so.

### **Data Coding**

**The Inventory.** The responses from the Inventory were analyzed using SPSS. However, due to the small sample sizes ( $n \leq 5$ ), cross-tabulations with chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) estimations and conducting independent t-tests between districts were not possible. Thus, only frequency and

descriptive statistics were conducted. Cross-tabulations or t-tests would have been used to test if there were any significant differences between response rates of public and Catholic districts who indicated having trans-specific policies, trans-specific resources and their corresponding perceived outcomes.

**Interviews.** The interviews were coded with the use of a grounded theory methodology and QDA Miner Lite software. Grounded theory is defined as a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data which have been systematically gathered and analyzed (Birks & Mills, 2011). However, this methodology can be used to elaborate or expand on an established theory; it does not always necessitate the emergence of new one. Grounded theorists are interested in providing a thick description of the conceptual relationships between and among various types of social units or social actors (Corbin, & Strauss, 1990). In this regard, the generation of a theory regarding social actors suits the paradigm of critical theory; as both are interested in understanding a deep description of social relations.

Consistent with grounded theory, the first step in my data analysis involved open coding of the data (Birks & Mills, 2011). Open coding will keep the emerging codes close to the participants' own words, also referred to as 'in vivo' codes. This first step of coding is used to fracture the data, to compare against each other in order to conceptualize beginning patterns or phenomena. Birks and Mills (2011) emphasize the initial coding process is a reflexive one, as it can be tempting for researchers to apply pet theoretical codes to support their position. In order to counterattack this temptation, I analyzed my data, focusing on short segments at a time.

Intermediate or axial coding, is the stage after open coding (Birks & Mills, 2011; Heath & Cowley, 2002). In this stage, I integrated the codes developed in the initial stage into conceptual categories and subcategories. I employed constant comparative analysis, which



means each interview or piece of data was compared against my current conceptual categories. When negative cases were identified, my conceptual framework was modified to incorporate the negative case.

To triangulate my data, I compared emerging themes from interviews to findings from my discourse analysis and results from the Inventory. This process enhanced my analysis by providing a deeper insight into the complexities of school policies and how they are implemented (Patton, 1999). The sources demonstrated consistencies and inconsistencies between the policies and participants' perceptions, both of which will be illuminative. This process was an interactive process and was aided with the use of memos in order to keep track of my thoughts on the codes and their relationship with one another.

The last stage was theory integration which started with sorting of memos to aid in the process of identifying relationships and patterns (Birks & Mills, 2011). Once I had a concrete idea of the major conceptual categories and their relationships to each other, I began to build my overarching theoretical framework.

**Policy documents.** The critical discourse analysis framework was utilized when analyzing the policy documents. Critical discourse analysis is primarily focused on how discursive strategies reproduce power, dominance and social inequalities (Van Dijk, 1993). Analysts provide insights into how arguments are framed or the language used. This framework seemed the most appropriate for this study to assess whether the policies are empowering for trans youth. I examined the documents for whether trans youth were mentioned, and if so, in what context. Specifically, some questions I sought to answer were: how are trans youth mentioned in school policies? Are trans youth explicitly protected by school board policies? If they are mentioned explicitly, are there any clauses to specifically accommodate trans youth

(such issues around which washroom to use or use of preferred name/pronouns)?

After a thorough read, the policies were coded based on whether they met the following criteria: the definition of bullying as defined by the ASA, promotion of a positive school climate, mandates to conduct the school climate surveys, mandates for staff training and/or inclusive curriculum, explicit support for of gay-straight alliances, and reference to the Ontario Human Rights Code. In addition to these six criteria, I also analyzed the policies to answer, “how are trans youth protected?”. Meeting the criteria for the six conditions would indicate compliance with the ASA.

**Establishing credibility and trustworthiness.** Trustworthiness is the standard qualitative researchers use to assess the quality of their research and is comprised of four criteria: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Erlandson et al., 1993; Padgett, 2012).

Establishing credibility rests on the principle that my data were true to the experiences of my participants rather than my interpretations (Erlandson et al., 1993). One method I used to help with credibility is source triangulation. Source triangulation is described as comparing and cross-checking consistency of information obtained from different methods (Erlandson et al., 1993; Padgett, 2012; Patton, 1999). Within my study I will be seeking data from multiple sources; from interviews with school administrators and a student, policy documents and provincial data from a questionnaire. Although source triangulation provides a process for validating findings gathered from another source, it rarely leads to a consistent account (Patton, 1999). However, inconsistencies only furthered my analysis as inconsistencies between the policies only helped enhance the sociopolitical context that school board policies are created and implemented within.

The use of purposive sampling also aided increasing my study's transferability, which is the extent to which my study's findings can be applied to other contexts (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Padgett, 2012). Using stakeholder sampling provided me with a more comprehensive account of the sociopolitical context of GSAs and policies in schools by including the voices of participants from varying relations to GSAs. These multiple accounts provided a thick description of the context GSAs and policies are situated in, and will allow other researchers to an assessment about the applicability of my observations for their contexts (Erlandson, et al., 1993).

Meeting the criteria for dependability means my procedures are documented and traceable (Padgett, 2012) and are also consistent (Erlandson et al., 1993). In order to enhance a study's dependability, researchers must provide an opportunity for an external check on the process by which the study was conducted. In order to fulfill this criterion, I have created a research journal, containing documentation of my notes regarding decisions made during the research process. Providing my research journal will also ensure the fulfillment of the confirmability criterion, which is achieved by illustrating the study's findings are firmly linked to the data (Padgett, 2012).

### **Ethical Concerns**

This study received ethical approval from Wilfrid Laurier University's Research Ethics Board. The university has research relationships with the local school boards, which are facilitated through the university's Human Research Ethics Coordinator. The Coordinator was consulted with and determined this study did not require consent from the schools boards as no research was conducted on school property. However, research directors of the both local school boards were notified of this study via email. Neither school board raised any issues about the nature of my study, nor asked for a formal review by their school board ethics committee.

## Results

First, I will present results from the Inventory, illustrating the trends for trans-specific policies and resources in Ontario schools. Secondly, I will discuss findings from the policy analysis for Waterloo Region’s public and Catholic school boards, supplemented with emerging themes from interviews with school staff and a trans student. Lastly, I will discuss facilitators and barriers to implementing trans-inclusive practices in schools.

### Trans-specific School Board Policies and Resources in Ontario

Overall, 29 (10 Catholic) superintendents responded to the Inventory, resulting in a response rate of 36%. Superintendents were asked to indicate whether their school board had any policies that protect freedom of gender expression or transgender identity and any resources for staff on gender expression or transgender identity. If superintendents reported having any policies or resources, they were asked whether they were implemented in their schools and what outcomes they had achieved. If the respondents reported they did not have any policy or resources they were asked why their school board did not have them. I discuss the results in two separate sections, ‘Trans-specific Policies’ and ‘Trans-specific Resources’.

**Trans-specific policies.** As shown in Table 3, seven out of 19 (57%) public school districts have policies that address harassment on the grounds of gender expression. Four of these seven (57%) policies had been implemented in all their schools. Two out of 10 (20%) Catholic school districts reported their district had this policy, and only one of those two (50%) policies had been implemented.

Table 3. *School Districts that Have Trans-specific Policies by School System*

Policy	Have policy/ Implemented	School System			
		Public		Catholic	
		(n)	%	(n)	%
Policy addressing harassment					

on the grounds of gender expression					
	Expected <sup>a</sup>	19	100	10	100
	Have policy <sup>b</sup>	7	37	2	20
	Implemented <sup>c</sup>	4	57	1	50
Policy addressing harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity					
	Expected	19	100	10	100
	Have policy	7	37	1	10
	Implemented	4	57	0	0
Policy to support transsexual students transitioning <sup>d</sup>					
	Have policy	6	32	0	0
	Implemented	3	50	0	0

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Expected values refers to the number of schools expected to have policies with compliance to the ASA

<sup>b</sup> percentages in this row were calculated out 19 for public and 10 for Catholic districts

<sup>c</sup> percentages in this row were calculated out of those districts that had policies

<sup>d</sup> expected values for this policy are not listed as this type of support is not explicit in the ASA

Seven out of 19 (57%) public school districts have a policy that addressing harassment of the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity, four of which (57%) had been implemented in schools. One out of 10 (10%) Catholic school district had a policy addressing harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity but it had not been implemented.

Six out of 19 (32%) public school districts have a policy to support transsexual students transitioning in their schools, three of which (50%) had been implemented within their schools. No Catholic district reporting having such a policy.

Nine out 19 (47%) public school districts reported protecting trans students through other policies. Out of these nine responses: two (22%) districts had specific accommodation guidelines for trans students and staff, two (22%) districts were in the process of drafting these guidelines, and the remaining five (56%) districts protect trans students through generic policies. Six of these nine (67%) districts had their policy implemented in all of their schools. Two out of 10 (20%) Catholic school districts reported they had other policies protecting trans students. One of

these two superintendents (50%) further explained by stating they follow the Human Rights Code and the other (50%) said they ‘were not sure’. The superintendent who reported they followed the Human Rights Code, also reported this had been implemented within all their schools.

Two out of 19 (11%) public superintendents reported they had none of the above policies. When asked why they had not implemented them, both checked off ‘other’. They clarified by explaining that one school district had guidelines in discussion while the other stated that they needed full support of the board and director before doing so. The superintendent who reported needing support, also checked off, ‘wanted to but lacked resources’. No Catholic superintendent responded to this question.

***Outcomes of trans-specific policies.*** Frequencies for achieved outcomes reported by superintendents are displayed in Figure 1. If superintendents reported having a policy, they were asked if the policy had achieved the following 12 outcomes for gender non-conforming or trans youth. There were nine superintendents (two Catholic) who reported having a policy in their district addressing harassment on the grounds of gender expression. The following is the list of outcomes and the number of superintendents who reported they had achieved them: less use of ‘that’s so gay’ ( $n = 5, 56\%$ ), less harassment ( $n = 4, 44\%$ ), less cyberbullying ( $n = 3, 33\%$ ), reduced high risk behaviours ( $n = 3, 33\%$ ), increased reporting of harassment ( $n = 4, 44\%$ ), increased attached to school community ( $n = 4, 44\%$ ), improved self-esteem ( $n = 4, 44\%$ ), improved mental health/ reduced suicidality ( $n = 2, 22\%$ ), improved performance or attendance ( $n = 3, 33\%$ ), increased inclusion in schools ( $n = 5, 56\%$ ), increased peer support ( $n = 5, 56\%$ ), increased staff support ( $n = 6, 67\%$ ).

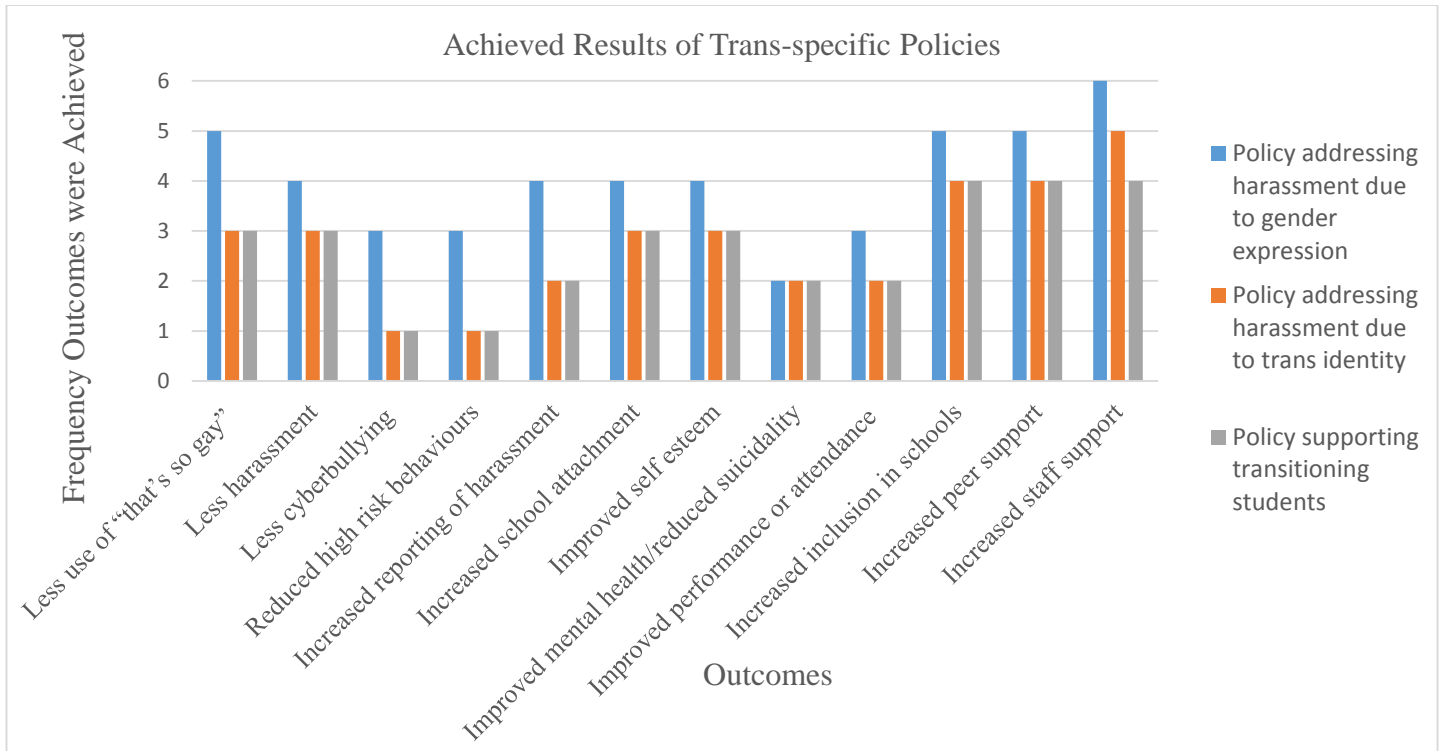


Figure 1. Frequency that policies were reported to have achieved the listed outcomes for trans or gender non-conforming youth.

There were eight superintendents (one Catholic) who reported having a policy in their district addressing harassment on the grounds of trans identity. The following is the list of outcomes and the number of superintendents who reported having achieved them: less use of 'that's so gay' ( $n = 3$ , 38%), less harassment ( $n = 3$ , 38%), less cyberbullying ( $n = 1$ , 13%), reduced high risk behaviours ( $n = 1$ , 13%), increased reporting of harassment ( $n = 2$ , 25%), increased attached to school community ( $n = 3$ , 38%), improved self-esteem ( $n = 3$ , 38%), improved mental health/ reduced suicidality ( $n = 2$ , 25%), improved performance or attendance ( $n = 2$ , 25%), increased inclusion in schools ( $n = 4$ , 40%), increased peer support ( $n = 4$ , 50%), increased staff support ( $n = 5$ , 63%).

There were six superintendents (all public) who reported having a policy supporting trans students transitioning in schools. The number of superintendents who reported they achieved the

outcomes are as follows: less use of ‘that’s so gay’ ( $n = 3$ , 50%), less harassment ( $n = 3$ , 50%), less cyberbullying ( $n = 1$ , 17%), reduced high risk behaviours ( $n = 1$ , 17%), increased reporting of harassment ( $n = 2$ , 33%), increased attached to school community ( $n = 3$ , 50%), improved self-esteem ( $n = 3$ , 50%), improved mental health/ reduced suicidality ( $n = 2$ , 33%), improved performance or attendance ( $n = 2$ , 33%), increased inclusion in schools ( $n = 4$ , 67%), increased peer support ( $n = 4$ , 67%), increased staff support ( $n = 4$ , 67%).

**Provincial trans-specific resources for staff.** As shown in Table 4, eight out of 19 (42%) public school districts provide workshops to staff on harassment on the grounds of gender expression, seven of which (88%) had been implemented in their secondary schools, and five of which (63%) had been implemented in at least some elementary schools. No Catholic school district reported having these workshops.

Table 4. *School Districts that have Trans-specific Resources by School System*

Resource	Have Resource/ Implemented	School System			
		Public		Catholic	
		(n)	%	(n)	%
Workshops on harassment on the grounds of gender expression	Expected <sup>a</sup>	19	100	10	100
	Have resource <sup>b</sup>	8	37	0	0
	Implemented <sup>c</sup>	7	88	0	0
Workshops on harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity	Expected	19	100	10	100
	Have resource	8	37	0	0
	Implemented	6	57	0	0
Workshops on supporting transsexual students transitioning <sup>d</sup>	Have resource	6	32	0	0
	Implemented	3	50	0	0

Note: <sup>a</sup> Expected values refers to the number of schools expected to have resources with compliance to the ASA

<sup>b</sup> percentages in this row were calculated out 19 for public and 10 for Catholic districts

<sup>c</sup> percentages in this row were calculated out of those districts that had resources



<sup>d</sup> expected values for this resource are not listed as this type of support is not explicit in the ASA

Eight out of 19 (42%) public school districts provide workshops on harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity, six of which (75%) had been implemented in secondary schools, and five (63%) had been implemented in at least some of their elementary schools. No Catholic district school reported having these workshops. Six out of 19 (32%) public school districts had workshops on supporting transitioning students. Three (50%) of these districts had these workshops in their secondary schools, and four (67%) districts had these workshops in at least some of their elementary schools. No Catholic district reported having these workshops.

Six out of 19 (32%) public school districts had ‘other’ resources for their staff: one district (17%) had trans guest speakers, one district (17%) had their board’s equity department, one district (17%) had LGBTQ media resources, one district (17%) had generic workshops on bullying and mental health, and two districts (33%) had guidelines for accommodating gender non-conforming and trans students. Five out of the six districts (83%) had these resources available in their secondary schools. Two out of 10 (20%) Catholic school districts had ‘other’ resources for their staff, which were elaborated to be resources through student support personnel and workshops on creating safe and accepting schools for all. One district (50%) had their resource implemented in both their elementary and secondary schools.

***Outcomes of trans-specific resources.*** If superintendents reported having a resource, they were asked if the resource had achieved the following 12 outcomes for gender non-conforming or trans youth. Frequencies for achieved outcomes reported by superintendents are displayed in Figure 2. There were eight public superintendents who reported having workshops for their staff on addressing harassment on the grounds of gender expression. The number of superintendents who reported achieving the outcomes are as follows: less use of ‘that’s so gay’ ( $n = 2$ , 25%), less

harassment ( $n = 3$ , 38%), less cyberbullying ( $n = 13$ ), reduced high risk behaviours ( $n = 1$ , 13%), increased reporting of harassment ( $n = 1$ , 13%), increased attached to school community ( $n = 2$ , 25%), improved self-esteem ( $n = 2$ , 25%), improved mental health/ reduced suicidality ( $n = 1$ , 13%), improved performance or attendance ( $n = 1$ , 13%), increased inclusion in schools ( $n = 3$ , 38%), increased peer support ( $n = 3$ , 38%), increased staff support ( $n = 4$ , 50%).

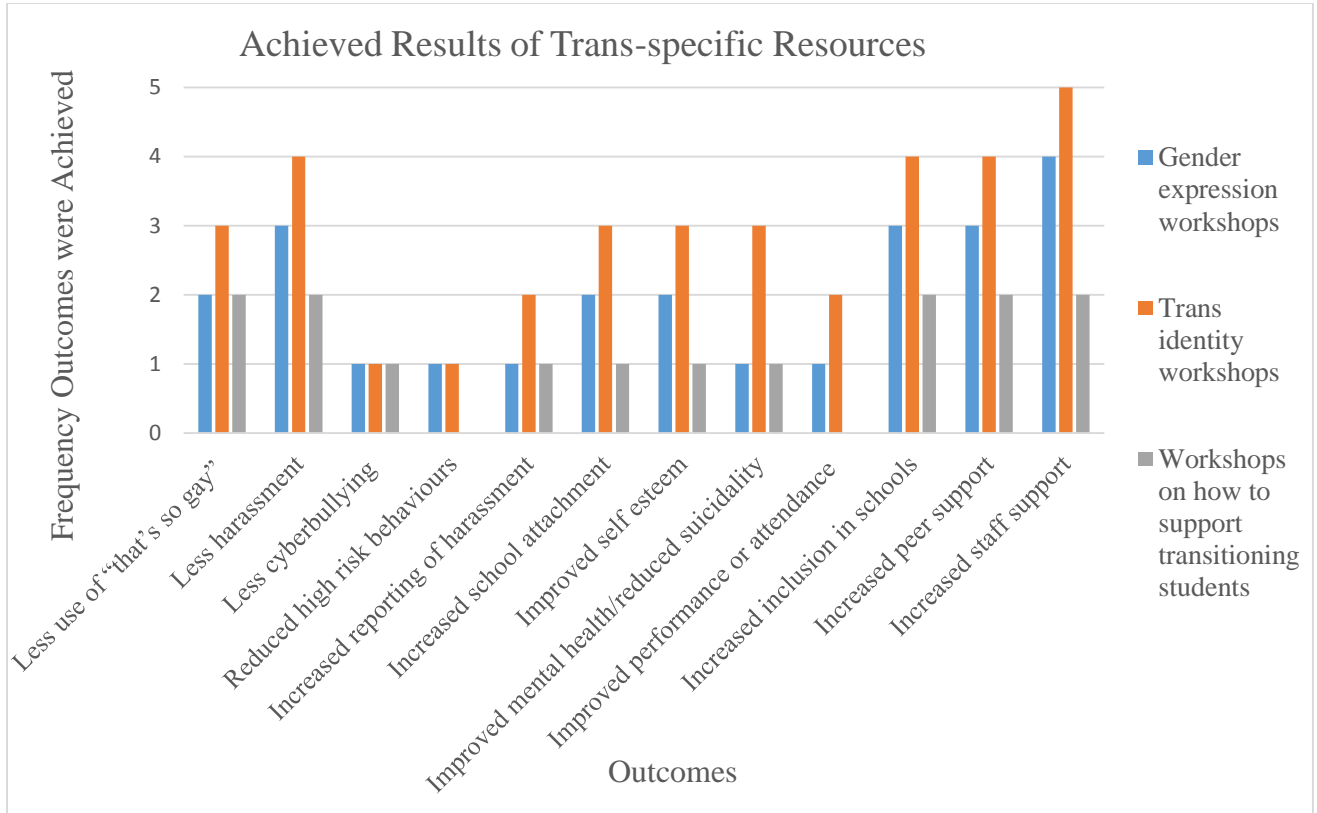


Figure 2. Frequency that workshops were reported to be have achieved the listed outcomes for trans or gender non-conforming youth.

The eight public superintendents who reported having workshops for their staff on addressing harassment on the grounds of trans identity, indicated their workshops had achieved the following outcomes for gender non-conforming or trans youth: less use of 'that's so gay' ( $n = 3$ , 38%), less harassment ( $n = 4$ , 50%), less cyberbullying ( $n = 1$ , 13%), reduced high risk behaviours ( $n = 1$ , 13%), increased reporting of harassment ( $n = 2$ , 25%), increased attached to

school community ( $n = 3, 38\%$ ), improved self-esteem ( $n = 3, 38\%$ ), improved mental health/ reduced suicidality ( $n = 3, 38\%$ ), improved performance or attendance ( $n = 2, 25\%$ ), increased inclusion in schools ( $n = 4, 50\%$ ), increased peer support ( $n = 4, 50\%$ ), increased staff support ( $n = 5, 63\%$ ).

There were six public superintendents who reported having workshops on how to support trans students transitioning in schools. The number of superintendents who reported achieving the outcomes are as follows: less use of ‘that’s so gay’ ( $n = 2, 33\%$ ), less harassment ( $n = 2, 33\%$ ), less cyberbullying ( $n = 1, 17\%$ ), reduced high risk behaviours ( $n = 0$ ), increased reporting of harassment ( $n = 1, 17\%$ ), increased attached to school community ( $n = 1, 17\%$ ), improved self-esteem ( $n = 1, 17\%$ ), improved mental health/ reduced suicidality ( $n = 1, 17\%$ ), improved performance or attendance ( $n = 0$ ), increased inclusion in schools ( $n = 2, 33\%$ ), increased peer support ( $n = 2, 33\%$ ), increased staff support ( $n = 2, 33\%$ ).

### **School Board Policies in the Waterloo Region**

Results from the Inventory have provided an overview of provincial trends in policies and resources protecting trans youth in Ontario. To better understand what these policies are and how they provide protection, I will use the school systems in the Waterloo Region as a case study. I will achieve this objective by using findings from my analysis of their school board policies and interviews with school representatives and one trans student. First, I will explain how or if transgender youth are protected in the policies analysis, and then discuss the emerging themes from my interviews.

This section will be divided into three main sections, ‘Waterloo Region District School Board’, ‘Waterloo Catholic District School Board’, and ‘Experiences in Schools’. All three sections will be further broken down into the following subsections, ‘Implementation of the

Accepting Schools Act’ and ‘Protections for Trans Youth’.

**Waterloo Region District School Board.**

*Implementation of the Accepting Schools Act.* Analysis of the Waterloo Region District School Board’s (WRDSB) policies illustrated their policies and their one administrative procedure adhere to the changes mandated by the Accepting Schools Act. The policies highlight the key changes, such as the definition of bullying, school climate surveys, protections for student-led organizations, and the Ontario Human Rights Code. All of the documents had been revised between February 2013 and April 2015. See Table 5 for list of WRDSB policies.

Table 5. *List of WRDSB Policies*

	Policy Title	Final Revision Date
Waterloo Region District School Board	BP1008 <sup>a</sup> – Equity and Inclusion	September 15, 2014
	BP6000 – Safe Schools	March 9, 2015
	BP6001 – Code of Conduct	November 14, 2014
	BP6008 – Student Discipline	March 23, 2015
	BP6009 – Student Bullying Prevention and Intervention	April 20, 2015
	AP1200 <sup>b</sup> – Student Bullying Prevention and Intervention	February 3, 2013

Notes: a ‘BP’ refers to board policy

b ‘AP’ refers to administrative procedure

BP6009 and AP1200 adhere to the Accepting Schools Act’s main emphasis on creating school-wide approaches promoting a positive school climate resulting in a reduction of bullying (Waterloo Region District School Board [WRDSB], 2013; WRDSB, 2015b). These documents contain the new definition of bullying as reflected by the ASA, and the duties of the principals, parents, board staff, and students have to both prevent as well as report incidents of bullying.

These documents also outline bullying intervention strategies such as, supports for students who

bully, bystanders and student who are bullied, staff and student training for bullying prevention and intervention strategies, an annual Bullying Prevention Awareness Week, conducting school climate surveys, and supporting student-led activities (i.e., GSAs). These two documents cover the major aims of the ASA.

Policy BP600 complements the previously mentioned documents, as it provides the expectations the WRDSB has for schools to be safe, to prevent bullying and violent incidents in the Waterloo Region (WRDSB, 2015a). However, this particular policy is explicit in its commitment to reduce violence. When overviewing the commitments of the school board, the policy includes the following:

- 1.1.1 significantly reducing the incidence of violence in Waterloo Region schools;
- 1.1.2 significantly reducing the incidence of bullying;
- 1.1.3 preparing students to conduct their lives in non-violent ways; ... (WRDSB, 2015a, p. 1)

Another major aim of the ASA is to increase staff development for bullying intervention (MOE, 2012a). BP1008 states the school board will “Provide administrators, staff, students and other members of the school community with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory biases and systemic barriers under the [Ontario Human Rights] Code” (WRDSB, 2014a, p.1). BP6000 also stresses the importance of building staff skills and confidence to effectively recognize and handle violent or potentially violent incidents (WRDSB, 2015a.).

***Protections for trans youth.*** All but one WRDSB policy addressed protection from harassment on the grounds of ‘gender identity’ or ‘gender expression’ either by explicitly using the terms or by referencing the Ontario Human Rights Act. AP1200 and BP6009 include the definition of bullying, which states that bullying behaviour can be characterized by ‘real or perceived power imbalance’ (WRDSB, 2013, p. 2) between peers based on factors such as

gender identity and gender expression (WRDSB, 2015b). Also, in the preamble of BP6008, there is a clause that states,

The *Human Rights Code* of Ontario has primacy over provincial legislation and school board policies and procedures, such that the *Education Act*, regulations, Ministry of Education Program Policy Memoranda, and Board policies and procedures are subject to, and shall be interpreted and applied in accordance with the *Human Rights Code* of Ontario. (WRDSB, 2015c, p. 1)

The only policy to not provide protections to transgender youth is BP6001, the WRDSB Code of Conduct (WRDSB, 2014b). Similar to the PPM128, BP6001 provides the standards of behaviour that each stakeholder in a school is responsible for creating a positive school climate (MOE, 2012c; WRDSB, 2014b). Both documents do not explicitly state ‘gender identity’ and ‘gender expression’ as protective grounds from harassment but they include sexual orientation and gender among “race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, age or disability” (WRDSB, 2014b, p. 3).

### **Waterloo Catholic District School Board.**

*Implementation of the Accepting Schools Act.* Analysis of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board policies illustrated that the some of the policies did not adhere to the changes mandated by the Accepting Schools Act. Out of the four policies retained for analysis: two of them were created before the Accepting Schools Act, in 2010, one was revised accordingly and the remaining policy was developed in response to the ASA. See Table 6 for the list of policies.

Table 6. *List of WCDSB Policies.*

	Policy Title	Date of Final Revision
Waterloo Catholic District School Board	APC018 <sup>a</sup> -Code of Conduct	December 1, 2013
	APC034-Bullying Prevention and Intervention	January 25, 2008
	APC037-Equity and Inclusive	September 2, 2010

	Education	
	APC041-Supporting Students of a Sexual Minority	October 15, 2012

Notes: <sup>a</sup> ‘APC’ refers to how the policies are named by the school board

The policy that had been revised was APC018; it was written in December 2013.

APC034 and APC037 had not been revised, and the remaining policy, APC041 was the new policy developed in response to the Accepting Schools Act.

The APC018 contained the ‘Preamble’, and ‘Standards of Behaviour’ of the Provincial Code of Conduct. These sections provide instructions to for the school board to implement a school-wide approach, demonstrating which responsibilities school boards, principals, teachers, parents, and students have to achieve a positive school climate. The revised policy has a section that was not present in the Provincial Code of Conduct, titled ‘Promoting Positive Student Behaviour (previous APC035)’. This new section describes how the Waterloo Catholic District School Board will work towards creating an accepting school environment within the doctrine of the Catholic Church. When describing their progressive discipline approach, the document stated:

A Catholic school community immersed in the Gospel of Jesus and filled with his Spirit is committed to the values of compassion, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Our progressive discipline approach in responding to student behaviour is rooted in our recognition that each student is made in God’s image, has a right to be included in our schools and a responsibility to act towards others with respect. The right of teachers to teach and students to learn in a safe and respectful environment is key to a safe, effective school. (Board Policy APC018, 2013, p. 6)

This new section was written to accommodate the changes in PPM145 – Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour. In the PPM145, there are specific components that school boards are instructed to include in their policies, one of which includes implementing the school climate surveys and professional development for administrators,

teachers and other staff on bullying intervention strategies among other things. The PPM145 also outlines how schools should support student-led groups, such as gay-straight alliances. The APC018 does not mention the climate surveys nor professional development. However, the policy does promote a positive school climate similar to the PPM145 and promotes preventative practices that may include “Human Rights strategy pursuant to PPM119” (WCDSB, 2013, p. 7).

Although conducting the climate surveys and professional development was not included in any of the WCDSB policies retained for analysis, student-led organizations was the main focus of the new policy, APC041 – Supporting Students of a Sexual Minority. The APC041 provides schools with guidelines regarding how to support sexual minority youth by ensuring schools are safe places and supporting the “activities and organizations” (p. 3), which is implied to refer to gay-straight alliances. The policy has an interesting stance, stating these school groups should include all students to help remove barriers that keep sexual minority youth silent. The policy states:

Morally, standing groups recognise the need to ensure access for all students; it is not useful to say to a student(s) who do not feel they have a voice, that when they get a voice, the school will help them find a voice. The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable and the principle of subsidiarity call the institution to serve the individual and remove barriers to self-advocacy. (Board Policy APC041, 2012, p. 3)

According to APC041, Catholic schools in Waterloo Region are instructed to have identified staff members who are willing to lead these organizations if they are requested. This instruction includes both elementary and secondary schools, with a specific mention that secondary schools should have staff members that continue from year to year.

It is interesting to note that the APC041 does not use the term ‘GSA’, it also does not use the term ‘Respecting Differences’ as the Respecting Differences resource instructs (OCSTA, 2012). The resource also states that, although such groups can be created, topics of gender



identity and sexuality are not appropriate to discuss in the group. APC041 emphasizes the opposite, stating that the goals of schools should be to give students voice to “remove barriers to self-advocacy” (WCDSB, 2012, p. 3).

The two policies that had not been revised, APC034 and APC037 should have been revised to the new definition of bullying, as defined by the Accepting Schools Act. Currently, none of the WCDSB policies contain the ASA’s definition of bullying, which includes ‘gender identity’ as grounds for protection.

***Protections for trans youth.*** None of the policies explicitly used the words ‘gender identity’, ‘gender expression’ or ‘transgender’. The APC018 was the only policy to be written after the Toby’s Act, however, similar to PPM128, APC018 does not explicit state ‘gender identity’ and ‘gender expression’ as protective grounds from harassment despite referencing the Ontario Human Rights Code: the policy does list sexual orientation and gender.

Although the other policies were written prior to the Accepting Schools Act, two of them reference the Ontario Human Rights Code. APC034 has the Ontario Human Rights Code listed in the ‘references’, but does not refer to it through the document. In APC037, it is referenced in the following sentence, “The WCDSB recognizes that in embodying such a vision, any form of social or cultural discrimination is incompatible with Catholic moral principles and is in violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code” (WCDSB, 2010b, p. 1).

The WCDSB has a strong emphasis on ensuring schools are safe for every student. For example, the policy APC034 uses scripture to highlight the need to advocate for all marginalized youth. The policy states:

[Catholic] principles form the basis of all of our relationships however, in a special way, Jesus fought for the weak and the marginalized. The Beatitudes, as proclaimed in Matthew (5.3-12), paints a vivid picture of Jesus’ passion and support for those who

suffer. Those who are poor, hungry, persecuted, mourn, are pure of heart and work for peace are constantly singled out for special mention in the Gospel.

...Only when we seek to protect the dignity of all in our communities, to restore and reconcile broken relationships, and actively working to eradicate the injustice of the power imbalance at the root of bullying can we find such a vision of the Kingdom [of God]. (WCDSB, 2010a, p. 2)

### **Experiences in Schools.**

*Implementation of the Accepting Schools Act.* Despite the WRDSB's policies adhering closely to the ASA, there were mixed perceptions on the compliance of schools during my interviews. This finding is also consistent with the results from the Inventory, specifically, that school districts had policies but not had them implemented. During her interview, Rebecca describes how there were some teachers in her school who did not have their students complete the school climate survey. The climate survey Rebecca refers to is a survey that school districts have been instructed to complete every two years. She said, "You get teachers not getting the kids to the lab, computer labs to do it, you know? We didn't have full compliance, which is a problem." Jessica also remembers hearing that an entire school did not participate in the survey at all.

There were also differences in the experiences in how the data from the climate surveys were used. Jessica explains,

What we have been doing is, in the fall, we have our safe, caring, inclusive schools conference. The first half, you know, keynote speaker and workshops and ...[schools as a team will] look at their data and figure out goals based on the data for their school...How are kids feeling in your school, talk about it and come up with some goals.

In contrast, when I asked Rebecca about the climate surveys, she said,

We recently had a very thorough overview of a safe schools survey that was just finished at our school, where [we] went through the numbers. And, of course, there was a lot of moaning and groaning from staff when those numbers and whatever is presented at a staff meeting.

I asked Rebecca if she thought the climate surveys have generated any changes in her school, she responded, “Not at my school, I don’t think it’s been analyzed well enough or maybe the vice principals haven’t had time to.”

With regards to staff development, Jessica states that there are opportunities for staff to learn more about the ASA and to learn about how to support LGBTQ students in general. She explains that the board put out an open call for staff and teachers to attend the Accepting Schools Act Conference hosted by Jer’s Vision. She also said, “there’s a willingness to learn more, [there are] Egale sessions for child and youth workers, for teachers and administrators. Those are fully booked, right? So there’s a willingness to learn more and to understand.” Rebecca also mentioned she had been informally answering her colleagues’ questions regarding appropriately incorporating LGBTQ curriculum. After running an event to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues, Rebecca mentioned:

The principal indicated that we should have that opportunity for the whole staff and I said I would help facilitate that. But that hasn’t happened yet...so individually I have had those conversations but not as a whole staff. No, we haven’t had any formal process but I think the meat is there.

Jessica explained how the ASA, and school board policies in general, supports the work of staff and teachers:

You don’t have to answer to anybody. ‘This is what it’s told me to do, so this is what I’m going to do.’ People just need to something to, not blame it on, but something to back them up, you know? So if they do get a parent calling and saying, “What are you doing?” They can say, “Well, we have this guideline and this admin procedure”

For Rebecca, she is currently unhappy with policies, or at least how they are being communicated or disseminated in her school:

I don’t know what is coming down from the board office, down to the principals and VPs, it’s like they’re given more and more and yet we [don’t see the results]. I don’t know what they’re doing so I’m at a loss as to explain where is the education gap and why is it not coming through? It’s not a priority, or maybe being promised that it *is* coming...I think

[things are being halted] at the board level, where something has happened or there's been discussions and policy but it's taking a while to get down into the schools.

Meanwhile, in the WCDSB, despite the lack of revised policies, Josh and Claire explained the changes occurring in Catholic schools. Josh explains that one of the most notable changes was that LGBTQ issues were discussed more. He stated,

I've noticed at the staff level, it almost feels like it's allowed the staff to let their walls down a bit because it's become very clear now, legislatively, that we *are* supposed to have safe spaces for these students, and we *are* supposed to talk about it. And not just...I'm not going to say, ignore it because I don't think that's what staff really did but if it's...even myself, if it's not on your radar, sort of day-to-day, then maybe it never gets addressed and as an example here, I had the opportunity to speak to staff ...and we were just talking about some of the experiences that I've had over the past years both in the classroom and with these LGBTQ groups. And just the ability to talk openly and talk about strategies like, "what do I do when someone throws a homophobic comment across the room?"

Claire explains that the Accepting Schools Act also allows superintendents to start discussing more open topics:

This would be one example of where that legislation now also protects [superintendents] to able to help us do the work...I mean, superintendents, everyone in the Catholic board in particular were walking on this, this tension...you know? You're trying not [quietly] piss the bishops off, we're trying not to piss parents off, piss the local priests off. But now it's like the legislation says, we must be doing this work so [shrugs] in some ways that part of the battle has been fought.

The increased awareness and discussions of these topics has also led to increased staff training and development. Claire mentioned that not only were the Catholic superintendents able to support teachers, but they also were receiving presentations about how to support LGBTQ youth, especially transgender youth. As Josh explained this in the previous quote; he and his colleagues can now openly discuss strategies for addressing homophobic comments in the classroom. He also explained how there was more staff training across many different schools. He explained how teachers are asked to give presentations at other schools:

You are invited in your own school to speak to staff based on how things are evolving.

That presentation potentially resonates with some people, the word spreads and then the next principal jumps in and says, "Hey! You know what? Would you mind speaking to our staff and get us rolling, because you know, we would benefit"

Although there has been some positive changes, Josh and Claire describe they would like to see more progress happen in schools. Both participants described how some Catholic schools were still “developmentally behind” other schools regarding LGBTQ discrimination. Within the last few years, Josh relocated to a new school and explained,

I've come to a new school, I don't think it would be as stretched to say that the educational process is a little bit in the developmental stages here. So I feel like I'm in a bit of case of Deja vu where I'm a few years back, hearing some of those things still in the classroom. Like someone saying, "Oh that's so gay" or, you know, "don't be a fag" something like that. I'm hearing those terms and those were starting to be eliminated at [my previous school] just because there was a conscious.

Similar to the WCDSB policies, a strong emphasis on helping all students was also expressed by the two Catholic participants. Josh explains how he would interpret the policies when asked if he was aware if trans youth were included anti-bullying policies,

I don't know the intimate details of those policies well enough to know if that is specifically addressed but that would be something I should probably do some digging on. I know that, you know, the literature that I've read very much involves, you know, inclusion of *all* so I would definitely interpret that, but is it specifically stated? I have to be honest, [chuckles] I'm not 100% sure.

Claire makes a similar statement when asked the same question:

Our whole culture of our school is about taking care of *everyone*. Our kids would automatically know that that those kids would be kids that we do help to take care and have a voice in the school and not be invisible.

Claire further explained, when asked if trans youth were included in policies in general, “You know, what? We're probably one of the only Catholic boards that actually has an administrative policies and procedure memo to do with support for LGBTQ youths. So I'm very proud of our board in that way.” The policy she was referring to was APC041, which only explicitly states sexual minority youth, however, it would appear that Claire is interpreting this

policy to also include trans youth.

As previously mentioned, there has been an increase in staff development and training regarding LGBTQ issues. Josh and Claire talk about how they are now specifically addressing transgender issues in their schools. Both participants described two key components needed to create sustainable change in schools: making students conscious of bullying in order for them to take ownership of bullying intervention, and providing staff with guidelines and training prior to making major changes in schools. Claire describes the impact students had,

And the turning point for me was in the last couple of years you started to see situations where someone would do something in the halls, make a comment, make a homophobic slur and rather than the teacher walking by have to address it, the students were jumping in saying, "that's not cool " and when you see the students sorta taking ownership of that, not just because a teacher's walking down the hall but because they think it's the right thing to do, I saw a huge culture shift in that school. I heard it on field trip bus, I heard students challenge one another...

Josh also articulates this,

What I *really* noticed is, the most impressive thing to me is the students don't seem to have much of an issue with this. Once they're educated on it and they're made consciously aware, it's not an issue with youth from 13-18...I'm not talking 100% but for the most part, they're very opened, it's almost like this well, "of course that's just the logical thing to do, to treat people equally and with respect." And to me, that bodes well, that gives me great hope because, you know, that is our future. And if that's sort of the view of the majority of teenagers then we're going to see a shift here, I think as we go forward.

***Protections for trans youth.*** None of my participants were knowledgeable about Toby's Act, but Claire and Jessica reported being familiar with the name of the legislation. Jessica mentioned she had noticed a change in the policies but did not realize there was a legislation change that caused it. When Jessica explains noticing 'gender expression' and 'gender identity' in some of the policies, she says,

Yea, I saw it in that, and I'm like, 'that's great!' because I know there was a difference because it never used to be in there...Maybe [people are unfamiliar with Toby's Act] because we are so focused on the Accepting Schools Act...So that was probably what we

paid more attention but that's interesting to hear that, it kinda just slid under the radar because I've heard Toby's Law but I didn't know what it was. I didn't know what it pertained to.

All of my school staff or administrator participants reported hosting trans-inclusive events and/or included trans topics in the GSA discussions. Only Rebecca and Claire had out trans GSA members. It is interesting to compare the experiences of Jessica and Rebecca regarding trans youths in their GSAs. For example, Rebecca mentioned she had several trans or gender non-conforming students in her GSA, whereas Jessica said the following:

I have heard that a lot of trans youth do not participate in GSA because it's a 'gay straight alliance' and they don't see themselves represented so much within that... So, I don't know that we're doing a great job in being of inclusive of people that identify as trans.

Similarly, Josh and Claire both commented that their students did not want to use the term 'GSA' when naming their clubs. Even though Josh did not have any out trans members, his students wanted a more inclusive club name,

one of the major issues in the Catholic system was "could you call it a GSA?" and the reality is, is that it's evolved so much the work that we do, that the term 'GSA', to be honest with you, it's pretty exclusive in its wording. It wasn't really a name that the kids wanted to call their group anyways.

When I asked Rebecca if she could comment on the experiences of her trans students, she responded,

A few have been severely at risk, they have been on suicide prevention at the Grand River Hospital. So very high-risk group. Some have stayed in school, some have left... But you know, quite a bit of depression, quite a bit of absences from school, anxiety. Overall, you know, high school's a really crappy time. It's socially extra, extra, extra stressful and challenging. So, yea, we just kinda hang out once a week and you know, I probably don't know everything that's going on, of course, but I certainly have a sense that they are at risk for mental illness and depression.

She explained that all of her students have received 'full support' from the social workers and child and youth workers at the school, as well as supports in the community. Conversations she has had with some parents have indicated that these supports have been beneficial. William also

commented that his guidance counsellor has been assisting him while transitioning in his school. Currently, his guidance counsellor was trying to help him change his name on the attendance sheets, although she was unsure of whether his parents needed to become involved with the process.

Interestingly enough, Rebecca mentioned that her students received harassment from their friends more than they do from strangers. She said,

It's actually students', the data that was presented to us in the last survey seemed to be just friend interactions that were the problem. It wasn't between strangers, it was actually friends who weren't treating each other well. I found that upsetting. But kids don't know how to befriend. And that's certainly, how my student's present it at as well. It might not be, you know, necessarily directed at them from strangers, but it's in that kinda of, what the general feel and how the topic is presented, and just indirect snickering and then, yea, these are the interactions.

William's experiences in his school are consistent with this when he says, "Teachers are understanding, mostly. The students aren't, they need a little more persuasiveness [sic]. Teachers use the preferred names and pronouns, which is cool. The students need a little more pushing." He mentioned that transphobic remarks were 'unintentional but there'.

Although Jessica did not have any known or out trans students in her GSA, she still helped to advocate for them within her school. She has also provided guidance to staff at other schools regarding how to support transitioning students. To protect Jessica's anonymity, I cannot provide specific details regarding how she has helped students since she recalled very specified events. Her stories did convey an increased level of involvement from the school in supporting the youth. She explains,

This year, it's been the big thing that's been most, and I don't want to say taking up my time because it's not taking up my time, I love what I'm doing... When [a colleague approaches me] and says they have a transgender student, "Have you met with the parents?" and sometimes it's yes and sometimes it's no, and then it's like "Well, ok let's with the parents" and talk about what their plans are, what they would like to see. "Let's talk to the student and find out from them what they would like to see, what they would



like to be called a particular name. Are they ready to share that with their class?" Just getting all that out and where they're at and how they want to share and how much they don't want to share. And just starting there

Jessica mentioned that these discussions have gone well and were well received by staff and students.

Regarding her colleagues' acceptance of trans students, Rebecca had some inconsistencies throughout her interview. When I asked her if the Accepting Schools Act had increased any conversations about LGBTQ issues at her school, she responded by saying:

Not at my school, I would say. It's a very large school, with a pretty large LBBTQ community and a pretty open community. And as such, as far as I know, there have always been many student who have either been open or fairly obvious, in their gender or sexual orientation.

However, when describing her struggles implementing trans-inclusive practices, such as a gender neutral washroom, she stated,

it would seem [we are] fairly entrenched in our old ways and looking at a very white, straight, staff where nobody feels safe to even come out as anything else but. We're in a very conservative place in time, I think.

Despite perceiving her school to have a more conservative environment, she did indicate that "the vast majority [of staff] are supportive of all kids...no matter what."

Neither Claire nor Josh could comment much regarding trans youths' experiences in their schools. Josh did not have any out trans students at his school and Claire was not familiar with her students' experiences. However, she was impressed she knew out trans youths in her school. She said, "the fact that we have an openly transgender people in our community who obviously feels it's safe to do so, says a lot to me." Claire describes that her students are generally supported within the school, however are having trouble using the washroom/change room or join the sports team of their felt gender.

Josh reported that he was not aware of any out trans students at his school but he wanted

to increase staff awareness of trans issues for when students did come out,

To be 100% honest here, we are working on just the basics of getting definitions down, of 'what does it mean to be transgender? ... Even words like questioning, 'what does questioning mean? What does two-spirited mean?'...we're so much at the informational stage that we haven't yet had time to get into some of the specific transgender questions that will arise once we have an out student perhaps, or even if there are students who aren't out as transgender, we're going to have to address those and make sure we have a gender neutral washroom and - but we're just not there yet. We're working towards it [laughs]

### **What are barriers and facilitators for trans-inclusive practices within schools?**

Results from the Inventory revealed that some barriers to implementing trans-inclusive policies in schools are lack of resources and lack of support from the school board and director. The emerging themes from my interviews were: a devoted GSA leader, supportive administrators/legislation, professional development, how trans youths' needs are framed and the conflation of sexuality and gender identity. I will elaborate on each of these themes below.

**Devoted GSA leader.** Having a devoted GSA leader or advocate was a key component to making change within a school. This was most evident by Claire, who argued that legislation alone was not enough to create changes in schools, rather schools needed a pioneer who was willing to work determinedly. She explains,

The bottom line for me, the legislation is not necessarily going to make it happen. I think you need passionate people, like, I don't mean to be immodest about this but if I wasn't in that building ...we would not be where we are...But unless you have someone on the inside pounding the pavement saying, 'look, let's get going' and is willing to take the backlash of "yea, the teacher's with her gay agenda" and these kind of comments, it just doesn't seem to happen that readily.

She goes further to explain,

It's just, every job is busy and teaching is more and more, you're expected to be a social worker and a big sister and a co-parent, and they're busy people! So, unless you have someone who is passionate, to call the meeting or to do whatever, it's one of those things that won't get done. It just won't get done.

Josh also shares this sentiment when he states change was coming regardless of the

legislation,

It's been done, let's not kid ourselves. There's always been people, whether it's a guidance counsellor helping... So to me, the fact that that stuff is happening, whether that's a direct link to the legislation, I think it was coming anyways but it's part of the process, right? I think that had to be part of the steps that are taken together.

However, GSA leaders not perceiving they have support from their colleagues can be a barrier. Rebecca's interview provided a unique perspective with regards to barriers for trans-inclusive practices. Not only was she the only GSA leader I spoke with who was the sole leader, she also knew the most amount of trans or gender non-conforming youth, who she described as 'at-risk'. Concurrently, these factors might have influenced Rebecca's disappointment by the rate of change in her school. For example, when I directly asked if she was solely advocating for change in her school, she responded:

Yea, it seems to be, I mean like any other bureaucracy there is the lip service given, I know there is things that is happening at the board level and that my principal assures me the policy is coming down, "It's coming down." But why can't we just open up a bathroom? I don't understand.

In this quote, Rebecca is expressing how she would like a student gender neutral washroom to be developed in her school but feels her requests are only met with "lip service". Currently, her students are using a single stall washroom primarily used by the school administration. Whereas Claire had two or three other GSA leaders, and although she wanted also wanted gender neutral washrooms in her school, she was appeased with the staff's gender neutral washroom. She said,

I just said [to my students], "We're not there yet. And our new schools need to be built with gender neutral washrooms. That's what needs to happen." But luckily we have a [nearby building] which has a family room and I allow [my students] to use the staff bathrooms, which aren't really that far off where the kids' regular bathrooms are. It's not like they have to be seen going in this alley way to use the bathroom, like kids wouldn't even know, really, that they're doing it. But the fact that they're being asked to do it, doesn't feel good to me... I feel badly that we're not there yet for these kids but that there are people in the trenches trying hard to make sure it gets to become reality at some point.

Rebecca was also disappointed by not receiving help running the GSA, especially from

LGBTQ staff members.

I also find it very frustrating that it's always, you know, I'm a very straight identified person and have to do the work because there obviously, the gay people on staff aren't comfortable... because otherwise you're perceived as the chicken-hawker or what the other things are on, so okay [laugh] it would be nice to have a little bit more support here. You know, sometimes staff members come forward to me, sometimes not but it's like, "Geez. I don't have anybody right now helping me." ...It's like [exasperated sound], "where is the community?"

Despite her frustration, Rebecca provides support to her students through the GSA. When I asked her whether the GSA was a good support for trans youth, she responds,

Yea, I mean, it depends on the staff sponsor, the facilitator. They certainly indicate that it's great they know it's a safe space, you know. And regardless of what we do, in terms of activism or not, you know, just to hang out once a week seems to be good for them. Sometimes I have had more or less successful GSAs, right? Depending on whose there...but I heard comments even from kids years later, just to know that we're there is enough.

Although she did not explicitly comment on her individual contribution to the GSA's success, it is evident in her quote that Rebecca plays a key role. Having a supportive GSA leader was also expressed by William, who mentioned his GSA leader was helpful in assisting him transition within his school.

Having realistic expectations about how slowly change can happen within institutions can help staff remain patient. Claire expresses the need to recognize that change happens in small increments over time:

We wouldn't have got what we did had I been impatient. And this is [several] years of getting here. People will say, "Oh, that's great, how did you get away with that?" Get away with it? For years I have been planting the stepping stones to get here! ... So it's not been overnight so, yea. Institutions move very slowly, as you know. Churches move slowly and you know, Catholic schools are held to the teachings of the Catholic Church and it's not an institutions moving quickly.

Claire's patience is also evident while she is faced with unforeseen obstacles. The day before one of her LGBTQ-inclusive events, her principal asked her to get permission forms signed by students who planned on attending. She says,

So we jumped that hoop, I wasn't thrilled about it ...but that was a decision made by my principal and superintendent so it was either honour it or not honour it and not have the [event]. I certainly gotten used to having to jump through hoops to get things to happen for kids and would continue to do them, if it means kids are safe, right?

**Administration support/legislation.** As discussed previously, having legislation allowed for teachers and superintendents to openly support and engage in LGBTQ-inclusive issues.

Similarly, it is also necessary to have supportive administration. For example, Jessica discusses how teachers need to be reassured they are doing the right thing when accommodating a trans youth:

the [staff weren't] sure if they should be calling a person by their preferred name because they don't know if their parents are onboard, but it's like, "regardless of whether the parent is on board or not, we need to call this person by their preferred name." So just having that conversation and then it's like, "Oh, ok" and then moving forward. I think there's a fear that, 'what if we do this and then there's a lawsuit' or 'we upset somebody'. There's a fear of 'what's a parent going to say? What's the community going to say if we do this and it's not the right thing?' But it's letting them know "no, no, this is the right thing, this is what we need to be doing and everything else will just fall in place behind that, right? The board is supportive, our policies are supportive of this. The ministry support, legal documents are supportive of this. So that's what we need to do"

However, unsupportive administration can also be a barrier. Throughout Rebecca's interview, she seemed frustrated by 'lip service' she receives from her principal, especially regarding her concern about a gender neutral washroom. Rebecca explained that change can be slow in schools, explaining "I always feel like [principals] are really stuck in some quagmire of crap at the top level, right?" This quote illustrates that support is necessary at many levels of the schools system's hierarchy in order to make changes within a school.

Similarly, Claire also explains that despite having legislation in place to support trans youth, some teachers may still be hesitant to do so:

I think there's still a lot of fear, though, even though the legislation is there. I think there's still a lot of fear for teachers who want to move ahead more explicitly to support trans kids...I think there's still some reticence for teachers to move forward because even though the legislation's there, I don't know that a lot of senior administrators like

superintendents and directors of education are being as forward with their support, like “yea the legislation is there but we're just going to leave it on that shelf.” And so I think unless teachers are hearing superintendents or even their principals or VP saying, "Hey, you know what? These kids exist and we need to get some supports in place".

**How the message is framed.** Josh, Jessica and Claire all expressed framing the issue or arguing for trans rights in a specific way has helped to gain support from their colleagues and superiors. Trans issues were usually framed as a human rights issue or as a need. Josh states,

the [staff and administration] have been so supportive because they're saying, at the ground level with the kids, "this is needed." We have kids that are attempting suicide who are, you know, have major depression issues, who been in, you know...just we have a need to help those students

Jessica and Rebecca both express that although teachers want to help all students, some may still be reluctant. Jessica says the following about her colleagues,

I think there's an effort to try. And they get the washroom thing, like they understand that piece and they get, for the most part, trying to do your best using the preferred pronoun and calling a person by their preferred name. But it's, I still think they need to hear that this is human rights, you know, this is equity, this is inclusion, this is safe, caring and inclusive schools, this is what we're about, this is you know, accepting schools act, this is our equity and inclusion policy, this is all of that stuff, you know?

She further elaborates by sharing a lesson she learned from another colleague,

“You've got different values and morals, I've got values and morals. We can argue 'til we're blue in the face, right? But if you come with a human rights perspective, that we all have rights, then you can't argue that, right? We're all afforded rights, so you can't argue mine, I can't argue you yours. It's just what it is." I try to think about that whenever I am engaged in some sort of a conversation where I feel like a person's values and rights are trying to take primacy or supremacy and that conversation, it's like, "wait a second, human rights triumphs that!"

Claire mentions that it can be important to frame issues within a theological lens within Catholic districts:

Sometimes within the Catholic context, you have to do things a little bit more sensitivity because of some of the people who maybe a little bit more conservative in terms of their interpretation of scripture or Catholicism...just to be sure that the steps that are being taken aren't going to get the kickback and then close down the whole initiative.

**Professional Development.** Even though my participants refer to staff meetings and

workshops throughout their interviews, they recall sharing strategies with their colleagues to be most effective for increasing their confidence to intervene or advocate for LGBTQ youth. For example, Josh recounts a workshop he conducted for staff and he explains the importance of teachers having a practical understanding of how to intervene when homophobic remarks are made:

I just was being as honest as I could and I say, "You know, if you rewind ten years ago and I'm a brand new teacher and you're nervous and you're new. And there's just that situation where you think you hear something, you sorta know you heard something". As a new teacher, if I were to be 100% honest, I'm sure there were moments where something was said across the room, whether it was homophobic or whatever, you're like "did I hear that right?" you sorta freeze on it, you don't act on it right away and then the moment's lost and you don't get the chance to address it and then you kick yourself later, ... As you mature and you sorta get more comfortable - I've had now experiences where, absolutely those statements have been made, you address them and I told the story at the staff meeting of I ... spent an entire class not talking about [coursework] but talking about a comment that was made and how it was disrespectful and just educating. And conveying that story to staff, ...the beginning of that educational process where they felt like they had a couple more strategies to deal with, "what do I do?" so that they're prepared in advance, they're not taken off guard by it. So if I'm a first year teacher, I know have thought about that in advance so that if I hear a homophobic comment, "how am I going to handle that?" and it's comforting to know too, that other teachers have heard, they have addressed and generally, it works, you know? It makes a difference, you can't just let it slide

Similarly, although Jessica referenced workshops hosted by both Egale and Jer's Vision, she explains how she finds explaining to teachers how to respond to concerns from parents to be effective. In the quote in the previous section, Jessica mentioned that teachers needs to be reassured the policies and schoolboard are supportive of trans-inclusivity. In the quote below, Jessica is referring to new sexual health curriculum that will be introduced to schools in the fall of 2015.

It's all about having a conversation with the parents, right? And if you're - a parent comes in and says they have an accommodation, you know, based on the curriculum...well [sighs] sit down with them and ask, 'well, exactly what is it about the curriculum that you don't, you know, goes against your beliefs?' and 9 times out of 10 you'll find that they have a misunderstanding about what we teach and when you say, 'well this is actually

what we do' they're ok with it! Right? Have a conversation! So when it comes to this curriculum, it'll be about having a conversation and that's what we're going to tell [staff]. Like, sit down with the parents and try to find out exactly what it is about the curriculum that they don't agree with and go from there. But you have to have a conversation, right? Because there's so many misunderstanding right now.

Similarly, Claire explains how the absence of negative consequences can lead to staff from other schools to take risks with their events. She says, "Other principals have seen what we've done, they think 'Oh, ok, well that principal didn't get in trouble for doing that, maybe we can risk doing it too.' So it's always good to have a pioneer go first and clear the way."

**Conflation of sexuality and gender identity.** Rebecca and Jessica perceive a need for more education to help their colleagues distinguish between sexual orientation and gender identity. When referring to a colleague, she says, "he's a smart guy [but] will make a comment about [my student's] friend who goes to school in male clothing and talks about sexual identification. You're talking about gender [laughs] identification, you know?" Jessica explains a similar perception in the following quote,

Even when we have Egale come in and do a training or something, they start off broad LGBTQ but they'll start focusing on trans because that's the thing that is most kinda current and what people really don't understand. They're still talking about - like in the meeting last night, [name] who's supporting a trans youth, would be talking about how they're struggling with their sexual orientation. And it's like, "but no, it's not sexual orientation! It's gender identity" Like just understanding the difference...that needs to be addressed at some point but yea, there's lot of confusion.

Her quote also illustrates how trans issues are seen as the "current" LGBTQ topic. Similarly, in a previous quote Josh mentioned how he perceived his school to be in the early stages of inclusive of trans students because he still hears homophobic comments in his school. His comment gives the illusion that still having homophobic remarks in his school is a 'developmental' stage before a school can become trans inclusive.



## Discussion

This research study was designed to provide an overview of how the Accepting Schools Act is being implemented and the current school-based supports for trans youth in light of these new legislative developments. First, I will discuss the Accepting Schools Act and its main components: policy changes, staff development, and supports for GSAs. Secondly, I will discuss the experiences of trans youth in schools. Lastly, I will end this section with limitations and strengths of this study.

### Accepting Schools Act and Effective School Interventions

The Accepting Schools Act was designed to be a comprehensive, school-wide bullying intervention. School-wide bullying programs have been consistently found to be the most effective at decreasing bullying behaviour (Oakes, Lane, & Germer 2014; Mishna, 2008; Nickerson et al., 2013; Russell et al., 2010). Sherer and Nickerson (2010) examined the most effective and ineffective anti-bullying strategies in schools and found that school-wide positive behaviour support (SWPBS) plans were the most effective at reducing bullying behaviour. As stated prior in my literature review, researchers recommended that their anti-bullying interventions include policies, professional development, and GSAs. In the following subsections, I will discuss the extent to which these three components were implemented and the level of support they provide trans youth.

**Policy.** The results from the Inventory illustrate that the Accepting Schools Act has been implemented inconsistently throughout Ontario school districts. Only about 31-37% of public school districts and 10-20% of Catholic school districts had a policy that protected trans or gender non-conforming students. Even within the school districts that reported having policies protecting gender non-conforming, transgender or transitioning students, only about half (50-

56%) of school districts reported they had implemented them. Since the ASA also included reference to the Ontario Human Rights Code and Toby's Act, all public-funded schools in Ontario should have policies addressing these issues and should have been fully implemented by February 1, 2013 (MOE, 2012c).

It should be noted that superintendents who reported they protected students through 'other' policies could have been referring to the ASA. These results indicate that seven more public school districts and two more Catholic districts were supporting trans youth as outlined in the ASA. Summing these numbers, 68% public districts and 30% Catholic districts had at least one policy that included protections for trans youth. However, these numbers still do not make for complete compliance from school boards.

There were very few superintendents who answered why their district did not have policies protecting trans youth. Only two public superintendents answered, one indicating a similar policy was being created and the other mentioned they needed support from the school board and director of education. No Catholic superintendent answered this question, which is surprising given the low compliance rates. One reason why superintendents might not give reasons why they currently do not have policies is socially desirability bias. Superintendents were asked to provide which school district they worked for; they might not have wanted to answer the question in case it painted them in an unfavourable light. For example, Catholic superintendents might have avoided stating they did not have policies supporting trans youth because religious groups opposed it or because they do not approve of transgender identity. Consequently, the results could be overestimates of the percentage of school districts that have trans-inclusive policies. To date, this is the first study to examine school board policies supporting trans youth, consequently, more research will be needed to examine factors effecting

compliance to new legislation changes.

Analysis on the WCDSB's policies revealed that none of their policies included any explicit protection for trans students. This is not surprising since most of the policies had not been revised after the ASA or Toby's Act were passed. However, the WCDSB had created a new policy, APC041, written to give schools guidance for supporting sexual minority youth (WCDSB, 2012). This policy framed the need for Catholic schools to support LGB youth by highlighting their vulnerability and susceptibility to aversive mental health experiences.

Although the policy solely focuses on LGB youth, Claire extended its focus to include trans youth as well. This extension might have been influenced by APC034, which quotes scripture depicting Jesus' passion to support those who are marginalized. This passion was also evident during the interviews with Claire and Josh, who advocated strongly to make schools a safe place for all. Alternatively, protecting trans youth under this policy could also be a consequence of categorizing trans youth and sexual minority youth together, which would also be consistent with the finding that sexual orientation and gender identity were often conflated. In this specific context, this conflation has benefitted trans youth, however, continued conflation of these youth can lead to trans youths' specific needs not being addressed.

The only policy which had been revised was the APC018, the Code of Conduct, and similar to PPM128, the APC018 did not include 'gender identity' or 'gender expression' as grounds for protection against bullying (MOE, 2012c; WCDSB, 2013). The APC018 does instruct schools to implement preventative practices, which may include "Human Rights strategy pursuant to PPM 119" (WCDSB, 2013, p.7). In relation to trans youth, this reference can be significant because the PPM119 explicit states that it has been revised to reflect the changes to the Ontario Human Rights Code by Toby's Act. Therefore, the areas of focus that schools are

advised to address, such as inclusive curriculum, professional development, and school climate, can be interpreted to encompass topics related to trans gender identity. However, considering how little my participants were familiar with Toby's Act, this link should be more explicit.

Examining the WRDSB policies, they adhered closely to the mandated changes, with all of the policies meeting the new requirements regarding revising the definition of bullying and developing clear guidelines and strategies to create positive schools. The WRDSB have explicit protections for trans students and GSAs. It is interesting to note the varying levels of support for gender non-conforming youth, transgender and transitioning youth. Among the quantitative data between both districts, nine districts had policies protecting gender non-conforming youth, eight districts protecting transgender students and six districts had policies supporting transitioning students. The same trend is evident in my analysis of the Waterloo Region. For example, Claire, Jessica and Josh explained how they had increase in staff training, resulting in more staff acceptance. However, Claire mentioned that her school would not allow a trans student to play on sports team or use the washroom/change room of their felt gender and Jessica explained how some teachers hesitated referring to students by their preferred name/pronouns without reassurance. Currently, there is a trans accommodations guidelines being developed by the WRDSB but the contents of the document will remain confidential until it is officially approved by the board. Despite that, it is hoped to be action orientated, especially as Rebecca's efforts to advocate for her students has been halted until the guidelines are launched.

Researchers have argued that a clear definition of bullying is essential for addressing bullying behaviours in schools as well as protecting at-risk youth (Cascardi, Brown, Iannorone, & Carona, 2014; Russell, Horn, Kosclw, & Saewyc, 2010 ). Cascardi and colleagues argue that definitions of bullying need to recognize the inherent power imbalances between bully and

victim, where bullies dominate and abuse in an unequal playing field. It is equally important to be explicit about who the at-risk youth are, and who should be protected in bullying policies. Being explicit about the type of discrimination, increases students' feelings of safety and the likelihood of teachers intervening in bullying incidents, especially in the case of sexual diverse youth (Russell et al., 2010). My analysis of the WCDSB's policies is not consistent with this research. The WCDSB school board had policies that did not explicitly address harassment on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression, however Claire and Josh are strongly advocating for increased awareness of trans issues. This discrepancy could be attributed to the publicity the ASA received when it passed. Therefore, even without their school board policies being revised, school staff were aware that provincial legislation had changed. This would be consistent with the fact that my participants were familiar with ASA and unfamiliar with Toby's Act, even though it also affected the same memorandums.

*Toby's Act.* Although the passing of Toby's Act also influenced changes in the Ministry of Education's memorandums, it was not that influential in schools. None of my participants were familiar with the act, although Jessica had noticed when 'gender identity' and 'gender expression' were added to policies. However, there was one respondent from the Inventory who stated their school district protected trans students through the Human Rights Code. Combining the data from Waterloo Region's two school board policies and results from the Inventory, it would appear that school policies are more relevant to schools. Specifically, school administrators and school staff might be more aware of changes in school board policies than changes to other provincial legislation. Although this finding is to be expected, it does highlight the importance of keeping school board policies updated with relevant legislation changes that are not directly related to the Education Act.

**Professional development.** Interestingly, none of my participants recalled their professional development workshops to be effective at increasing their colleagues' likelihood to intervene in bullying incidents. Josh mentioned that one of the biggest barriers he perceived teachers had with addressing bullying is not having confidence to address incidents as they occur. He explains that teachers can be caught off guard when comments are made, especially if they do not have a prepared method for addressing it. Josh also described how exchanging strategies with his colleagues which they were later able to implement within their classrooms. He attributed the ability to talk about these issues among staff was a direct result of the ASA. Josh argued that once staff and students were made conscious of homophobia, most of them 'got it' and started to address homophobic incidents as they occurred. His opinion is consistent with previous research demonstrating educators' preference for practical, real-world responses in professional development workshops.

Although SWPBS plans have been argued to be the most effective anti-bullying strategy, they have also been listed in Sherer and Nickerson's (2010) top three of strategies in need of improvement. Staff training and lack of education is the most cited anti-bullying strategy in need of improvement (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010) and lack of confidence in their ability to intervene and lack of classroom management are principal reasons why teachers do not intervene when they witness bullying incidents (Nickerson et al., 2013). Teachers are more likely to intervene when victims of bullying fit teachers' assumptions, or show visible signs of being distressed. This illustrates a need for teachers to have more comprehensive training so they are not relying on stereotypical depictions of how victims should behave (Nickerson et al., 2013). Rebecca did not perceive a reduction in bullying incidents at her school as her students reported that many bullying incidents have gone unaddressed by teachers, which may have been complicated by the

higher incidents of bullying occurring among friends.

The attitudes of Rebecca's colleagues might also be contributing to the lack of bullying reduction in her school. Throughout her interview, she seemed frustrated by her perceived lack of support from her principal, as well as by her colleagues' conservative opinions. The outcome of the bullying program is related to the support school personnel receive from principals, schools, and district and state-level administrators (Oakes, Lane, & Germer 2014). School administrators and principals are especially critical for the success of the program, as they set the tone for a school's commitment to an anti-bullying program (Nickerson et al., 2013). However, it is possible that Rebecca's principal was waiting for further guidance regarding how to proceed with accommodating trans youth, for example, how to address gender neutral washrooms. As Jessica explained, many teachers needed reassurance and guidance when helping trans youth. This finding is consistent with Payne and Smith's (2011) finding that some school administrators need clear protocols established before they are comfortable making accommodations for trans youth.

Needs assessments for individual schools has been recommended to assess what forms of bullying students experience, any unsafe locations, what resources schools have (Mishna, 2008; Nickerson et al., 2013), and which youth are most effected by bullying (Russell et al., 2010). However, in Sherer and Nickerson's (2010) study on anti-bullying practices, they found that school-wide surveys had one of the lowest ratings of an effective strategy, as only 8% of schools rated it as effective while 27% rated it as the most ineffective anti-bullying strategy. The authors did not speculate reasons for this discrepancy, however, it is possible that needs assessments are most successful when schools have the resources to address issues found by them. This difference is consistent with the different perspectives Jessica and Rebecca had regarding the

school climate surveys. Jessica described how she thought they were effective during the annual ‘Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools Conference’ in the fall. She described how schools would analyze their data, developing goals to increase their students’ feelings of safety. However, Rebecca perceived the surveys to be ineffective, as she would like for more comprehensive analyzes done to understand what were some of the trends of the students, such as identifying the at-risk groups.

Payne and Smith (2014) argue that policy and professional development should be conducted concurrently. Other researchers argue that school staff need time to become acquainted with new terminology and process their feelings of guilt as they come to recognize their heteronormative privilege and fear of being discriminatory (Case, & Meier, 2014; Cooper et al., 2014). Teachers may need a safe place to ask sensitive questions without the fear of being perceived as offensive. Josh and Claire stress increasing staff skills before policies or procedures are changed. Having staff fully aware of issues facing trans youth can prevent unintentional harm. For example, Jessica mentions that some teachers were not sure if they should refer to children with their preferred name because they were not sure if the parents were in agreement. If teachers were not to refer to students by their preferred name, they could cause them distress. However, using their preferred name and pronoun when speaking to a student’s parent without speaking to the student first, could ‘out’ the student to their parents. Outing a child may put them at risk if their parents are not accepting.

My findings demonstrate that having the legislation to support teachers was a facilitator for both districts but was quite significant in the Catholic school board. Josh and Claire explained how the ASA allowed for open conversations about homophobia or transphobia among teachers, which was especially significant for superintendents. Claire explained how prior to the ASA,



superintendents had to turn a blind-eye to LGBTQ inclusive events that were happening in schools, as a method of supporting the work. Not only are superintendents now able to support LGBTQ inclusive events openly, they are also receiving awareness training for how to better support these youth, especially trans youth. Jessica also explained how effective policies were for deflecting opposition from parents, who may be concerned about their children learning about LGBTQ topics. This finding is inconsistent with previous research suggesting professional development providing teachers with practical skills were more effective at increasing teachers' likelihood to intervene in bullying incidences than obligation to adhere to policies (Case, & Meier, 2014; Greytak, & Kosciw, 2014). However, increased policy support might be most effective for staff who were already wanting to be supportive of LGBTQ issues but feared backlash from staff or parents.

**Gay-straight alliances.** The participants' GSAs had the dual focus of providing peers support to LGBTQ youth and hosting awareness campaigns. My analysis revealed that the events hosted by the GSA leaders were increasing the awareness of trans issues in schools. Claire, Josh and Rebecca all mentioned events hosted by their GSA also led to requests for them to conduct workshops for staff, although Rebecca's request never came to fruition. Consistent with Nickerson and colleagues' (2013) stance that bullying programs should target student's cognitive and affective contexts, Josh and Claire reported perceived reduction in bullying in their schools after they had hosted anti-bullying events. In describing these events, they explained how they noticed how non-LGBTQ students took ownership of intervening during bullying incidents.

McGuire and colleagues (2010) found that school personnel mediated the relationship between school protective factors, such as GSAs and LGBTQ-inclusive policies, and trans youths' feelings of safety. Consistent with their finding, William confided in his GSA leader who

was able to assist him with his transition in the school. Similarly, Jessica described how she helped to advocate for trans youth by explaining to school staff procedures for using students' preferred name and pronouns. These findings suggest that GSAs help students identify supportive school personnel they can approach with trans-related issues.

One interesting finding was the notion that trans students may be deterred from attending GSAs because, as Jessica says, 'they don't see themselves represented' in the name. This finding is somewhat inconsistent with previous research demonstrating the positive benefits of attending GSAs were stronger for trans youth than LGB youth (Greytak et al., 2013). Since neither of these leaders had out trans students in their clubs, more research is needed to understand how the name influences participation from trans students. However, William did not report any concerns with his club's name, and Rebecca's GSA had several trans and gender non-conforming members. From her perspective, her students benefitted from their participation, which would be consistent with prior research (McGuire et al., 2010).

### **Experiences of Trans Youth**

Rebecca's students were described as at-risk for depression and some of them had been admitted to the hospital for suicidal thoughts. She also mentions that some of her students abstain from going to class and some have left school entirely. Her students' experiences are consistent with previous research demonstrating trans youths' susceptibility to mental health issues (Taylor et al., 2011) and suicidal thoughts (Almeida et al., 2009; Clements-Nolle et al., 2006; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007; Scanlon et al., 2010), school absences and high drop-out rates (Kosciw et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2011). Although William did not report experiencing the same challenges as Rebecca's students, all of them reported experiencing transphobic remarks.

From Rebecca's experiences, it would appear that increased awareness of trans issues does not have an immediate impact on trans students' wellbeing. Rebecca and William also mentioned that transphobic remarks are still heard in schools. A similar trend appeared in the results from the Inventory. Some superintendents reported having trans-specific policies in their districts with corresponding workshops. However, superintendents were less likely to report less cyberbullying, reduced high risk behaviours, improved mental health and improved performance as achieved by trans-specific policies and resources. Rather, they more frequently reported increased staff and peer support, and increased inclusion in schools. These findings could be consistent with Josh's stance and previous research that staff training should precede the implementation of interventions in schools. For example, school districts that had trans-specific policies might have needed to increase staff developments in order to implement the policies effectively. Superintendents could have also been less likely to report less cyberbullying, reduced high risk behaviours, improved mental health and improved performance as achieved because they would have more contact with school staff than they would students. Therefore, superintendents may not know how policies effect students because they do not have any direct contact with students.

Greytalk and colleagues (2013) found that anti-bullying LGBTQ-policies were not associated with less absenteeism due to safety concerns among trans youth. Their study found that GSAs, LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum and supportive educators were associated with less absenteeism. It is possible that policies are not effective for decreasing transphobic victimization. These findings could also suggest that the policies themselves are not effective at increase trans youths' wellbeing, rather it is the increase supports associated with policies that are perceived to effective.

## Policy Systems

Literature assessing the stages of policy have theorized policy systems occur in the following stages: agenda-setting, formulation, adoption (also called ‘decision making’), implementation, and evaluation (Fischer, Miller, & Sidney, 2007). Policy systems are theorized to occur in chronological order (Fischer, et al., 2007) and can involve multiple feedback loops between inputs and outputs or demands and resources (Barkenbus, 1998; Fischer, et al., 2007).

Agenda-setting is the first stage, which involves current issue reaching the agenda of the policy makers (Barkenbus, 1998). The policy makers define the problem at hand and formulate a policy to address it (Barkenbus, 1998; Fischer, et al., 2007; Ingraham, 1987). Experts can play a significant role at this stage, as they can be consulted with regarding what should be achieved with the policy (Barkenbus, 1998) and possible alternative actions (Fischer, et al., 2007).

The formulation of a policy does not necessitate its implementation. According to Fischer and colleagues (2007) policy adoption is “the formal decision to take on the policy” (p. 48), which can be dependent upon availability of resources and competent actors. If the decision has been made to adopt the policy, then the next step is to implement the policy. The final stage is an evaluation of the policy to assess whether it had met its objectives and adequately addressed the problem as defined by the policy makers (Barkenbus, 1998).

Since the Accepting Schools Act and Toby’s Act had already been formulated before the start of this study, my study examines the adoption and implementation stages. Thus, I will discuss the last three stages of the policy cycle, ‘adoption’, ‘implementation’, and ‘evaluation’ below.

**Policy adoption.** As stated previously, the decision to adopt a policy can be dependent upon the availability of resources (Fischer, et al., 2007). A scarcity of economic, time, personnel or

political resources can influence whether a policy can be implemented. A study examining physical education (PE) policies implementation in the US found that the number of PE teachers in a school had an impact in how the policies were implemented (Lounsbery, McKenzie, Morrow, Monnat, Holt, 2013). The authors found that many schools only had one PE teacher, thus in order to meet new minimum time for PE, many schools had to decrease PE in class and increase the length of recess.

It would seem that the decision to adopt the ASA was inconsistent across schools in Ontario. The results from the Inventory illustrate that less than half of school districts had anti-bullying policies protecting trans youth. Inconsistencies in adopting the ASA were also found in the Waterloo Region. For example, the WRDSB had adopted the policies at the school board level, revising their policies to accommodate all new provincial legislative changes, whereas the WCDSB had only revised a few of their policies to accommodate select changes. These differences could be contributed to differences in the infrastructure of the two school systems. The WRDSB has an Equity and Inclusion department, which is responsible for creating policies and procedures addressing issues of equity and diversity in schools (St. John, et al., 2014). This department could provide the physical resources, such as time and personnel, which allow for policies to be adopted. The WCDSB may not have an equivalent department, which may be why they were selective in the policies they did adopt.

My findings indicate that superintendents have a significant role to play in policy implementation. For example, Claire mentioned how her superintendent had a direct influence on what events she was allowed to host in her school. She also states how superintendents of other Catholic schools “place the legislation on the shelf” and do not implement the policy, which influences the actions of school staff. Rebecca made a similar reflection when she describes how

she perceived a communication gap between her principal and the school board, which would be facilitated by a superintendent. Thus, the explicit support of a superintendent might be a significant factor for schools who have staff that are hesitant or unsure of how to implement trans-inclusive practices.

Fischer and colleagues (2007) also stated that policy adoption can be dependent on the allocation of competencies between actors. All of my participants strongly advocated for trans-inclusivity and were willing to devote their time on staff training, hosting LGBTQ-inclusive events and leading their GSAs. Thus, it is not surprising that all their schools were becoming more trans-inclusive. However, it is possible that the schools who do not have similar leaders in their schools may not have the same level of adoption of the ASA or trans-inclusivity.

**Policy implementation.** Results from the Inventory demonstrate the differences between policy adoption and policy implementation, as school districts had policies and resources supporting trans youth but had not implemented them in their schools. Lounsbury and colleagues (2013) argued that implementation of a school policy is dependent upon the degree of implementation of the same policy at the provincial and regional school board level. Individual school policies can differ as school districts use a site-based management style, giving individual schools responsibilities to adopt policies and practices with district policies. A similar approach is used in Ontario; namely, that school boards will develop policies which are then communicated through superintendents.

Further research is needed to fully understand the discrepancy between just having policies in a school district and having policies that are also implemented. Fischer and colleagues (2007) argued that ideal policy implementation include the specification of policy (e.g. how the policy should be interpreted), allocation of resources, and decisions (e.g. decisions regarding

single cases). Consequently, the implementation of school policies could be delayed if there are not the appropriate resources or if there are still school-specific decisions that need to be addressed first. Similarly, this discrepancy could be contributed to the acknowledgement by superintendents that although the policy had been adopted, there have been no efforts to implement the policy.

Similar to the policy adoption phase, having a leader within schools plays a significant role regarding whether policies are implemented. Barkendus (1998) argued that although being a critical stage in the policy process, policy implementation was often neglected. The lack of policy implementation could be contributed the lack of a leader who will take initiative for implementing it in their schools. One of the advantages of the ASA my participants described was the procedural support it gave to their work. However, all my participants had been advocating for trans-inclusivity even before the ASA was passed. To paraphrase Josh, the legislation did not directly increase trans-inclusivity in schools, rather, it allowed teachers who were already doing the work to openly communicate that fact with their colleagues.

**Policy Evaluation.** Loundsbery and colleagues (2013) advised that policy implementation should also include thorough communication during dissemination, evaluation and accountability. Accountability includes procedures for follow-up as well as consequences for non-compliance. Loundsbery and colleagues (2013) examined different contextual factors between schools that had implemented PE policies and schools that had not. A significant factor was whether the school also had a policy requiring their PE program to be evaluated annually; district policies requiring the same were not a significant factor.

At the time of writing this, the ASA has been effective for four years. To date, there has not been an evaluation of it and none of my participants indicated any plans for one. Fischer and

colleagues (2007) stated policy evaluation should be conducted to assess whether the policy met its intended objectives or reduced the problem at hand. The impetus for passing the ASA was the growing concern of teen suicides in Ontario, thus one outcome that could be assessed in an would be whether there has been a reduction in suicidal thoughts and behaviours of Ontario youth. As discussed prior, reduced suicidality was an outcome that was infrequently achieved by the policies addressing harassment on the grounds of gender expression or transgender identity. Rebecca's description of her students would also indicate there are still high rates of depression and suicidal thoughts among trans youth.

The climate surveys could also be utilized as a method for assessing trends in students' well-being year-to-year. Currently, Rebecca's perception of the results do not indicate that the ASA has yet been helpful. However, Claire's and Josh's perceptions would suggest that bullying specific to LGBTQ discrimination had decreased, although bullying in general still occurs.

Policy evaluation can lead to the creation, modification or termination of policies (Fischer, et al., 2007). It is possible then that an internal evaluation of the ASA was conducted, leading to the development of the trans accommodation guidelines. Since this study evaluated the ASA, results will be shared with the local school boards, which could be utilized to either modify their current policies or how the ASA is presented in schools.

## **Implications**

**Knowledge Transfer Plan.** Critical theory also has a strong action orientation, thus knowledge transfer (KT) will be a primary goal at the conclusion of my study. While conducting this study, I became involved with the review committee for WRDSB's new trans accommodation guidelines. Although I could not use my knowledge about these guidelines in the analysis of my study, I have created community partnerships with key members of the



committee. These community partners work closely with schools, educators and LGBTQ youth in the Waterloo Region.

My primary goal of the KT plan would be to provide schools with necessary and relevant information to ensure trans-inclusive policies and procedures are implemented. I will consult with my community partners regarding how the findings from this study can be best put to use, however, below I outline the KT plan I would propose for each school system.

**WRDSB.** The most significant finding for the WRDSB is the discrepancy between policies and how they are implemented within schools. My findings illustrate that policies do not directly lead to change occurring within schools, rather, the work being done now is solely due to the tireless efforts of GSA leaders (or similar advocacy leaders). Therefore, my main recommendation would be to increase communication from senior administration, such as superintendents, to better illustrate their support. During staff meetings, trans or LGB issues should be stressed areas that warrant special attention. Their support can also be demonstrated through attending LGBTQ-related events, such as dances, or wearing visible, rainbow paraphernalia.

**WCDSB.** Although my Catholic participants were generally pleased with the progress they were witnessing in their schools, my results from the Inventory would suggest that their circumstances are in the small minority for Catholic schools. Therefore, the main message I would communicate with the WCDSB would be to use their narratives as examples for other regional Catholic schools to follow. Both Claire and Josh mentioned they receive requests to assist other schools, whether through providing them with workshops or advice for hosting LGBTQ-inclusive events. Claire mentioned even superintendents were receiving workshops on trans-inclusivity, therefore, trans-related events may receive more support from superintendents.

Similar to the WRDSB, I would also stress the importance of explicit administrator support in the WCDSB.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The study had three main strengths which are: the triangulation of data sources, having a Canadian perspective, and real-world implications. This study also had three major limitations: the nature of the survey data, sample size for interviews, and lack of perspectives from trans youth. I will elaborate on each of these in greater detail below.

#### **Strengths**

***Triangulation of data.*** The triangulation of my three forms of data provided a novel and fairly comprehensive overview of school board policies. Mathison (1988) argues that triangulation results in richer data because findings can often be inconsistent or contradictory. In my study, there were very significant discrepancies in school boards and experiences within schools. The most profound discrepancy was between the WCDSB policies, results from the Inventory and the advocacy efforts of Claire and Josh. Analyzing the policies or responses from the Inventory as sole data sources would have resulted in the assumption that few Catholic school districts, including the WCDSB, support trans youth and have implemented trans-inclusive practices. However, the interviews with Claire and Josh demonstrate that there are efforts to raise awareness of trans issues in at least one school district that does not have trans-specific policies.

***Canadian perspective.*** The majority of studies examining trans youth's experiences in schools have been conducted in the US. Canada and the US have different sociopolitical environments that may affect the creation of policies as well as their uptake in schools. For example, American state and county laws vary with the protections they provide transgender

people. Some state laws, such as Nevada's, ban discrimination in employment, public accommodations and housing but not in education (American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, 2015). Similarly, American education policies can be influenced by Christian beliefs which would also pose as a barrier to trans-specific events (for more see: Lugg, 1998).

Both the Accepting Schools Act and Toby's Act were proposed because of the significant suicides, namely those of Hubely and Dancer. With such a strong impetus for social change, it is important for Ontarians to understand how these policies are preventing similar aversive experiences for LGBTQ people. Although this study focuses specifically on supports for trans youth, it provides a strong foundation for future research. This study demonstrates how the ASA is being inconsistently implemented in school districts across Ontario while also highlighting the advocacy work conducted by school administrators and staff in the Waterloo Region. Future research could examine such work in further detail to increase supports for all LGBTQ youth.

***Real-world implications.*** The most important implication of this study is the implications it can have for schools in Ontario. The findings from my study can be used to shape future professional development workshops, as well as provide school administrators and staff with strategies for increasing awareness and supports in their schools.

One finding relevant to schools would be policies should be the foundation of anti-bullying strategies but they should not be the sole component. My findings indicated that policies were most effective in schools that already had devoted teachers and administrators who were advocating for change. As Jessica described, policies provide school administrators with "something to back them up" if they receive backlash from parents. However, Claire describes how other school administrators such as superintendents and directors of education do not implement new policy changes. Therefore, new policies may not be implemented within schools

unless the school environment is one in which the policy would be welcomed. An implication following this finding would be to provide more support to GSA leaders or LGBTQ advocates. My findings suggest that informal discussions among colleagues might provide more practical knowledge than staff meetings or professional development workshops.

### **Limitations**

*Nature of the survey data.* The first limitation of the current study is the nature of the data collected from the National Inventory of School District Interventions in Support of LGBTQ Student Wellbeing. As this was secondary data collected for another study, the questions were not explicitly designed for my research questions and thus I only responses from items 12 and 13, out of a 14-item survey. The goals of the larger study is to provide an overview of the LGBTQ inclusive policies across Canada, thus there are not questions asking superintendents directly about the Accepting Schools Acts, a provincial legislation specific to Ontario. Therefore I cannot make inferences that policies superintendents reported were influenced by the Accepting Schools Act.

In addition to the use of secondary data, the sample sizes were small. Out 80 school districts in Ontario, only 29 superintendents responded to the survey, which is a 36% response rate. Even then, not all superintendents answered the questions I analyzed. The small sample sizes diminished the ability to use statistical analyses. The small sample size might indicate there was biases in the superintendents who responded to the Inventory. For example, superintendents who were not supportive of LGBTQ issues could have declined to participate. One way to overcome this type of bias would be to conduct a policy analysis on school board policies across Ontario. Future research could pursue this avenue of research to gain a more thoroughly understanding of school board policies.

***Sample size for interviews.*** The second limitation of my study was the small sample size for my qualitative interviews. Although smaller sample sizes are not a limitation for qualitative methods in general, it posed a unique limitation in my study. Based on the innovative and novelty nature of the trans-inclusive events and procedures my participants were a part of, I was not able to provide details in fear it would jeopardize the anonymity of my participants. Whenever possible, I made slight modifications to quotes if I believed it would not change the overall meaning, however, even fabricating events of an equivalent nature could still reveal my participants' identities.

Also, I was not able to provide any demographic information, including where and what roles my participants were employed. This also prevented me from comprehensively analyzing how different positions and responsibilities created unique challenges and opportunities working with either trans youth or policies. Since all my participants worked in different schools, their perspectives on the schools had to be analyzed at face value. Thus, my participants' experiences became representative of their school in general.

My analysis revealed that numerous actors and factors work together within a school to create an accepting environment and to implement changes. A direction for future research could be to conduct a thorough case study of a school, examining the relationships between superintendents, principals and school staff and policies. A comprehensive study on this nature would provide multiple perspectives on the same school environment.

***Lack of perspectives from trans youth.*** Since I was not able to recruit more trans youth to participate in my study, I do not have many perspectives from the stakeholder that are most affected by these school board policies. Critical emancipatory paradigms with an underlying assumption that individuals who develop insight into the way their lives are being oppressed by

systematic forces can achieve emancipation through individual or collective action (Humble & Morgaine, 2002). By not having trans youth voices, it could be argued I am not providing an opportunity for youth to achieve emancipation, or self-advocacy from this study.

As I stated in my reflexivity, I do identify as a trans researcher and consequently, I am a strong advocate for including trans voices in research wherever necessary to create action-orientated and normative research. However, I also remember my high school experiences and how challenging they were for me. During participant recruitment, I was referred to and connected with several youth who were initially interested in participating in my study. Prior to arranging a time, most of them changed their minds claiming that they were overwhelmed or where not in the right emotional place to be able to meet with me. Empathetic to their experiences, I decided against more participant recruitment however future research should focus on sensitively examining trans youths' experiences in schools in light of these new policies changes. Some recommendations for future research might be to conduct focus groups rather than individual interviews. Another recommendation is to conduct an arts-based study. Since trans youth might be experiencing mental health difficulties, an arts-based method might provide an easier avenue for youth to express their thoughts and feelings.

### **Conclusion**

In Ontario, there is a growing need to address the issue of LGBTQ youths' mental health. In June 2012, two new provincial legislations, the Accepting Schools Act and Toby's Act, were passed that showed potential to address this need. This exploratory study is currently the first to examine the implementation of these acts while examining school-based supports for trans youth. Although compliance rates for the ASA were generally low and inconsistent, the ASA can provide support for school staff and superintendents who are advocating to increase awareness of

trans issues. Specifically, the ASA can be utilized to deflect backlash from parents and allow school staff to openly discuss LGBTQ-related topics in schools.

This study has implications for bullying prevention and educational research. Although there are advancements being made to increase the presence of LGBTQ-inclusive education, there is still a significant gap in the literature regarding trans-specific resources. This study addresses this gap by providing a fairly comprehensive overview of trans-specific policies and resources in Ontario. My findings from the Waterloo Region highlight how trans youth are still at-risk for mental health difficulties, however, schools have started to proactively address this concern. The majority of my participants describe an increase in awareness of trans issues and a growing recognition that schools need to better understand best practices for accommodating trans students. This study provides a foundation for which future research can more thoroughly examine what practices and strategies can be utilize to support trans youth.

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## Appendix A

Preliminary Interview Guide  
School Admin and staff

Firstly, I would just let to say thank you for taking the time to join our discussion about Gay-Straight Alliances. My name is Charlie Davis and I'm a Masters student from Wilfrid Laurier University. I will be asking you about your experiences and opinions of GSAs. I will also be asking you to comment on policies, such as the Accepting Schools Act and Toby's Act and how schools are responding to these legislations. I just want to remind you that we can take a break at any point, or if you feel uncomfortable at all you may withdraw from the study.

I will be tape recording the sessions so they can later be transcribed. Your identities will be kept confidential and your names will not be used in any analyzes or reports based of this discussion. You will be assured of complete confidentiality.

If you have questions, either now or later on, please feel free to ask me. Is it OK if I start the tape recorder?

\*Turn on recorder\*

1. Please explain where you work and what your job responsibilities are.
  - a. How are you connected to LGBTQ youth or GSAs? how you are connected with either trans youth or GSAs
    - If directly connected to a GSA, ask for roles and how they have been in that role
  
2. Since the Accepting Schools Act, what changes have occurred in schools?
  - Successes, challenges
  - Has there been any opposition to this act?
  - Have there been any discrepancies between what the policy says and how it has thus far been enacted?
  -
  
3. How inclusive do you perceive schools to be regarding trans issues?
  - Probe for:
    - If not currently inclusive to trans youth, how can this be improved? What else would you like to see?
    - Inclusive curriculum within classrooms
    - How are schools around the bathroom/change room issue?
    - Anti-bullying procedures
      - Are these enforced and how? Are they effective?
  - Probe: what are the experiences of trans youth in GSAs
    - Feel safe and/or like they belong there – absenteeism
    - Get along with other peers
    - Bullying incidences: from peers or teachers, how/if it was handled.

- General attitudes of teachers and admin
4. What do current school board equity and diversity policies offer in terms of specific insights into how to support trans youth in GSAs?
    - If trans youth are not mentioned, why not?
    - Has there been any increased awareness of trans issues with the emergence of the accepting schools act?
  5. Around the same time that the Accepting Schools Act was passed, the Ontario Government also issued an act called Toby's Act, which included gender identity and gender expression into the Human Rights code. Can you comment on whether Toby's Act has had an influence within the school system?
    - Probe for:
      - greater acceptance of trans issues if implemented
      - More discussion or increased awareness of trans issues
    - If not, ask for personal opinions on law
  6. Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not talked about yet?

\*Turn off recorder\*

Thank you all so much for your insight and having this conversation with me. I am really honoured you shared your personal experiences with me and contributed to my study

## Appendix B


### National Inventory

# National Inventory of Interventions to Support LGBTQ Students in Canadian Schools

Page #1

#### Branching Information

- If Consent = Agree then Skip to Page 3
- If Consent = Disagree then Skip to Page 2

 The National Inventory of School District Interventions to Support the Wellbeing of LGBTQ Students


This survey is designed to identify the various types of supports that school districts have put in place for sexual and gender minority students (those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or "questioning"). For example, you will be asked questions such as "Does your school district have a policy on LGBTQ-inclusive education?" Ultimately, the results of this research will be used to produce evidence-based recommendations on how best to support sexual and gender minority students. This research is funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research as part of a larger research program led by Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc (University of British Columbia).

The information collected will be used in aggregate reporting only (e.g., "Seventy school districts in rural areas implemented Gay Straight Alliance clubs, and 70% of directors perceived a decrease in homophobic comments as a result."). We will not include any identifying information about your school district in any reporting or scholarly publication. Your contact information will be used only for personal communication with you to discuss the interventions in place in your school district, and only if you consent to such contact at the end of the survey.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may skip any question(s) you would rather not answer. You can go back to change or delete answers you have already given at any time. You may exit the survey at any time and discard your answers by pressing the "Exit" button. (You can also opt to leave the survey and complete it at a later time by pressing the "Save and continue later" button.) You may withdraw your answers from the survey at any time up until we report on the findings by contacting the research team at [c.taylor@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:c.taylor@uwinnipeg.ca).

Data will be downloaded from the Fluid Surveys site and anonymized by replacing the name of your school division with a code. A table connecting the code to your school division contact information will be kept on a separate hard drive in the locked office of the lead researcher. Anonymized data will be stored on password-protected computers and locked cabinets in the university offices of the research team for at least five years. Once they are no longer needed, the coding table and the anonymized data files will be destroyed by electronic/paper shredding.

This survey is being conducted by Dr. Catherine Taylor (University of Winnipeg) in partnership with Manitoba Association of School Superintendents. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Dr. Taylor at 204-786-9893 or [c.taylor@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:c.taylor@uwinnipeg.ca). If you have any concerns about the conduct of the survey, please contact the University of Winnipeg Research Ethics Officer at 204-786-9058 or [ethics@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:ethics@uwinnipeg.ca).

 Your participation:




By clicking on "Agree" below you are consenting to the above terms. As a small token of thanks for agreeing to participate, you will have the opportunity to enter a draw for an iPad donated by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust. (Please note: If you choose not to complete the survey, you will still be eligible for the draw.)

By clicking on "Disagree" you will exit the survey with our sincere thanks for your interest in making schools safe and respectful for sexual and gender minority students and for having taken the time to consider participating. (Consent)


Agree

Disagree

 If you would like a chance to win an iPad Mini, enter your email address in the space provided. (DisagreeDraw)

---

• If not Q1b = Yes then Hide AgreeDraw

 School district information :( Q1a)

Province or territory \_\_\_\_\_


Name of school district \_\_\_\_\_

Number of schools in your district (all levels) \_\_\_\_\_

 Would you like to be entered in our prize draw for an iPad

mini?(Q1b) Yes

No

 For a chance to win an iPad Mini, enter your email address in the space provided.(AgreeDraw)

\_\_\_\_\_

- If not Q2 = No then Hide Q2e
- If not Q2 = Yes then Hide Q2a
- If not Q2 = Yes then Hide Q2b
- If not Q2 = Yes then Hide Q2c
- If not Q2c.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q2d
- If Q2 is one of [u'1', u'2'] then Skip to Page 5

- Does your district have a policy on LGBTQ-inclusive education? (Q2)
- Yes
- No
- Choose not to answer

- What is covered in your policy? (Q2a)

Check all that apply.

- Harassment
- Inclusion in the curriculum
- Professional development for staff
- Gay Straight Alliance Clubs (or other clubs that focus on LGBTQ inclusion)
- Other(s) - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer


- Has the policy been thoroughly implemented in all schools?(Q2b) Check all that apply.

- No
- Yes - in senior years
- Yes - in middle years
- Yes - in early years
- Choose not to answer

- Which results were hoped for from implementing LGBTQ-inclusive education policy, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q2c)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> /<br>reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among LGBTQ<br>students | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other(s) - specify below:  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Choose not to answer   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here: (Q2d)

\_\_\_\_\_

Why have you not implemented such a policy? (Q2e)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of homosexuality on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of homosexuality
- Don't believe homophobic harassment warrants special attention
- Generic policy adequately addresses homophobic harassment
- No/very few incidents of homophobic harassment in my school district
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

## Branching Information

- If not Q3 = No then Hide Q3e
- If not Q3 = Yes then Hide Q3b
- If not Q3 = Yes then Hide Q3c
- If not Q3c.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q3d

Does your school district endeavour to protect LGBTQ students through generic inclusive education policies with NO special attention to LGBTQ inclusion?(Q3)

- Yes  
 No  
 Choose not to answer

Has the policy been thoroughly implemented in all schools?(Q3b)

- No  
 Yes - in senior years  
 Yes - in middle years  
 Yes - in early years  
 Choose not to answer

Which results were hoped for from implementing generic inclusive education policies, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q3c)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) - specify below:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choose not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q3d)

---

Why have you not tried to protect LGBTQ students through a generic inclusive education policy?(Q3e)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- Don't believe generic policy is adequate to protect LGBTQ students
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

## Branching Information

- If not Q4 is one of [u'1', u'2', u'3'] then Hide Q4f
- If not Q4 is one of [u'0', u'1', u'2'] then Hide Q4a
- If not Q4 is one of [u'0', u'1', u'2'] then Hide Q4b
- If not Q4 is one of [u'0', u'1', u'2'] then Hide Q4c
- If not Q4c.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q4d
- If not Q4 is one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q4e


 Do schools in your district have Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs (or other LGBTQ-specific clubs such as Rainbow clubs)?(Q4)

Choose the selection that best reflects the clubs in your school district.

- We have GSA / LGBTQ-specific clubs
- We have diversity or social justice clubs that include a focus on LGBTQ among other issues
- We have generic anti-bullying / respectful school clubs
- We have no clubs that address bullying or respectful schools
- Choose not to answer


What are these clubs called?(Q4e)

- Gay Straight Alliance
- Rainbow Club
- Social Justice Club
- Diversity Club
- Respecting Difference Club
- Other - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

 How many schools have these clubs?(Q4a)

Your best estimate is fine.

\_\_\_\_\_

 Are there any of these clubs at the early or middle years (K-8) level?(Q4b)


- Yes
- No
- Choose not to answer

Which results were hoped for from establishing these clubs, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q4c)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among LGBTQ students | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other(s) - specify below:  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Choose not to answer   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here: (Q4d)

\_\_\_\_\_


Why has your district not implemented LGBTQ-specific clubs? (Q4f)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.


- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of homosexuality on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of homosexuality
- Don't believe homophobic harassment warrants special attention
- Generic policy adequately addresses homophobic harassment
- No/very few incidents of homophobic harassment in my school district
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

## Branching Information

- If not Q7a = No then Hide Q7h
- If not Q7f.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q7g
- If not Q7a = Yes then Hide Q7b
- If not Q7a = Yes then Hide Q7c
- If not Q7a = Yes then Hide Q7e
- If not Q7a = Yes then Hide Q7i
- If not Q7a = Yes then Hide Q7f

 Do schools in your district have LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum?(Q7a)

- Yes
- No
- Choose not to answer

 How many schools have this curriculum?(Q7b)

Your best estimate is fine.

---


Is LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum mandatory?(Q7e)

- Yes, by school division
- Yes, by legislation
- Yes, by provincial/territorial policy
- No
- Choose not to answer

In what subject areas does LGBTQ content appear?(Q7i)

Check all that apply.

- Health/Healthy Relationships
- History/Social Studies
- Language Arts
- In many subject areas
- Choose not to answer


 Is there any LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum in K-8 schools?(Q7c)

- No
- Yes
- Choose not to answer

Which results were hoped for from implementing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q7f)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among LGBTQ students | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other(s) - specify below:  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Choose not to answer   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please specify here:(Q7g)

\_\_\_\_\_

Why has your district not implemented LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum?(Q7h)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of homosexuality on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of homosexuality
- Don't believe homophobic harassment warrants special attention
- Generic policy adequately addresses homophobic harassment
- No/very few incidents of homophobic harassment in my school district
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

Branching Information

- If not Q5 contains one of [u'1', u'2', u'3', u'4'] then Hide Q5a
- If not Q5a.14 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q5b
- If not Q5 contains No, sexual orientation and transgender identity are not protected in our employee discrimination policies then Hide Q5c
- If not (Q6 = Yes, if the content is specific to a Ministry-approved or Division-approved approved curriculum) or (Q6 = Yes, if the content is age-appropriate and relevant to the curriculum) then Hide Q6a
- If not Q6a.14 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q6b
- If not Q6 = No then Hide Q6c

One approach to inclusive education involves trying to ensure that school staffing reflects the demographics of the student population. Do your school district employment policies protect LGBTQ teachers and school staff?(Q5)

Check all that apply.


- No, sexual orientation and transgender identity are not protected in our employee discrimination policies
- Yes, sexual orientation is protected in our employee discrimination policies
- Yes, transgender identity is protected in our employee discrimination policies
- Yes, teachers can be open about their sexual orientation status with students (e.g., answer "yes" when asked, "Are you gay?")
- Yes, teachers can be open about being transgender
- Yes, we have tried to hire LGBTQ teachers and other staff members
- Choose not to answer

Which results were hoped for from including LGBTQ staff in employment policies, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q5a)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Increased <u>protection</u> for LGBTQ employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>visibility</u> of LGBTQ employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less use of "that's so gay" or "t'es gai"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other(s) - specify below:

Choose not to answer

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please specify here:(Q5b)

Why do your district's employment policies not protect LGBTQ staff?(Q5c)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- District has a policy against talking about personal life
- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of homosexuality on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of homosexuality
- Don't believe discrimination against LGBTQ staff warrants special attention
- Generic policy adequately addresses discrimination against LGBTQ staff
- No/very few incidents of discrimination against LGBTQ staff in my school district
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

Does your school district have a policy supporting teachers who include LGBTQ-related content?(Q6)


- No
- Yes, if the content is specific to a Ministry-approved or Division-approved approved curriculum
- Yes, if the content is age-appropriate and relevant to the curriculum
- Choose not to answer

Which results were hoped for from implementing a policy to support teachers who include LGBTQ-related content, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q6a)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Increased <u>protection</u> for LGBTQ employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>visibility</u> of LGBTQ employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less use of "that's so gay" or "t'es gai"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Improved performance or attendance /  
reduced drop-out rates among LGBTQ  
students

- |   |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other(s) - specify below:                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Choose not to answer                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please specify here:(Q6b)

\_\_\_\_\_

Why has your district not implemented a policy to protect teachers who include LGBTQ-related content?(Q6c)


Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- District has a policy against talking about personal life
- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of homosexuality on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of homosexuality
- Don't believe discrimination against LGBTQ staff warrants special attention
- Generic policy adequately addresses discrimination against LGBTQ staff
- No/very few incidents of discrimination against LGBTQ staff in my school district
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer


Page #9

## Branching Information

- If not Q8 = No then Hide Q8d
- If not Q8 = Yes then Hide Q8a
- If not Q8 = Yes then Hide Q8b
- If not Q8b.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q8c


 Does your school district have generic anti-bullying programs and/or events?(Q8)

- Yes  
 No  
 Choose not to answer


 How many schools have these programs/events?(Q8a)

Your best estimate is fine.

\_\_\_\_\_

 Which results for LGBTQ students were hoped for from establishing these generic programs/events, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q8b)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) - specify below:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choose not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q8c)

\_\_\_\_\_

Why have you not implemented anti-bullying programs/events?(Q8d)


Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- Don't believe generic programs/events adequately address homophobic harassment
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer




## Branching Information

- If not Q9 = No then Hide Q9f
- If not Q9 = Yes then Hide Q9a
- If not Q9 = Yes then Hide Q9c
- If not Q9 = Yes then Hide Q9d
- If not Q9d.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q9e


 Do schools in your district have anti-homophobia/LGBTQ-inclusion events (such as Pride month events, Day of Pink, or Ally Week)?(Q9)

- Yes  
 No  
 Choose not to answer


 How many schools have these events?(Q9a)

Your best estimate is fine.

\_\_\_\_\_

 Are there any anti-homophobia/LGBTQ-inclusion events at elementary schools in your district?(Q9c)


- No  
 Yes - in some elementary schools  
 Yes - in all elementary schools  
 Choose not to answer

 Which results were hoped for from having these events, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q9d)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) - specify below:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Choose not to answer



 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here: (Q9e)

\_\_\_\_\_


Why have schools in your district not held anti-homophobia/LGBTQ-inclusion events? (Q9f)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of homosexuality on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of homosexuality
- Don't believe homophobic harassment warrants special attention
- Generic policy adequately addresses homophobic harassment
- No/very few incidents of homophobic harassment in my school district
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

## Branching Information

- If not Q10 = No then Hide Q10f
- If not Q10 = Yes then Hide Q10a
- If not Q10 = Yes then Hide Q10c
- If not Q10 = Yes then Hide Q10d
- If not Q10 = Yes then Hide Q10b
- If not Q10d.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q10e


 Does your school district offer LGBTQ-inclusive education resources for staff development (such as curriculum support, PD opportunities, workshops)?(Q10)

- Yes
- No
- Choose not to answer


What kinds of resources are available?(Q10b)

Check all that are available.

- Teacher organization committees or cohorts on LGBTQ issues
- Teacher organization resource person/staff on LGBTQ issues
- School division/district resource person on LGBTQ issues
- Other teachers with training in LGBTQ education
- School counsellors with training in LGBTQ issues
- LGBTQ web resources (e.g., egale.ca, myGSA.ca, glsen.org, pridenet.ca, pflagcanada.org)
- LGBTQ educators' networks (e.g., Global Respect in Education, Pride Education Network)
- LGBTQ community centres (e.g., 519 Church, Rainbow Resource Centre)
- LGBTQ library holdings
- LGBTQ curriculum guides
- Other - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- None
- Don't know
- Choose not to answer

 How many schools have been involved?(Q10a)

Your best estimate is fine.

 Are there any LGBTQ-specific resources available for elementary teachers?(Q10c)

- No
- Yes - in some elementary schools
- Yes - in all elementary schools
- Choose not to answer


Which results were hoped for in providing these resources, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q10d)

Hoped for

Achieved

Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) - specify below:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choose not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here: (Q10e)

\_\_\_\_\_


Why has your district not introduced LGBTQ-inclusive education resources for staff? (Q10f)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of homosexuality on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of homosexuality
- Don't believe homophobic harassment warrants special attention
- Other resources adequately address homophobic harassment
- No/very few incidents of homophobic harassment in my school district
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

## Branching Information


- If not Q11 = No then Hide Q11f
- If not Q11 = Yes then Hide Q11a
- If not Q11 = Yes then Hide Q11c
- If not Q11 = Yes then Hide Q11d
- If not Q11 = Yes then Hide Q11b
- If not Q11d.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q11e

 Does your school district offer LGBTQ-inclusive education resources for students (such as library or guidance materials, posters or pamphlets)?(Q11)

- Yes  
 No  
 Choose not to answer


What kinds of resources are

- available?(Q11b) School library  
 Curriculum  
 Teacher who identifies as an ally  
 LGBT teacher(s)  
 Guidance counsellor who identifies as an ally  
 GSA  
 Other - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 None  
 Don't know  
 Choose not to answer

 How many schools have been involved?(Q11a)

Your best estimate is fine.

\_\_\_\_\_


 Are there any LGBTQ-specific resources available for elementary students?(Q11c)

- No  
 Yes - in some elementary schools  
 Yes - in all elementary schools  
 Choose not to answer

Which results were hoped for in providing these resources for students, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q11d)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of LGBTQ students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of LGBTQ students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among LGBTQ students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LGBTQ students feel <u>more attached to school community</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Improved <u>self esteem</u> among LGBTQ students   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among LGBTQ students                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among LGBTQ students | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>LGBTQ inclusion</u> in schools  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>peer support</u> for LGBTQ students   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Increased <u>staff support</u> for LGBTQ students  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other(s) - specify below:  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Choose not to answer   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q11e)

\_\_\_\_\_

Why has your district not introduced LGBTQ-inclusive education resources for students?(Q11f)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of homosexuality on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of homosexuality
- Don't believe homophobic harassment warrants special attention
- Generic policy adequately addresses homophobic harassment
- No/very few incidents of homophobic harassment in my school district
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

## Branching Information

- If not Q12a contains No, we don't have any of these policies. then Hide Q12n
- If not Q12a contains Yes, we have a policy that addresses harassment on the grounds of gender expression. then Hide Q12b
- If not Q12a contains Yes, we have a policy that addresses harassment on the grounds of gender expression. then Hide Q12c
- If not Q12c.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q12d
- If not Q12a contains Yes, we have a policy that addresses harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity. then Hide Q12e
- If not Q12a contains Yes, we have a policy that addresses harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity. then Hide Q12f
- If not Q12f.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q12g
- If not Q12a contains Yes, we have a policy covering support for transsexual students transitioning from male to female or vice versa. then Hide Q12h
- If not Q12a contains Yes, we have a policy covering support for transsexual students transitioning from male to female or vice versa. then Hide Q12i
- If not Q12i.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q12j
- If not Q12a contains Other - please specify: then Hide Q12k
- If not Q12a contains Other - please specify: then Hide Q12l
- If not Q12l.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q12m

Does your district have any policies that protect freedom of gender expression or transgender identity?(Q12a)

Check all that apply.

- Yes, we have a policy that addresses harassment on the grounds of gender expression.
- Yes, we have a policy that addresses harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity.
- Yes, we have a policy covering support for transsexual students transitioning from male to female or vice versa.
- Other - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No, we don't have any of these policies.
- Choose not to answer

Has this policy addressing harassment based on gender expression been thoroughly implemented in all schools?(Q12b)

- No
- Yes - in secondary schools only
- Yes - in all schools
- Choose not to answer

Which results were hoped for from this policy on harassment based on gender expression, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q12c)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of "that's so gay" or "t'es gai"	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of gender non-conforming students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of gender non-conforming students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among gender non-conforming students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender non-conforming students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender non-conforming students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Improved self esteem among gender non-conforming students

Improved mental health / reduced suicidality among gender non-conforming students

Improved performance or attendance / reduced drop-out rates among gender non-conforming students


Increased diversity inclusion in schools


Increased peer support for gender non-conforming students

Increased staff support for gender non-conforming students


Other(s) - specify below:

Choose not to answer

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q12d)

 Has the policy addressing harassment based on transgender or transsexual identity been thoroughly implemented in all schools?(Q12e)

- No  
 Yes - in secondary schools only  
 Yes - in all schools  
 Choose not to answer

 Which results were hoped for from this policy, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q12f)


	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of trans students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among trans students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trans students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trans students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>inclusion</u> of trans students in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>peer support</u> for trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>




Increased staff support for trans students

Other(s) - specify below:

Choose not to answer

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q12g)


 Has the policy on support for transitioning transsexual students been thoroughly implemented in all schools?(Q12h)

No


Yes - in secondary schools only


Yes - in all schools

Choose not to answer

 Which results were hoped for from this policy, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q12i)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of transitioning students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of transitioning students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among transitioning students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transitioning students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transitioning students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among transitioning students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among transitioning students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among transitioning students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>inclusion</u> of transitioning students in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>peer support</u> for transitioning students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>staff support</u> for transitioning students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) - specify below:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choose not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q12j)

 Has the policy you've specified above been thoroughly implemented in all schools?(Q12k)

No

- Yes - in secondary schools only  
 Yes - in all schools  
 Choose not to answer

Which results were hoped for from this policy, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q12)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of trans students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among trans students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trans students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trans students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>inclusion</u> of trans students in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>peer support</u> for trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>staff support</u> for trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) - specify below:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choose not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q12m)

---

Why have you not implemented such policies?(Q12n)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximates your district's stance.

- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of gender variance or transgender identity on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of gender variance or transgender identity
- Don't know of any transgender students in my school district
- Don't believe transphobic harassment warrants special attention
- Generic harassment policy adequately addresses transphobic harassment
- No/very few incidents of transphobic harassment in my school district
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

## Branching Information

- If not Q13a contains No, there are no resources available on gender expression or transgender identity. then Hide Q13v
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we provide a workshop on harassment on the grounds of gender expression. then Hide Q13b
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we provide a workshop on harassment on the grounds of gender expression. then Hide Q13c
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we provide a workshop on harassment on the grounds of gender expression. then Hide Q13d
- If not Q13d.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q13e
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we provide a workshop on harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity. then Hide Q13f
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we provide a workshop on harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity. then Hide Q13g
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we provide a workshop on harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity. then Hide Q13h
- If not Q13h.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q13i
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we provide a workshop on supporting transsexual students transitioning from male to female or vice versa. then Hide Q13j
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we provide a workshop on supporting transsexual students transitioning from male to female or vice versa. then Hide Q13k
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we provide a workshop on supporting transsexual students transitioning from male to female or vice versa. then Hide Q13l
- If not Q13l.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q13m
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we have library resources on transgender topics or themes. then Hide Q13n
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we have library resources on transgender topics or themes. then Hide Q13o
- If not Q13a contains Yes, we have library resources on transgender topics or themes. then Hide Q13p
- If not Q13p.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q13q
- If not Q13a contains Other - please specify: then Hide Q13r
- If not Q13a contains Other - please specify: then Hide Q13s
- If not Q13a contains Other - please specify: then Hide Q13t
- If not Q13t.12 contains one of [u'0', u'1'] then Hide Q13u



Does your district provide any resources for staff on gender expression or transgender identity?(Q13a)

Check all that apply.

- Yes, we provide a workshop on harassment on the grounds of gender expression.
- Yes, we provide a workshop on harassment on the grounds of transgender or transsexual identity.
- Yes, we provide a workshop on supporting transsexual students transitioning from male to female or vice versa.
- Yes, we have library resources on transgender topics or themes.
- Other - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- No, there are no resources available on gender expression or transgender identity.
- Choose not to answer



How many schools have been involved with workshops on gender expression harassment?(Q13b)

Your best estimate is fine.

\_\_\_\_\_



Are there any specific resources available for the elementary teachers on gender expression?(Q13c)

- No
- Yes - in some elementary schools
- Yes - in all elementary schools
- Choose not to answer



Which results were hoped for in providing this training, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q13d)

Hoped for

Achieved

Less use of "that's so gay" or "tes gai"

Less harassment of gender non-conforming students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)

Less cyberbullying of gender non-conforming students

Reduced high risk behaviours among gender non-conforming students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)

Gender non-conforming students report when they are harassed

Gender non-conforming students feel more attached to school community

Improved self esteem among gender non-conforming students

Improved mental health / reduced suicidality among gender non-conforming students

Improved performance or attendance / reduced drop-out rates among gender non-conforming students


Increased diversity inclusion in schools

Increased peer support for gender non-conforming students

Increased staff support for gender non-conforming students

Other(s) - specify below:

Choose not to answer


 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q13e)

\_\_\_\_\_

 How many schools have been involved with workshops on transgender or transsexual identity?(Q13f)

Your best estimate is fine.

\_\_\_\_\_

 Are there any specific resources available for elementary teachers on transgender or transsexual identity?(Q13g)

No

Yes - in some elementary schools


Yes - in all elementary schools

Choose not to answer


Which results were hoped for in providing this training, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q13h)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of trans students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among trans students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trans students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trans students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>self esteem</u> among trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>mental health</u> / reduced <u>suicidality</u> among trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved <u>performance or attendance</u> / reduced <u>drop-out rates</u> among trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>inclusion</u> of trans students in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>peer support</u> for trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased <u>staff support</u> for trans students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other(s) - specify below:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choose not to answer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>


 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q13i)

\_\_\_\_\_


 How many schools have offered workshops for teachers to support transitioning transsexual students?(Q13j)

Your best estimate is fine.

\_\_\_\_\_

 Are there any specific resources available for elementary teachers to support transitioning transsexual students?(Q13k)

- No
- Yes - in some elementary schools
- Yes - in all elementary schools
- Choose not to answer

 Which results were hoped for in providing this training, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q13l)

	Hoped for	Achieved
Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>harassment</u> of transitioning students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less <u>cyberbullying</u> of transitioning students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced <u>high risk behaviours</u> among transitioning students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transitioning students <u>report when they are harassed</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transitioning students feel <u>more attached</u> to school community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Improved self esteem among transitioning students

Improved mental health / reduced suicidality among transitioning students

Improved performance or attendance / reduced drop-out rates among transitioning students


Increased inclusion of transitioning students in schools

Increased peer support for transitioning students


Increased staff support for transitioning students

Other(s) - specify below:

Choose not to answer


 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please specify here:(Q13m)

\_\_\_\_\_

 How many schools have library resources on transgender topics/themes?(Q13n)

Your best estimate is fine.

\_\_\_\_\_


 Are there any school resources available specifically for elementary teachers on transgender topics/themes?(Q13o)

No

Yes - in some elementary schools

Yes - in all elementary schools

Choose not to answer

 Which results were hoped for in providing these resources, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q13p)

Hoped for

Achieved

Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”

Less harassment of trans students (e.g., verbal, physical, sexual)

Less cyberbullying of trans students

Reduced high risk behaviours among trans students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance abuse)

Trans students report when they are harassed

Trans students feel more attached to school community

Improved self esteem among trans students

Improved mental health / reduced suicidality among trans students

Improved performance or attendance /  
reduced drop-out rates among trans  
students


Increased inclusion of trans students in  
schools

Increased peer support for trans students


Increased staff support for trans students

Other(s) - specify below:

Choose not to answer


 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please describe here:(Q13q)

\_\_\_\_\_

 How many schools have these other specified resources?(Q13r)

Your best estimate is fine.

\_\_\_\_\_

 Are these resources available for elementary teachers?(Q13s)

No

Yes - in some elementary schools

Yes - in all elementary schools

Choose not to answer

Which results were hoped for in providing this training, and which have been at least somewhat achieved?(Q13t)

Hoped for

Achieved

Less use of “that’s so gay” or “t’es gai”

Less harassment of trans students (e.g.,  
verbal, physical, sexual)

Less cyberbullying of trans students

Reduced high risk behaviours among trans  
students (e.g., unprotected sex, substance  
abuse)

Trans students report when they are  
harassed

Trans students feel more attached to school  
community

Improved self esteem among trans students

Improved mental health / reduced suicidality  
among trans students

Improved performance or attendance /  
reduced drop-out rates among trans  
students

Increased inclusion of trans students in  
schools


Increased peer support for trans students

Increased staff support for trans students

Other(s) - specify below:



Choose not to answer

 If you selected Other(s) in the previous question, please specify here:(Q13u)

---

Why has your district not introduced resources for staff on gender expression or transgender identity?(Q13v)

Check all that apply. Select the option(s) that most closely approximate your district's stance.

- Parents would object
- Wanted to but insufficient staff support
- Wanted to but insufficient resources
- Wanted to but community opposed
- Wanted to but religious groups opposed
- Don't approve of gender variance or transgender identity on religious grounds
- Don't want to imply official approval of gender variance or transgender identity
- Don't know of any transgender students in my school district
- Don't believe transphobic harassment warrants special attention
- Generic harassment policy adequately addresses transphobic harassment
- No/very few incidents of transgender harassment in my school district
- Other(s) - please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose not to answer

## Branching Information

• If not Q15 = Yes then Hide ContactInfo



Future stages of this research will investigate the effectiveness of interventions through case studies and analysis of existing data on LGBTQ youth wellbeing in Canada.

Are you willing to be contacted for follow-up discussion of the interventions in place in your school



district/division?(Q15) Yes

No



Contact information:(ContactInfo)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Position (if not CEO) Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_



N.b.: Answering the questions below does NOT imply agreement to be involved in a case study. District employees or students will not be approached to participate in any study without the necessary prior approvals at the school district level.



Tell us about any intervention that you discontinued because it did not prove effective.(Q14a)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Tell us about any intervention that has been particularly effective.(Q14b)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Tell us about any innovative approaches you have taken that might be of interest to other school districts.(Q14c)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Thank you for completing this survey! Project reports will be distributed by email to all participating school districts. With best wishes for safe and respectful schools for all students, Catherine Taylor, on behalf of the National Inventory research team.

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