

SELECTED FINDINGS ON
LGBTQ
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
AND EDUCATIONAL
ATTAINMENT

School Attendance and Dropout Rates

- Although there are not precise dropout rates for LGBTQ students, almost one third of all LGBTQ students drop out of high school, compared with a national average of about 8 percent (Bart, 1998).
- LGBTQ students report that their main reason for dropping out of high school is constant bullying and harassment from other students (American Psychological Association, 2012).
- Nearly one third of LGBTQ students had skipped a day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe (Kosciw et al., 2012; Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014).
- Of students held in juvenile detention centers, 15 percent are LGBTQ-identified and many are held on truancy charges (Irvine, 2010).

School Climate and Grade Point Average (GPA)

- In studies looking only at LGBTQ-identified students, students who report a high level of harassment and school victimization because of their sexual orientation report lower GPAs—an overall GPA of 2.8, compared with 3.3 for students with a low level of victimization (Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014).
- Boys and girls who report same-sex romantic attraction leave high school with lower grades than their opposite-sex-attracted peers (Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007).
- LGBTQ students in a highly supportive environment have higher GPAs than LGBTQ students in less supportive environments. Among LGBTQ students, GPA is positively correlated with teacher support, peer support, and a sense of belonging in the school environment (Kosciw,

Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010; Kosciw, Greytak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014; Murdock & Boloch, 2005).

- Some LGBTQ students may show a high level of resilience and emerge from a less-than-supportive school climate with high grades, high student achievement, and high educational expectations (Russell, 2005; Ueno et al., 2013).
- Adolescents experiencing same-sex sexuality have better academic performance in high school when attending schools in urban areas and schools with lower levels of student religiosity and less emphasis on hyper-masculine sports such as football (Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009).

College Aspirations and Experiences

- LGBTQ high school students express greater ambitions to pursue higher education than their peers. Over 90 percent of LGBTQ high school students plan to attend college and about 50 percent plan to earn a graduate degree; in contrast, only about 70 percent of high school students plan to go to college and about 33 percent expect to complete a graduate/professional degree (Ingels & Dalton, 2013).
- Among college students, large-scale studies using the National Survey of Student Engagement data show no meaningful differences between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students in parental education levels, transfer status, athletic participation, or self-reported grades (Gonya & Moore, 2007; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2011).
- LGBTQ college students who are more out are more likely to participate in academic enrichment programs and activities such as foreign language course taking, study abroad, and engagement in courses that emphasize diversity (Gonyea & Moore, 2007; National Survey of Student Engagement).

Additional findings reported in Chapter 7: LGBTQ Student Achievement and Educational Attainment, LGBTQ Issues in Education: Advancing a Research Agenda.

References

American Psychological Association. (2012). Guidelines for psychological practice with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients. *American Psychologist*, 67(1), 10–42.

Bart, M. (1998). Creating a safer school for gay students. *Counseling Today*, 26, 36–39.

Gonyea, R., & Moore, J., III. (2007, November–December). Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students and their engagement in educationally purposeful activities in college.



Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Louisville, KY.

Ingels, S. J., & Dalton, B. (2013). *High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09) First Follow-up: A First Look at Fall 2009 Ninth Graders in 2012*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Irvine, A. (2010). We've had three of them: Addressing the invisibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual and gender non-conforming youths in the juvenile justice system. *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, 19(3), 675–701.

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Diaz, E. M., & Bartkiewicz, M. J. (2010). *The 2009 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Palmer, N. A., & Boesen, M. J. (2014). *The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network.

Murdock, T. B., & Bolch, M. B. (2005). Risk and protective factors for poor school adjustment in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) high school youth: Variable and person-centered analyses. *Psychology in the Schools*, 42, 159–172.

National Survey of Student Engagement. (2011). *Fostering student engagement campus wide: Annual results 2011*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.

Pearson, J., Muller, C., & Wilkinson, L. (2007). Adolescent same-sex attraction and academic outcomes: The role of school attachment and engagement. *Social Problems*, 54(4), 523–542.

Russell, S. T. (2005). Beyond risk: Resilience in the lives of sexual minority youth. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education*, 2(3), 5–18.

