

# **LGBT Educators' Perceptions of Safety and Support and Implications for Equity-Oriented School Leaders**

## **Authors**

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## **Description**

This 16-page research study reveals LGBT-educators' perceptions of safety and support in the school system and offers suggestions to further improve the current experience of LGBT-educators.

## **Salient Points**

This study provides a picture of LGBT educators' experiences after coming out as LGBT. I used the National Survey of Educators' Perceptions of School Climate instrument (also used in 2007 and 2011) to determine teachers' perceived experiences when coming out as LGBT educators. In 2007/2011, some of the negative feedback revolved around the lack of support from students, the continued experience of bullying to the extent that some teachers felt being ostracized for coming out as LGBT, and resistance of parents who did not want their children placed with LGBT educators.

In contrast, in 2017, more respondents mentioned the positive effects of being out than the negative effects. LGBT teachers mentioned that their ability to support LGBT learners was the most positive effect of being out. They were able to be role models, their LGBT learners had "someone like them" to go to, and they were able to be involved in their schools' GSAs.

Despite these positive consequences, still, in 2017, one third of LGBT teachers still experienced a hostile school climate. The study suggests that school leaders must continuously support teachers by providing professional development on LGBT issues, providing quality and frequent interventions on issues about homophobia and transphobia, and creating inclusive school activities that welcome everyone regardless of their sexual identities or preferences. Having a support system that is open for change not only affects LGBT educators but also influences students' perceptions of a whether a school environment is safe and caring.

## **Questions for Reflection**

As you explore this study, consider the following questions:

- As mentioned in the study, coming out as LGBT can have both positive and negative consequences for instructors. What positive or negative consequences would an LGBTQ instructor face if they came out in your teaching context?

- The conclusion lists suggestions for disrupting heteronormative (and discriminatory) practices. What practices does your organization implement to counter hostility towards LGBTQ educators?
- One theme that emerged from the study was bullying (p. 12). What measures do your school administrators take to counter the bullying experienced by LGBT teachers and students?

## **Keywords**

*LGBT educators, school climate, homophobia*

## **Reference**

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