

SELECTED LGBTQ RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhance the content of education research on LGBTQ issues.

- **Develop and implement an operational definition of LGBTQ status to use across research.**
Most research defines LGBTQ status and sexual orientation based on a person's sexual identity, sexual behavior, sexual attraction, and/or household structure; missing is a clearly defined method or questions to categorize LGBTQ status.
- **Develop valid and reliable scales and assessments to measure aspects of LGBTQ status.**
The term *sexuality* tends to include three unique aspects—identity, behavior, and attraction—but missing is a reliable and valid scale measuring sexuality.
- **Encourage increased attention to LGBTQ topics as a focus of research.**
Much of the research addressing LGBTQ students is designed to address school climate, mental health issues among teens, and/or drug and substance abuse. Few studies focus specifically or exclusively on LGBTQ subjects with a broad scope.
- **Include LGBTQ status at the intersections of race, ethnicity, social class, education level, income, and geographic location.**
Issues surrounding sexuality have large and significant cultural or subcultural underpinnings; LGBTQ students cannot be seen as a monolithic group. The diversity within LGBTQ communities needs to be reflected in the research.
- **Conduct research that differentiates among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people and issues.**
There is an emerging discussion of different gender expressions, which may not necessarily be connected with sexual behavior or identity; greater knowledge and research about gender expressions needs to be developed. More generally, research should not treat all LGBTQ status groups as identical.

Enhance data and information systems to include information about LGBTQ status of students, school practices, and educational outcomes.

- **Include items about LGBTQ student status in large-scale federal and state data collection such as those conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics and the National Science Foundation.**

Expanded knowledge about the LGBTQ status of students is important to tracking population statistics, the experiences of these students, and the quality and forms of student support. Thus, including LGBTQ-identifying questions in large-scale surveys and questionnaires that are targeted to students and youth is a step in this direction.

- **Collect data on students' household and family structures.**

Although there is a growing body of research on same-sex couples and LGBTQ parents, the information and data about their experiences with their children's schools are limited.

- **Develop a data system that collects school-context information on crime and discipline related to LGBTQ status.**

Information on LGBTQ status needs to be systematically included as part of data collection on campus harassment, bullying, hate crimes, sexual assault and violence, and other related criminal activities. Only such information allows identifying how these offensive and criminal violations are connected to LGBTQ status or sexual orientation.

Build capacity among researchers and in the research enterprise to study LGBTQ topics in education research.

- **Encourage scholars and researchers to study LGBTQ issues as part of their research agenda.**

Scholars and researchers at all grade levels should be encouraged to study LGBTQ issues in education.

- **Empower education researchers to study LGBTQ issues.**

Universities, field- and discipline-based organizations, and private foundations can promote LGBTQ research through their journals, conferences, academic colloquia, and general discussions.

- **Invest in research that advances knowledge on LGBTQ issues.**

Universities, associations, foundations, and federal and state research agencies need to fund and support research that addresses LGBTQ issues.

Develop policies and practices that can potentially enhance education research on LGBTQ issues and topics.



- **Develop guidance for institutional review boards (IRB) that specifically references research related to sexual orientation and LGBTQ people, including research with children.**

Local school districts and communities remain very reluctant to allow researchers to provide access to undertake research on LGBTQ issues or to ask students questions about sexual behavior or sexual identity; often, the outcomes of IRB review at the researchers' own institutions or at the school-district level preclude asking certain questions or using information in student records.

Additional recommendations reported in Chapter 12: Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research, LGBTQ Issues in Education: Advancing a Research Agenda.

