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A report released this week by Gay-Straight Alliance Network and the California Safe Schools Coalition (CSSC) provides new insight into the impact on individual students and school climate as a whole when different class lessons include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people and issues.

"These data prove what Gay-Straight Alliance activists have known for years: when students have factual lessons that honestly reflect the world and the people around them, they are more likely to succeed and feel safe in school," said Carolyn Laub, executive director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

"This important research supports emerging best practices on the school, district, and state level, including California's groundbreaking FAIR Education Act, which updates education guidelines to end the exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from social studies lessons."

Among the report's key findings is that LGBTQ-inclusive lessons, when rated by students as "mostly supportive," positively impact school climate across the board.

Additionally, any mention of LGBTQ people or issues in class -- supportive or not -- increases individual students' feelings of safety regardless of their sexual orientation. Physical education (PE) classes are the only exception, where "neutral/mixed" LGBTQ-inclusive lessons have a negative effect on students.

"This new research clearly shows how important inclusive lessons can be in today's schools," said University of Arizona professor Stephen T. Russell, the lead researcher for the California Safe Schools Coalition. "At a time when there is more concern than ever about LGBTQ bullying

and safety in schools, this research confirms that students need to see themselves reflected in lessons. When they do, they feel safer and more connected at school -- and the school climate is healthier for everyone."

The Lessons That Matter report expands on previous research from organizations including the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and the California Safe Schools Coalition that found a correlation between schools with LGBTQ-inclusive lessons and student-reported feelings of safety.

The report honed in on the specific classes and types of inclusive lessons that most positively impact school climate. The report analyzed data from the California Safe Schools Coalition's 2008 Preventing School Harassment (PSH) survey, which asked 1,232 students at 154 California high schools about school safety and the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning students and their straight allies.

The full report is available for download HERE [1].

http://www.sdgln.com/news/2012/06/08/report-lgbtq-inclusive-... [2]
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