



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Support Services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) Youth program began during the 2018-19 school year through the creation of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) at 16 Dallas Independent School District (ISD) campuses. GSAs are student-run groups that provide safe spaces for LGBTQ students and straight-student allies to socialize and learn to advocate for policies that make schools safer for LGBTQ youth. In addition to supporting GSAs, the program also promoted the Out for Safe Schools (OSS) program, which provided teachers and other Dallas ISD staff members with training in harassment intervention and creating an LGBTQ-inclusive environment.¹ Staff members who completed the training received an OSS badge, which was worn with the Dallas ISD identification badge and identified the staff member as an LGBTQ ally. This training continued in 2019-20. The program was not funded during previous school years. This year, the program was funded with \$96,028 from Title IV, Part A.²

This evaluation examined GSA implementation and activities on campuses, GSA student-member experiences, and OSS training attendance. The district transitioned to at-home learning beginning March 23, 2020 because of COVID-19. Changes to programming as a result of the transition are detailed in the relevant components of the report.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

How were GSAs implemented during the 2019-20 school year?

Methodology

The evaluator received a list of campus GSAs from the Support Services for LGBTQ Youth coordinator on January 13, 2020. GSA sponsor training session attendance data were received on July 09, 2020. The evaluator calculated the number of sponsors and who attended each training session.

To document GSA activities, the evaluator interviewed three GSA faculty sponsors, observed three GSA meetings, and surveyed participating students. Because of the district transition to at-home learning in response to the COVID-19

pandemic, GSA sponsor interviews and meeting observations were cancelled after March 23, 2020.

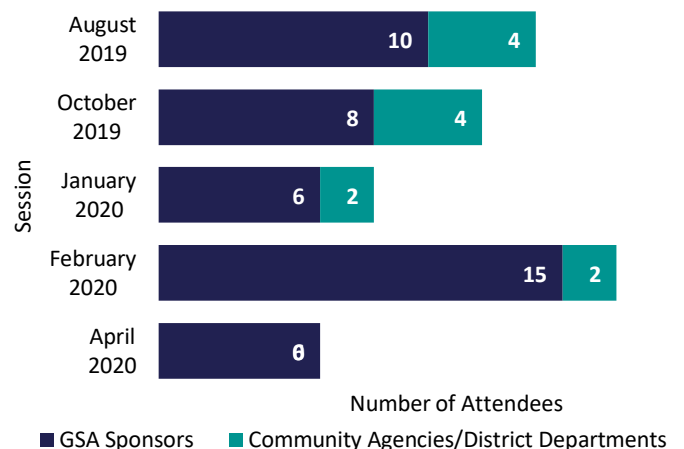
Results

GSA Formation and Support

The program aided in forming GSAs at 16 high school campuses during the 2018-19 school year.³ During the 2019-20 school year, three additional campuses formed GSAs: J. L. Long Middle School, Irma Lerma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School, and Harry Stone Montessori Academy.

The Support Services for LGBTQ Youth provided five training sessions for GSA sponsors throughout the school year (Figure 1). Trainings included overviews of the Support Services for LGBTQ Youth and GSAs; presentations by representatives from Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Dallas Police Department, and the American Civil Liberties Union; discussion of the 2020 Teen Pride festival; and self-care tips for GSA students and sponsors. Sponsors could attend more than one training. While the training was designed for GSA sponsors, representatives from community agencies and staff members with other district departments also attended. The first four sessions were conducted in person; the April 2020 session was attended virtually.

Figure 1: 2019-20 GSA Sponsor Training Session Attendance



Source: Support Services for LGBTQ Youth on 07/09/20.

¹ Support Services for LGBTQ Youth coordinated with the Resource Center to provide OSS training. More information on the Resource Center can be found here: <https://www.myresourcecenter.org/>.

² Reported on 02/28/20.

³ 2018-19 campuses included Bryan Adams High School, W. H. Adamson High School, CityLab High School, Emmett J. Conrad High School,

Hillcrest High School, Thomas Jefferson High School, Justin F. Kimball High School, Moises E. Molina High School, Franklin D. Roosevelt High School, Seagoville High School, Skyline High School, Spruce High School, Sunset High School, Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Magnet Center, Booker T. Washington High School for the Visual and Performing Arts, and Woodrow Wilson High School.

GSA Activities

GSA sponsors provided spaces for GSA meetings, coordinated presentations with outside organizations and Support Services for LGBTQ Youth, but generally allowed students to lead meetings and direct the activities that the group pursued. Presentations from outside agencies included LGBTQ rights in schools and LGBTQ experiences in law enforcement. Other activities ranged from social and artistic (e.g., writing letters to GSA members at other campuses, homecoming parade floats, hallway decorations, and creating designs for ceiling tiles), to learning the history of LGBTQ people and issues, to activist (e.g., writing letters to campus administrators to promote gender-neutral restrooms).

How did GSA student members perceive LGBTQ issues on their campuses and the effectiveness of GSA activities during the 2019-20 school year?

Methodology

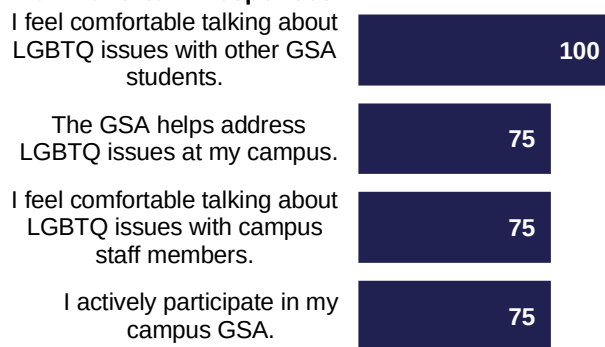
In partnership with the LGBTQ Support Services coordinator, the evaluator developed a 19-item student survey addressing perceptions of GSA activities, perceptions of the campus environment, and experiences with harassment and bullying. The surveys were originally intended to be completed on Scantron sheets. Because surveys could neither be delivered nor picked up after spring break because of district building closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluator created an electronic version of the survey to be delivered during virtual GSA meetings.⁴ The evaluator used frequency analyses to summarize the percentage of students who responded positively to each campus environment item (agree or strongly agree). For harassment and bullying items, the evaluator calculated the percentage of students who responded affirmatively.

Results

GSA Activities and Campus Environment

Twelve students completed the survey; due to the small number of respondents, results should be viewed with caution as they may not be fully representative of all GSA students. Most students reported that they actively participated in their campus GSA (75%; Figure 2) and had attended six or more GSA meetings over the course of the school year (58%). All students reported that they felt comfortable talking with other GSA students about LGBTQ issues, and 75 percent felt comfortable talking about LGBTQ issues with campus staff members. Seventy-five percent of respondents indicated that the GSA helped address LGBTQ-related campus issues.

Figure 2: 2019-20 GSA Student Survey Campus Environment Item Responses



% Agree or Strongly Agree

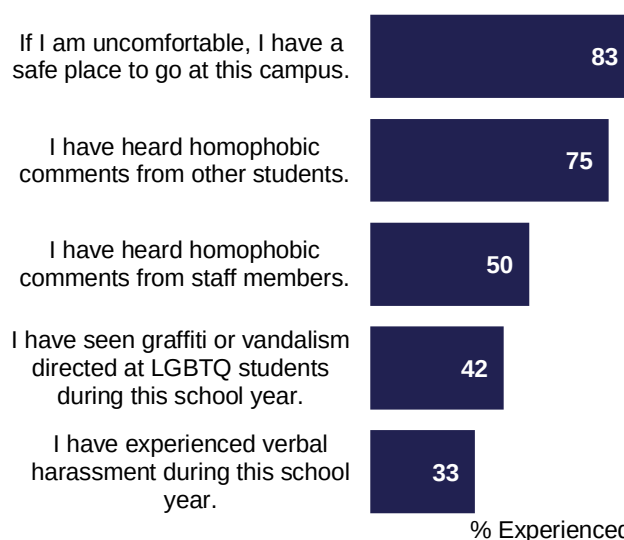
Source: GSA Student Survey administered 04/09/20 to 06/09/20.

Note: Number of respondents = 12.

Harassment and Bullying

While no students reported that they experienced physical harassment or cyberbullying during the 2019-20 school year, 75 percent had heard homophobic comments from other students, and 50 percent reported hearing homophobic or negative comments about gender expression from campus staff members, though the comments occurred rarely (Figure 3). Forty-two percent of respondents had seen graffiti or vandalism directed toward LGBTQ students at their campus, and 33 percent were directly harassed verbally. Over 83 percent of the respondents indicated that, if uncomfortable, they had a safe place to go at their school; however, 17 percent did not have a safe place to go.

Figure 3: 2019-20 GSA Student Survey Harassment and Bullying Item Responses



% Experienced

Source: GSA Student Survey administered 04/09/20 to 06/09/20.

Note: Number of respondents = 12.

⁴ The online survey included one additional open-ended response item asking students to describe the GSA activities that they had participated in during the school year. The survey was administered 04/09/20 to 06/09/20.

No responding students reported receiving a discipline referral and one student (8%) reported experiencing homelessness during the 2019-20 school year.

What were the attendance outcomes for Dallas ISD staff members at OSS training sessions during the 2019-20 school year?

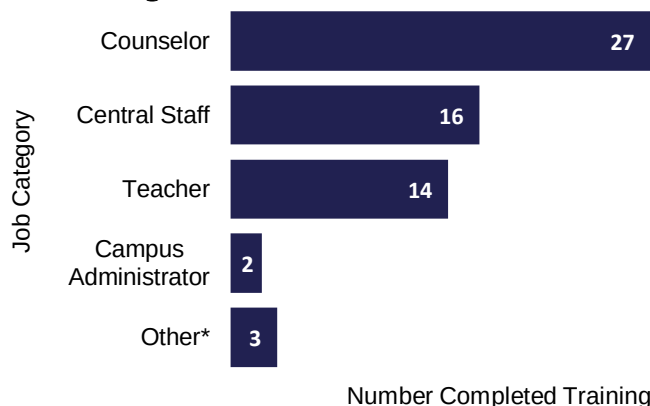
Methodology

The evaluator received a list of district staff members who received OSS training during the 2019-20 school year on June 24, 2020 and merged these data with the district personnel file dated April 7, 2020. The evaluator calculated the number of staff members who completed the training by job category.

Results

Exactly 62 district staff members completed OSS training and became recognized as LGBTQ allies during the 2019-20 school year. The number of staff members by job category is shown in Figure 4. The largest number of attendees were counselors ($n = 27$), central staff members ($n = 16$), and teachers ($n = 14$). Two attendees were campus administrators.

Figure 4: 2019-20 District Staff Members Completing OSS Training



Source: Support Services for LGBTQ Youth on 06/24/20 and district personnel file dated 04/07/20.

Note: Information on three district staff members could not be matched in the district personnel file. *Other included media specialists and a registrar.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Encourage OSS training for all district employees at the campus level, particularly campus administrators and members of the Dallas ISD Police Department. The OSS training ensures that district staff members are understanding of LGBTQ issues, can provide a safe space for LGBTQ youth, and are provided with LGBTQ harassment intervention strategies. Such roles on campus should not be limited to counselors and teachers. Support Services for LGBTQ Youth should develop strategies to increase the number of on-campus administrators and police who can serve in these capacities. This may provide support for the 17 percent of students of students who reported having no safe place on campus.

Promote completion of the GSA student survey to GSA sponsors. It is important to gauge the experiences of LGBTQ youth in the Dallas ISD, and the GSA survey is an important part of that objective. While the transition to at-home learning prohibited the collection of the physical surveys, few students ($n = 12$) completed the survey electronically. Because the survey relies on GSA sponsors for distribution to students, it is imperative to communicate to the sponsors the importance of getting as many responses as possible from students at secondary campuses across the district.

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