

# LGBTQ FACTS

## Historical Background on LGBTQ Youth Safety



The School Board of Broward County values and appreciates all students and staff. As the 6<sup>TH</sup> largest school system in the nation with staff and students from 173 countries who speak 53 different languages, we understand that diversity's assets are key elements of creativity, the ability to think critically and success in school and in the community. With diversity's assets and opportunities comes a plethora of challenges as students negotiate making their way in the world. School year 2008-2009 heralded a shooting tragedy at a local high school, and a team of school board leadership and community members came together to discuss how to continue to make our schools safe from violence.

An offshoot of this small team grew into a larger committee which met to discuss the safety and well-being of all youth, in particular youth of varying sexual identities. The team found that local and national data underscored the issues, needs and protection of LGBTQ students. From this committee the "Safe to Be Me Coalition" was initiated. Comprised of approximately 30 organizations, the coalition gathers regularly, offering support and advocacy for the at risk population of LGBTQ youth, and those perceived as such, in Broward County Public Schools. They work closely and regularly with the Department of Diversity, Cultural Outreach and Prevention (DCO&P.) DCO&P has a point person who, among other tasks related to bullying and peace building in schools, helps to ensure the safety, respect and well-being of sexual minority students in Broward County Public Schools.

# The Facts about LGBTQ Safety

***“They would be like “Oh yeah, I’m accepting,” and then I’d walk down the hall and everyone would call me a dyke.”***

## **LGBT identified South Florida middle school student**

We know that bullying and harassment in schools takes place at all ages, transpires among both boys and girls and men and woman, and is often initiated when a perception is made about something or someone that is not understood. Research points to the number one reason that students are bullied is because of appearance and the number two reason being real or perceived to be real sexual orientation.

For students that are bullied, excluded or harassed because of their perceived or real sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sobering realities of daily life at school have brought to light a clear and consistent need for protection so students can feel safe, learn and thrive while in their school communities.

