

Addressing Homophobia In Our Schools

It's Elementary & Secondary

Limestone District School Board

April 2012



Research shows...

- ❖ Student success is directly linked to a school's learning environment
- ❖ Students are more able and more motivated to do well and to achieve their full potential in schools that have a positive school climate, and in which they feel safe, supported and respected



Thus, Ontario Ministry of Education has...



- ***developed an Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy that requires each school to create and support a positive school climate that fosters and promotes equity, inclusive education and respect for human diversity***



Inclusive Education...

- ❖ is based on principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students
- ❖ ensures students see themselves reflected in daily curriculum, activities, events, physical surroundings and in the broader environment
- ❖ respects human diversity and honours all individuals



Lezzie

Homo

Dyke!

FAG

"That's so gay!"

A national survey of homosexual and heterosexual students found that anti-gay comments are so common in Canadian schools that most students hear them on a daily basis

***Harassment and discrimination based on one's perceived sexual orientation makes school a difficult and frightening experience for many students**

***Even the perception of being homosexual or being tolerant of homosexuality is enough to result in harassment and intimidation**



If homophobic bullying is not addressed, it implies to the whole school community that it is okay to discriminate!



As part of an inclusive education strategy, Anti-homophobia education is:

- inclusive of all members of our school communities
- respectful of differences and inclusive of diversity
- respectful of Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- mindful that harassment and discrimination are present in our school system



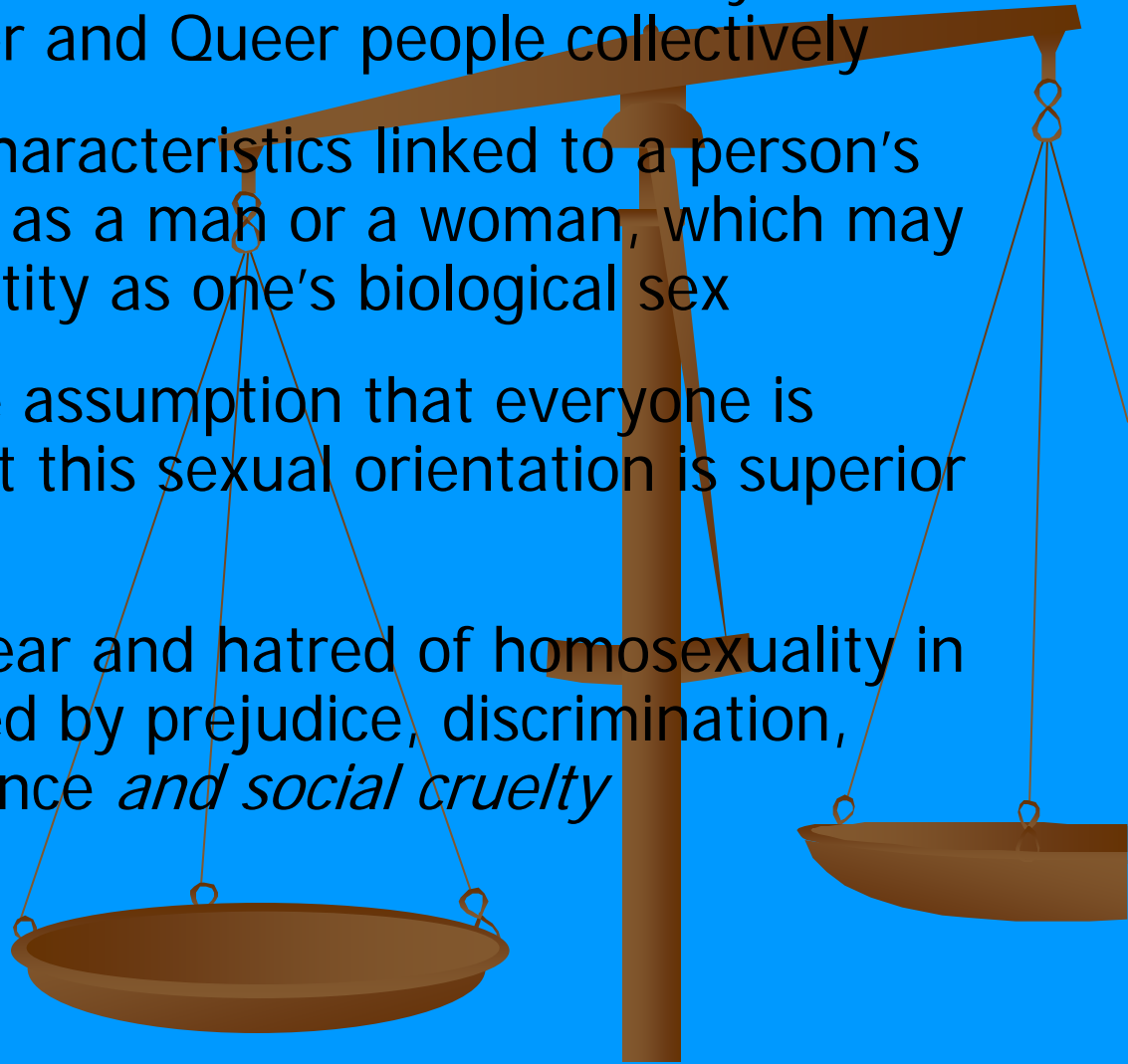
As part of an inclusive education strategy, Anti-homophobia education is:

- mindful that silence around certain topics can be a form of discrimination
- optimistic that a better, caring, more respectful school environment is possible for everyone
- contributing to safe learning and teaching environments by responding to homophobia and heterosexism



KEY TERMS

- **LGBTQ:** an acronym that refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer people collectively
- **Gender Identity:** characteristics linked to a person's intrinsic sense of self as a man or a woman, which may not be the same identity as one's biological sex
- **Hetero-sexism:** the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that this sexual orientation is superior *and normal*
- **Homophobia:** the fear and hatred of homosexuality in others, often exhibited by prejudice, discrimination, bullying, acts of violence *and social cruelty*





Myths and Facts about Anti-homophobia education...



Myth: Teaching about homosexuality in schools involves talking about gay sex

Fact: Just as health curriculum at the elementary level does not include discussion about sex or sexual practices, Anti-homophobia education does not involve a description or discussion of sexual activities



Myth: Anti-homophobia education will encourage students to choose to become LGBTQ.



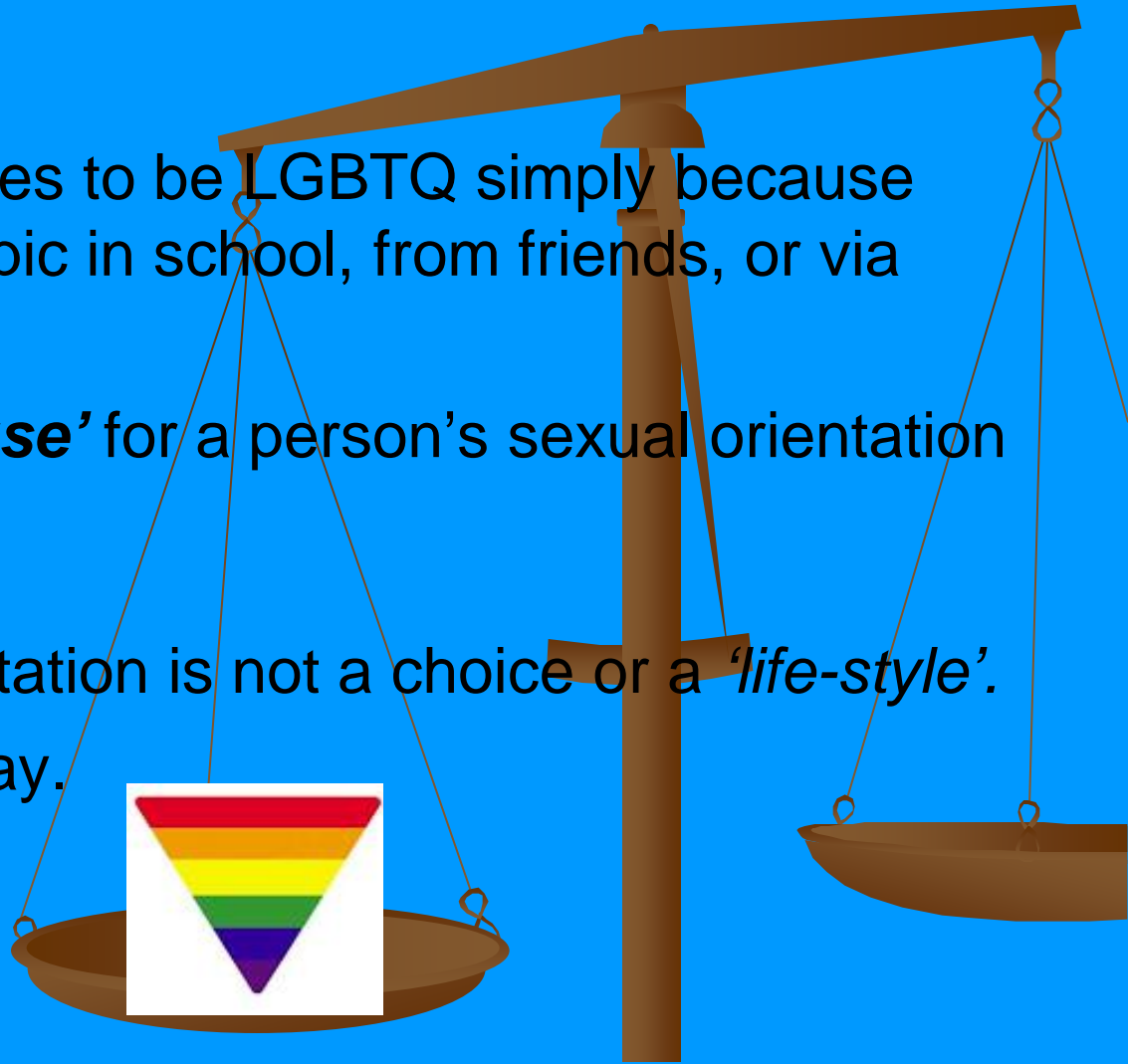
Fact:

No one suddenly chooses to be LGBTQ simply because they heard about the topic in school, from friends, or via their social circles.

There is no known **'cause'** for a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

A person's sexual orientation is not a choice or a *'life-style'*.

A person is born that way.



Myth: Talking about homosexuality in schools condones the *'lifestyle'*.

Fact:

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) people have lives like everyone else.

There is no distinct LGBTQ *'lifestyle'*.

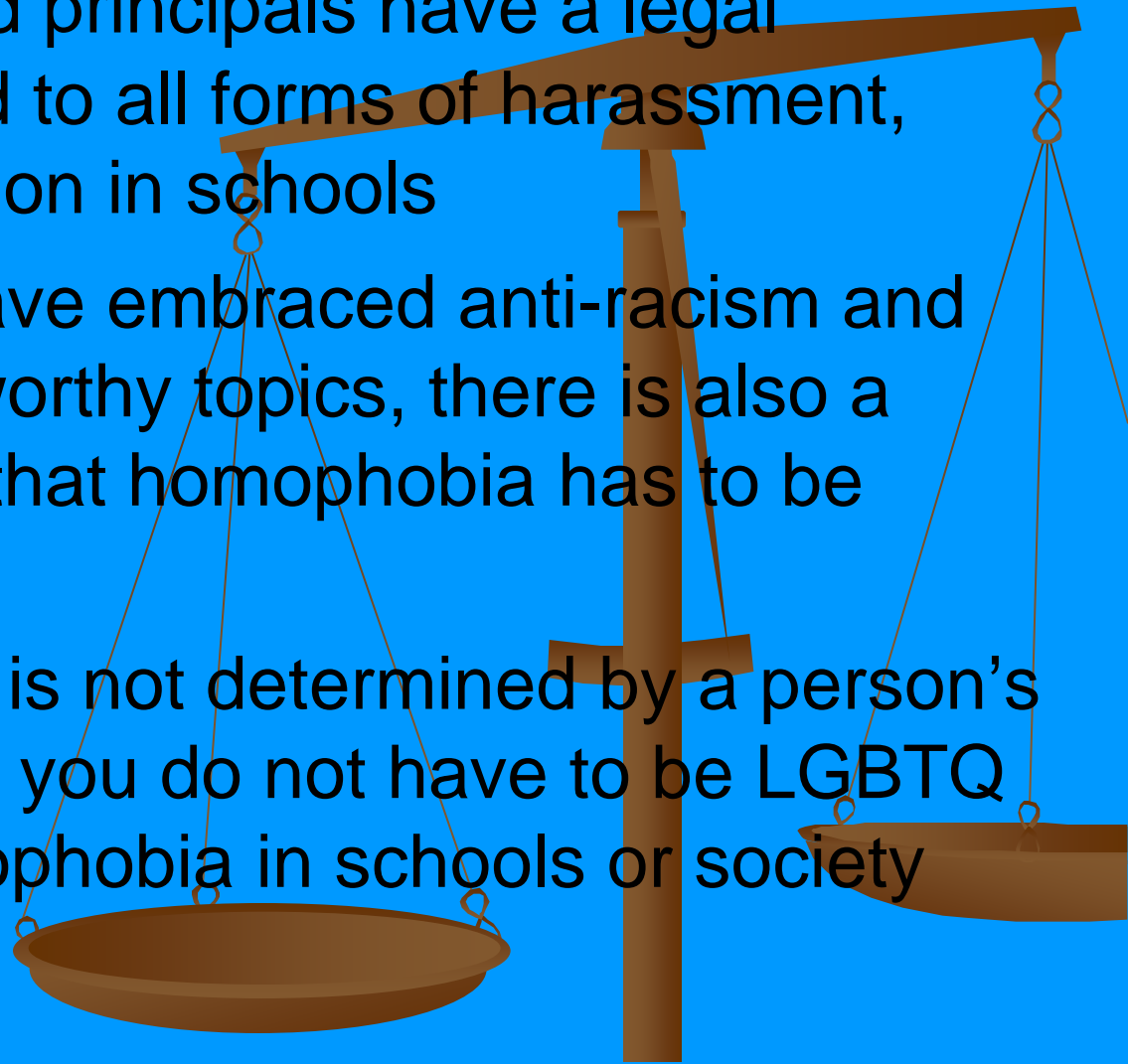


Myth: LGBTQ teachers have a gay agenda for public schools by introducing LGBTQ topics.

Fact: Teachers and principals have a legal obligation to respond to all forms of harassment, hate and discrimination in schools

Just as educators have embraced anti-racism and multiculturalism as worthy topics, there is also a growing awareness that homophobia has to be addressed

Caring about racism is not determined by a person's skin colour. Similarly you do not have to be LGBTQ to fight against homophobia in schools or society



Myth: *“My child is too young for this topic.”*

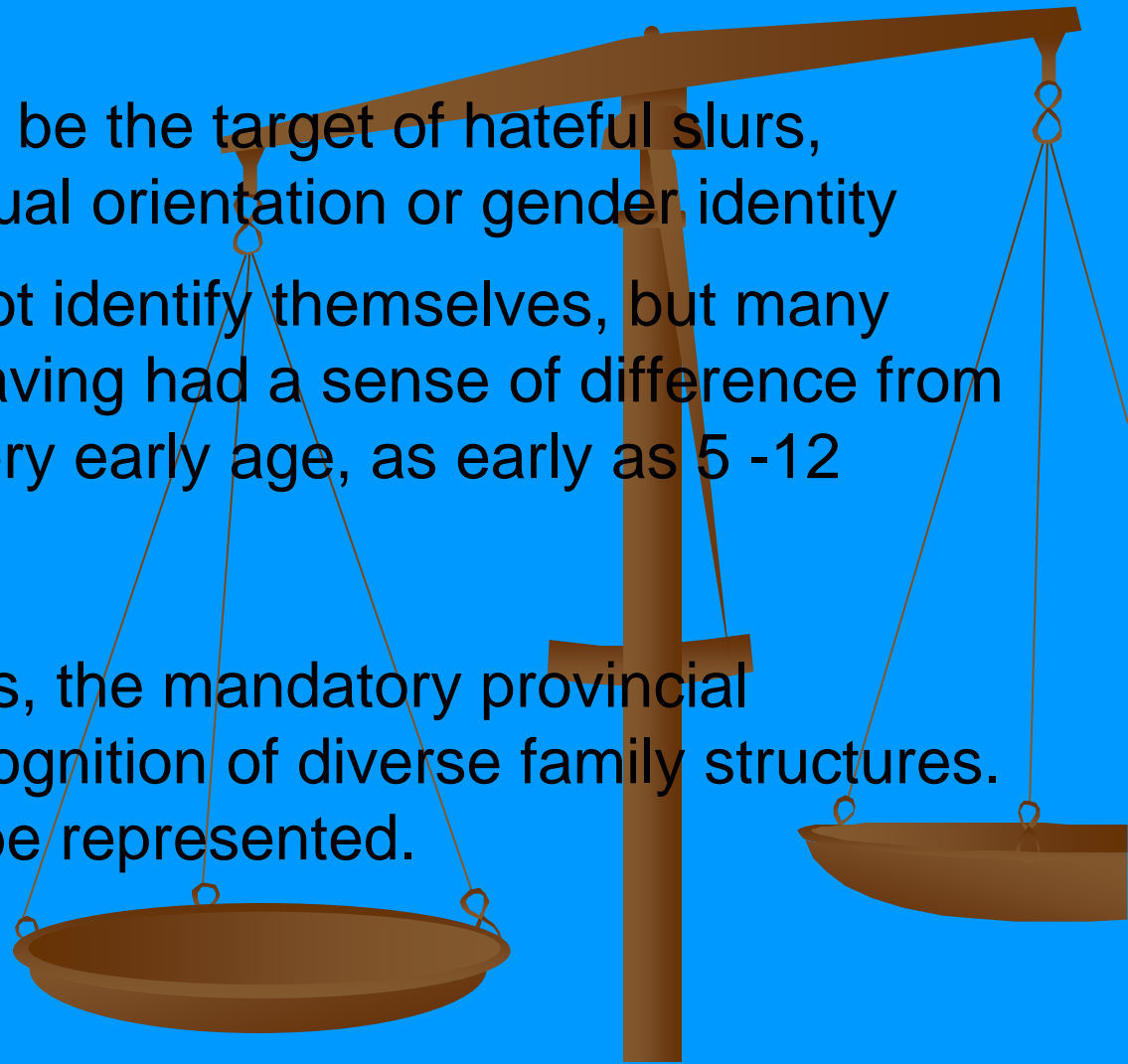
Fact:

Children are already learning homophobic slurs starting in the primary years.

Children of all ages can be the target of hateful slurs, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity

LGBTQ children may not identify themselves, but many LGBTQ adults report having had a sense of difference from other children from a very early age, as early as 5 -12 years old.

Even in the early grades, the mandatory provincial curriculum includes recognition of diverse family structures. All families deserve to be represented.



Myth: *“This is against our rights as parents to teach our own set of family values.” ... or ... “This is against our religion/culture.”*

Fact:

Educators do not condone children being removed from our classes when we engage in anti-racism education. The issue is no different.

Public schools teach about respecting diversity and valuing everyone. All children have a right to an inclusive education free from fear and any form of discrimination.

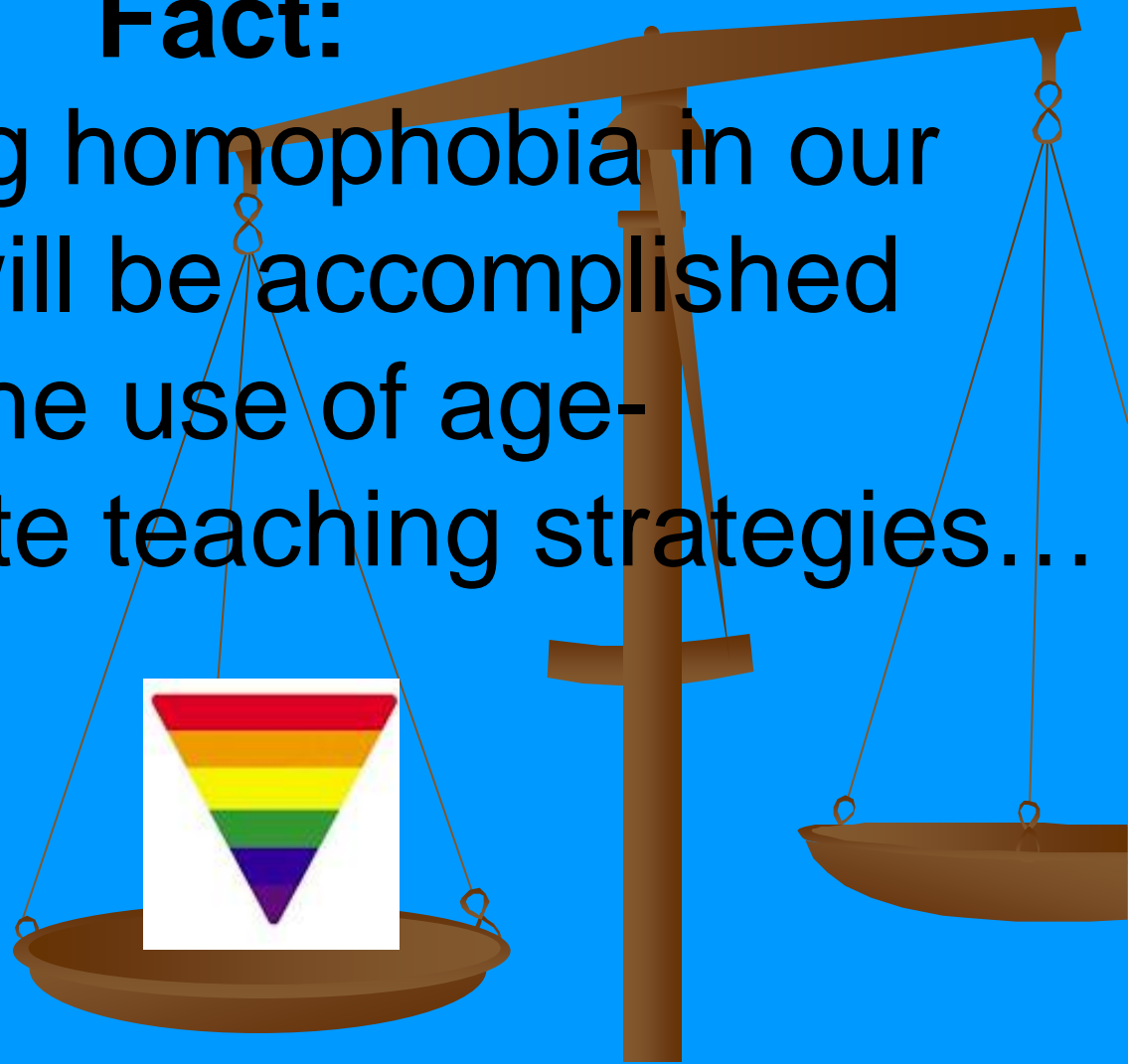
Respecting people’s human rights does not infringe on any religious belief.





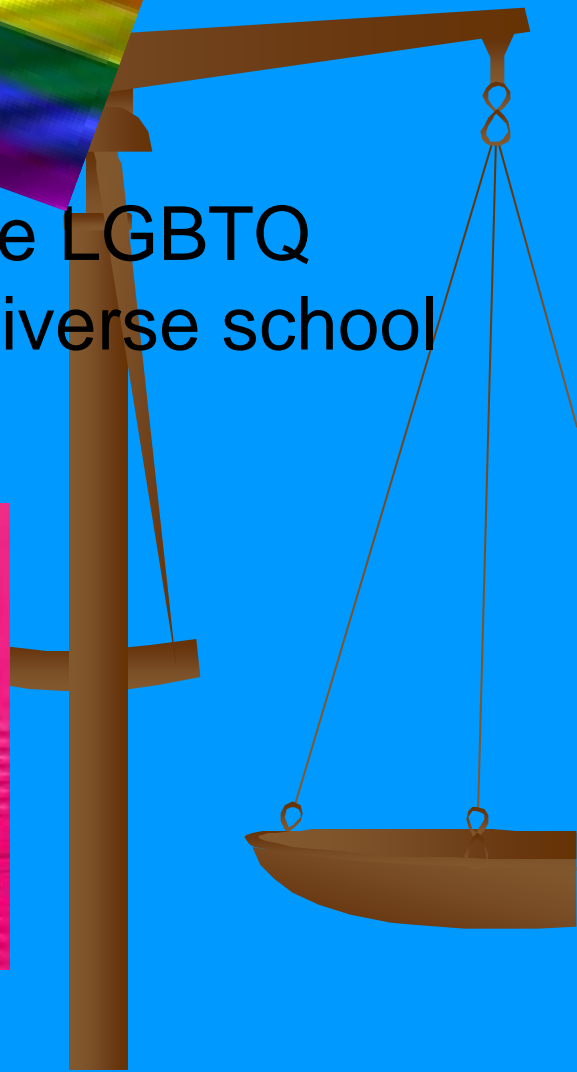
Fact:

Addressing homophobia in our schools will be accomplished through the use of age-appropriate teaching strategies...





...by displaying symbols that welcome LGBTQ students and families as part of our diverse school communities...





...by interrupting and taking action on name-calling, putdowns and anti-gay jokes...

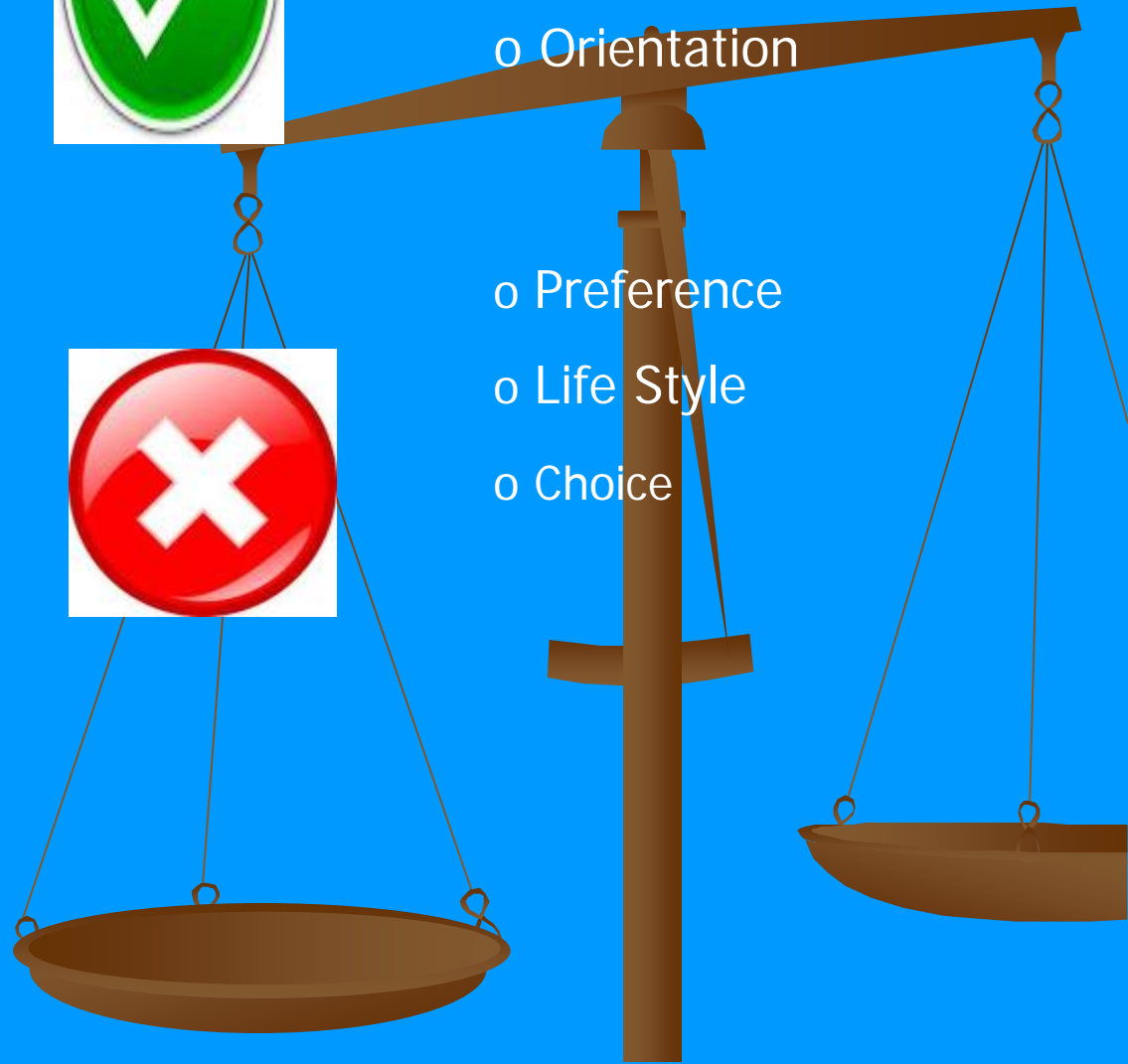


...by using
inclusive
language
verbally
and in
writing...



- o Partner
- o Family
- o Love
- o Orientation

- o Preference
- o Life Style
- o Choice





...by using and teaching the words 'gay' and 'lesbian' during the primary years in terms of romantic love...



Anti-homophobia education...

...acknowledges that relationships can be between any 2 people... so discussions may include references to bisexual, gay, heterosexual and lesbian relationships

The sexual orientation of the individuals does not determine whether a relationship is healthy or not!





...by reading texts that introduce LGBTQ characters and issues in age-appropriate and positive contexts and by making them accessible in our classrooms and school libraries...



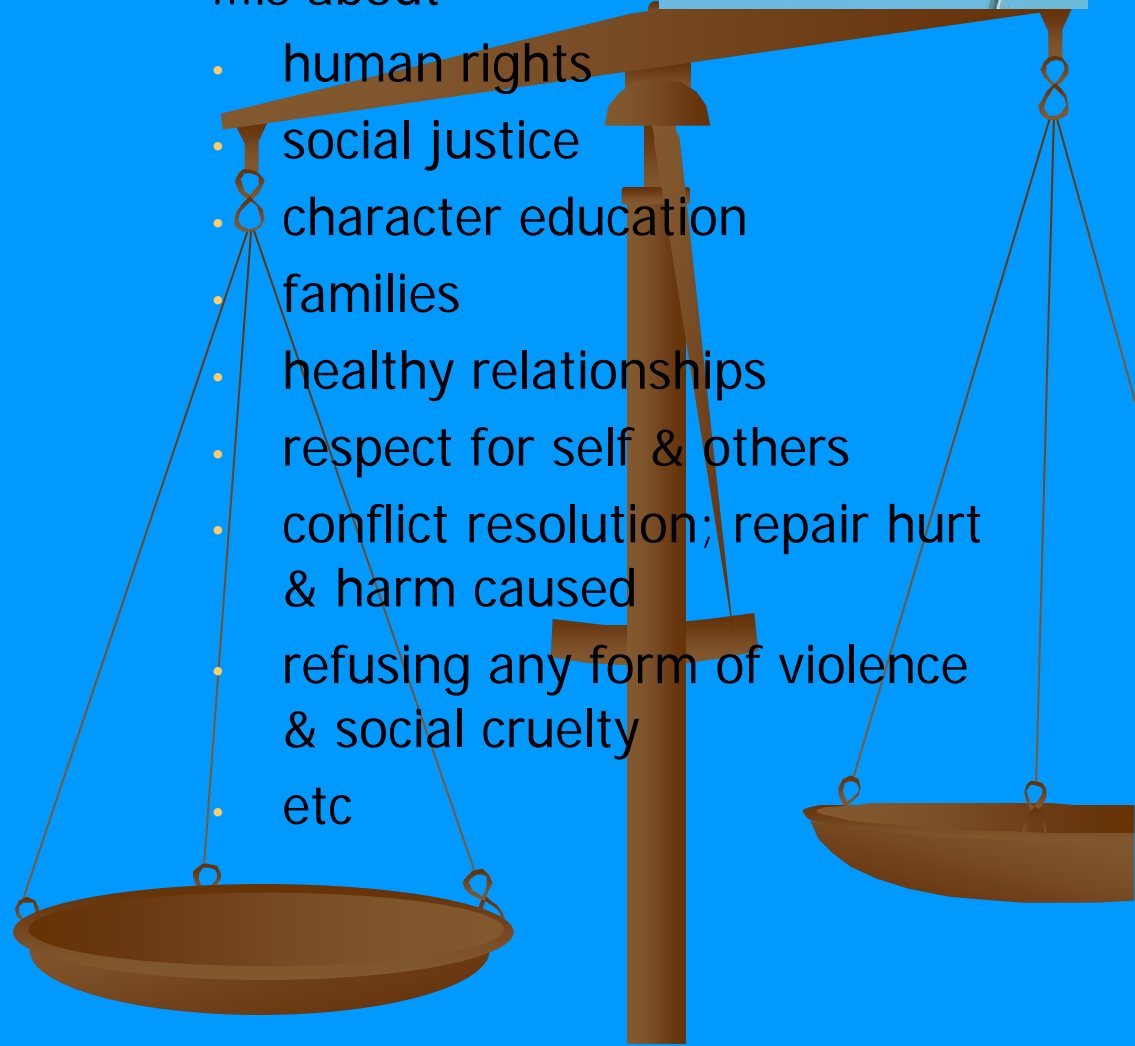
Anti-homophobia education ...

...establishes classrooms that acknowledge and represent the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning people in positive inclusive ways across the curriculum



...is about

- human rights
- social justice
- character education
- families
- healthy relationships
- respect for self & others
- conflict resolution; repair hurt & harm caused
- refusing any form of violence & social cruelty
- etc



Anti- homophobia education...

...seeks to ensure all members of a school community feel safe, respected, welcomed and that they belong!





Words Can
Hurt 
or  **Heal**
What Did Yours
Do Today?



Sources used ...



- Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy: Ontario Ministry of Education
- Pride Education Network: www.pridenet.ca
- Responding to Homophobia and Heterosexism: A Resource Guide for Educators Elementary
Teachers' Federation Ontario
- BC Teachers' Federation, Homophobia & Heterosexism Social Justice Action Group
- Happens to be...LGBTQ in Our Schools: Project for the Barrie Area Family of Schools:
Durham District School Board; Trillium Lakelands District School Board
- OSSTF/FEESO District 16 Adapted from Pride Education
- Creating Spaces: Embedding Equity in Education: OSSTF/FEESO 2010
- Positive Space: Take Action Kit: ETFO/FEEO
- Every Class in Every School: Final Report on First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biophobia & Transphobia in Canadian Schools: Executive Summary, EGALE Canada, 2011

