

# HARVARD EDUCATION LETTER

INSIDE

## Sexual Minority Students Benefit from School-Based Support—Where It Exists

New studies document the challenge of being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender in school and the value of supportive programs

By Michael Sadowski

Six people surrounded the young man and threw a lasso around his neck. They threatened to drag him from the back of a truck, but the victim managed to escape from his tormentors. He immediately reported the incident to the authorities, expecting them to seek out and punish the attackers. Instead, they accused him of provoking the attack by telling others too much about his identity.

This story of physical assault, institutional indifference, and the limits of free speech may sound like fiction, or the kind of incident that takes place somewhere known for human rights abuses and government-sanctioned violence. In fact, it is drawn from a report released in May by Human Rights Watch (HRW), an organization that monitors human rights violations all over the world. But the attack took place in the parking lot of a Nevada high school, the authorities were public school administrators, and the victim, called Dylan N. in the report, was targeted because he is gay.

According to HRW, Dylan's problems at school escalated after he appeared on a local cable TV show about the challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) high school students. Taunts such as "fag," "homo," and "queer" became part of the daily routine, Dylan says. Then the attacks became more physical: students spit at him and threw food at him in the cafeteria. Next came the incident in the parking lot. Dylan reported it to a vice principal, but she never disciplined the offenders, he says. After several other such incidents, district officials transferred him to a school for students with academic and emotional problems. He reports that the principal there told him "he wouldn't have me acting like

a faggot at school." He eventually ended up in an adult education program, unable to get a high school diploma.

While Dylan's case may sound extreme, it is far from exceptional, say the authors of the HRW report, called *Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools*. Drawing on interviews with 140 young people (ages 12 to 21) and 130 adults in seven states, authors Michael Bochenek and A. Widney Brown conclude that verbal, physical, and sexual harassment of LGBT students are widespread in U.S. schools; that many teachers and administrators fail to deal effectively with such incidents; and that most school districts

lack sufficient policies to protect the rights of sexual minority students. "Dylan N.'s story is all too familiar," they write, "... a story of a young man denied an education because of his sexual orientation."

As a qualitative study, Bochenek and Brown's report relies not on statistics but on the personal accounts of LGBT youth. It includes stories about the anti-gay epithets students hear in their schools and the effect this language has on their self-esteem; the ways these words often escalate to physical and sexual harassment; students' feelings of invisibility when school curricula include no positive mention of LGBT people or issues; the coping strategies LGBT youth adopt to deal with in-school abuse; and the support—or lack thereof—of teachers, administrators, and counselors. "We took on this issue because we believed it should be analyzed in a human rights context," says Bochenek. "It's about the right to freedom from violence and discrimination, the right to

**Verbal, physical, and sexual harassment of LGBT students are widespread in U.S. schools.**

### Anti-Gay Bias and the Law

Schools that don't combat harassment of LGBT students can wind up in court.

3

### new and noteworthy

School segregation is still a problem.

5

### for discussion

Harvard's Pedro Noguera talks about "action research."

6

### insights

### Controversy in the Science Classroom

The disputes inherent in science can help capture student attention, writes *Science* magazine's Pamela J. Hines.

8

Please visit our website:  
[www.edletter.org](http://www.edletter.org)

Currently on the web:

### The Research Feature

This month's focus is on efforts to aid sexual minority students, with online links and other resources.

### The Forum Feature

In a technology-driven, "knowledge-management" society, is there still a place for wisdom and vulnerability? Leadership and management expert Peter Senge leads the discussion.

Also visit our past research features, including those on senior-year slump, arts in education, and high-stakes testing.



**Harvard  
Education Letter**

**EDITOR**  
David T. Gordon

**PRODUCTION EDITOR**  
Dody Riggs

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**  
Michael Sadowski

**BUSINESS STAFF**  
Karen Olander

**FACULTY EDITOR**  
Richard F. Elmore

**EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD**  
Katherine C. Boles, Lecturer, HGSE; Laura A. Cooper, Asst. Superintendent, Erving Township (IL) High School; Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor, Stanford University; Sally Dias, Superintendent, Watertown (MA) Public Schools; Harold Howe II, Lecturer Emeritus, HGSE; Susan Moore Johnson, Professor, HGSE; Robert Kegan, Professor, HGSE; Peggy Kemp, Office of School Partnerships, HGSE; Marya Levenson, Director, Teacher Education, Brandeis University; Deborah Meier, Principal, Mission Hill School, Boston, MA; John Merrow, President, The Merrow Report; Jerome T. Murphy, Professor, HGSE; Mill Pierce, Director, Principals' Center, HGSE; Arthur J. Rosenthal, Publishing Consultant; Catherine Snow, Professor, HGSE; Jay Sugarman, Teacher, Runkle School, Brookline, MA; Arundine Valsamis, Director of Project Development, HGSE

Harvard Education Letter (ISSN 0755-3714) is published bimonthly by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, 8 Story Street, 5th floor, Cambridge, MA 02138-3752. Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address change(s) to Harvard Education Letter, 8 Story Street, 5th floor, Cambridge, MA 02138-3752.

Signed articles in the Harvard Education Letter represent the views of the authors.

©2001 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Published as a non-profit service. All rights reserved. Special permission is required to reproduce in any manner, in whole or in part, the material herein contained.

**HOW TO SUBSCRIBE**  
Send \$34 for individuals, \$44 for institutions (\$46 for Canada/Mexico, \$56 other foreign, in U.S. funds only) to Harvard Education Letter, Subscription prices subject to change without notice. Single copies, \$7.00. Back issues and bulk subscriptions available at special reduced rates.

Address all correspondence to Harvard Education Letter, 8 Story Street, 5th floor, Cambridge, MA 02138-3752; phone 617-495-3432 in Massachusetts, 800-513-0763 outside Massachusetts; fax 617-496-3584; email editor@edletter.org; web: www.edletter.org.

freedom of expression, and the right to an education."

When the report was released last May, it drew both interest and criticism in the national media. The San Diego *Union-Tribune* called the reports of school personnel's indifference to anti-gay harassment and violence "sickening." However, *USA Today* columnist Michael Medved challenged the authors' estimate that two million youth are affected by anti-LGBT activity in schools. Medved also questioned why an international organization like HRW would focus its attention on what he considered to be a relatively minor domestic issue: "The new report implicitly compares the teasing of American students with butchery by some of the world's most vicious regimes—thereby trivializing the evil of those nightmare societies."

Brown defends the two million figure and says it takes into account younger students who are labeled by their peers, often as early as preschool, for behavior that does not conform to gender stereotypes. She also rejects the dismissal of anti-gay harassment as mere teasing, noting that biased language often leads to more dangerous abuses: "When we only pay attention to situations like genocide and torture, we allow the climate of intolerance and discrimination to grow."

**Daily Threats**

The HRW study is not the only one to document the hostile climate faced by LGBT students in the United States. A 1999 survey conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), a New York-based group that fights anti-gay bias in schools, found that more than 90 percent of the LGBT students polled heard anti-gay language either "frequently" or "sometimes" in their schools, creating an uncomfortable school climate for these students. More than 60 percent said they had been the victim of verbal harassment in school, half of these on a daily basis.

Where does this verbal harassment take place? Researchers have found that unstructured school spaces such as hallways and cafeterias are likely spots because students perceive that teachers and other adults won't hear, and therefore permit, them there. But several studies reveal the disturbing fact that in many schools, staff often fail to respond to anti-

LGBT language even when they hear it. More than one-third of GLSEN's 496 respondents from 32 states indicated that they never heard teachers or other school staff address such language, and even more had heard faculty and staff actually use derogatory language about sexual minorities.

A growing body of research also backs HRW's finding that verbal harassment can escalate to more dangerous forms of abuse. For example, 28 percent of the LGBT youth surveyed by GLSEN had been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Such violence is also documented in the most recent Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) report, a biennial study based on the responses of more

**School staff often fail to respond to anti-gay language, and many actually use such language, studies show.**

than 4,400 students from randomly selected high schools around the state. (The YRBS is coordinated nationally by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but state and local officials are free to modify the survey. Massachusetts and Vermont are the only two states to include items about sexual orientation on their questionnaires and to break down data along these lines.)

The survey shows that sexual minority students are three times as likely as their peers to skip school because they feel unsafe (19% vs. 6%), three times as likely to report having been injured or threatened by a weapon at school (24% vs. 8%), and more than twice as likely to report having been in a physical fight at school (32% vs. 13%). Moreover, sexual minority youth are more than four times as likely as other students to have attempted suicide (29% vs. 7%), a finding that supports earlier studies about higher rates of suicidal tendencies among LGBT youth.

GLSEN executive director Kevin Jennings believes the verbal and physical harassment of sexual minority youth has

not only emotional and physical consequences, but academic ones as well. "The schools are failing our children—at least LGBT children—because of the climate in which those children are trying to learn," he says. "How can you possibly focus on reading and writing skills when you're basically trying to survive every day?"

A 1999 Washington State study supports Jennings' argument. Based on interviews with 58 students who reported being harassed at school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, Beth Reis, co-chair of the Safe Schools Coalition of Washington, found that more than one-third believed harassment had hurt their grades. Seventy percent avoided parts of the school building or grounds, 64 percent had difficulty paying attention in class, 59 percent talked less in class, and 36 percent cut one or more classes because of such harassment.

Reis says that her figures provide some indication of how harassment and violence affect LGBT students academically, but that even these may be underestimates. "We don't have a good statistical record of the academic toll this takes on kids," she notes. "What the numbers [in this and other studies] don't show are all the students for whom the harassment was too painful and they dropped out."

**Promising Programs**

While these studies paint a sobering picture of the school lives of LGBT youth, there is also new research suggesting that supportive programs may make a difference. In a study for the Massachusetts Department of Education, Harvard University researcher Laura Szalacha found that schools with gay-straight alliances (GSAs), school-based support groups for LGBT students and their "straight allies," were significantly more likely than those without GSAs to be welcoming places for sexual minority students. Nearly three times as many students in schools with GSAs, for example, said that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students can safely be open about their sexual orientation at school, and they were significantly less likely to hear slurs such as "faggot," "dyke," and "that's so gay" on a daily basis, the study showed. Szalacha based her statistics on surveys with 1,646 students and 683 staff members from schools across the state.

Gay-straight alliances, which barely

existed a decade ago, can now be found in nearly 1,000 schools in 47 states, according to GLSEN. Usually after-school clubs, GSAs are places for students to talk about how issues such as homophobia and heterosexism affect them in school, with peers, and at home; seek support from each other and their advisors; and plan programs and activities.

Practitioner training about LGBT issues can also improve a school's climate, Szalacha's study shows. In schools where teachers received such training, 54 percent of students believed that sexual minority students have faculty support,

whereas only 26 percent of students in the comparison schools held such a perception. Teacher trainings on LGBT issues can vary widely, from one-time panel presentations by sexual minority youth, parents, and advocates, to multi-day workshops that include role play, curriculum development, and other activities. Arthur Lipkin, director of LGBT services at Cambridge (MA) Rindge and Latin School, has been teaching both in-service and preservice teachers about LGBT youth issues since the mid-1980s. Most important in these trainings, Lipkin says, is for teachers to hear the personal stories

of students: "Everybody responds to the notion that kids are hurting or that kids have been hurting in their school and that they perhaps weren't aware of it."

Testimonials from local students or recent graduates are most effective, Lipkin says, but if these youth are not available, films or readings can also serve as the source of student voices: "If [teachers] hear, either through direct testimony, film representation, or some readings, that students in their school or at some similar schools have had really difficult experiences because of harassment, loneliness, desperation, or suicidality, they [are often]

## Ignoring Harassment Can Have Legal Consequences

By Michael Sadowski

Only five states—California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Wisconsin—currently have laws specifically protecting public school students from harassment and/or discrimination based on sexual orientation. Only one, California, also protects students based on gender identity. But a 1996 lawsuit demonstrated that existing federal laws are often enough to make school officials liable if they fail to deal effectively with harassment against students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT).

Jamie Nabozny successfully sued school administrators in Ashland, WI, for failing to protect him against anti-gay abuse in middle and high school, dramatically changing the landscape with regard to the rights of sexual minority students under the law. Working with the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, an organization that fights anti-gay discrimination, Nabozny received a settlement of just under \$1 million. The principal of Nabozny's middle school, as well as the principal and vice principal of his high school, were held personally liable in the case.

Nabozny's abuse began in the usual way—with anti-gay epithets in the early middle school years. As they often do, the verbal attacks escalated to physical assault. In high school, Nabozny was mock-raped by some fellow students, urinated on in a school bathroom, and beaten to the point where he required hospitalization for internal bleeding. In each case, Nabozny and his parents say, school officials failed to punish the perpetrators.

David Buckel, one of the Lambda attorneys who argued Nabozny's case, says the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution makes clear that the school officials' failure to support Nabozny was illegal. "Under this clause, public schools cannot pick and choose which students will be safe and which students will not be safe," writes Buckel in an article published last year in *Education and Urban Society*. Buckel says this constitutional provision was instrumental to the success of Lambda's argument: "We asserted that Jamie's

school made some students safe but treated Jamie differently on two different and independent grounds: because he is male and because he is gay."

The Lambda attorneys made their claim partly on the basis of Wisconsin anti-discrimination laws, but even in states without such protections, school officials can be held liable if they treat harassment complaints differently based on the sex of the complainant. "We often find that male students are treated differently on their complaints of harassment because school administrators believe that boys should fight back physically rather than request help from administrators," Buckel notes.

Buckel adds that in addition to the Equal Protection Clause, numerous other laws can make school personnel vulnerable to charges of discrimination. Some states and municipalities have general anti-discrimination laws that may apply in some cases to LGBT students. The federal statute Title IX, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in schools, can be applied where students are targeted—or their complaints are ignored—because they are perceived as not conforming to gender norms. Moreover, anti-LGBT behavior can be construed as sexual harassment where a perpetrator's actions involve sexual gestures or similar conduct, and school personnel can be held liable if they fail to respond under these circumstances.

Students have also used existing federal laws successfully to win the right to form gay-straight alliances (GSAs). When the board of the Salt Lake City School District tried to block the formation of a GSA at the city's East High School, students there argued that they had the same right to assemble on school grounds as other student clubs under the federal Equal Access Act. In a highly publicized decision, the school board voted in 1996 to ban all noncurricular clubs rather than allow the gay-straight alliance to meet. Eventually, the board relented and lawsuits brought by several civil-rights groups were dropped. ■

## For Further Information

S.M. Blake, R. Ledsky, T. Lehman, C. Goodenow, R. Sawyer, and T. Hack. "Preventing Sexual Risk Behaviors Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Adolescents: The Benefits of Gay-Sensitive HIV Instruction in Schools." *American Journal of Public Health* 91, no. 6 (June 2001): 940-946.

M. Bochenek and A.W. Brown. *Hatred in the Hallways: Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students in U.S. Schools*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2001. Available online at [www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/toc.htm](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/toc.htm)

D.S. Buckel. "Legal Perspective on Ensuring a Safe and Nondiscriminatory School Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Students." *Education and Urban Society* 32, no. 3 (May 2000): 390-398. Available online at <http://www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/pages/documents/record?record=706>

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)

GLSEN. *1999 National School Climate Survey*. Available online at <http://www.glsen.org/templates/news/record.html?section=20&record=24>

A. Lipkin. *Understanding Homosexuality, Changing Schools: A Text for Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.

Massachusetts Department of Education. *1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. Boston: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000. Available online at [www.doe.mass.edu/ss/yrbss1999](http://www.doe.mass.edu/ss/yrbss1999)

B. Reis. *They Don't Even Know Me! Understanding Anti-Gay Harassment and Violence in Schools*. Seattle: Safe Schools Coalition of Washington, 1999. Available online at [http://www.safeschools-wa.org/ssc\\_reports.htm](http://www.safeschools-wa.org/ssc_reports.htm)

B. Reis and E. Saewyc. *Eighty-Three Thousand Youth: Selected Findings of Eight Population-Based Studies as They Pertain to Anti-Gay Harassment and the Safety and Well-Being of Sexual Minority Students*. Seattle: Safe Schools Coalition of Washington, 1999. Available online at [http://www.safeschools-wa.org/ssc\\_reports.htm](http://www.safeschools-wa.org/ssc_reports.htm)

L. Szalacha. *Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students evaluation report* (united). Massachusetts Department of Education, forthcoming.

moved to act." Lipkin often concludes professional development sessions with in-service teachers by encouraging each educator to commit to one action they can take to make their school a better place for LGBT youth.

In addition to their emotional well-being, programs that specifically address sexual minority students' needs may also benefit their physical health, according to another study. In a report published in the June 2001 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*, a research team led by Susan Blake of George Washington University's School of Public Health and Health Services found that "gay-sensitive" HIV-instruction in school was linked to a reduction in risk behaviors among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth. These students had less overall sexual activity, had fewer sexual partners, and were less likely to have sex under the influence of drugs or alcohol than students in the comparison group, the study found. (The level of such instruction at each school was determined based on health teachers' evaluations of their curricula, course materials, and comfort level in teaching sexual minority students about HIV.)

Both Szalacha and Blake qualify their findings by explaining that they merely show correlations between LGBT-positive programming and the well-being of sexual minority students; they don't necessarily prove that the programs cause these positive outcomes. (It is possible, for example, that the same factors that make schools more welcoming environments for sexual minority youth also make the formation of GSAs or the provision of gay-sensitive HIV instruction more likely.) Still, these studies imply at the very least that school climates can differ widely with regard to sexual orientation issues, and that these differences can have profound effects on the ways that LGBT youth experience school.

### The Massachusetts Model

It is no coincidence that so many of the studies examining the effects of school environments on LGBT students involve Massachusetts youth. In 1992, then governor William Weld established the country's first and only Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth to advise the executive office, as well as state agencies such as the Department of Education,

about issues affecting sexual minority young people. Though five states currently have laws specifically protecting public school students from discrimination based on sexual orientation (and one, California, also protects students based on gender identity), only Massachusetts has backed up its law with funding. The annual budget for programs to benefit LGBT students in the state now stands at \$1.5 million. This money is used for a variety of purposes, including grants to help schools start and maintain GSAs; for state-funded professional development programs; to provide speakers for school assemblies and programs; and for regional workshops that bring together teams of students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

**"How can you possibly focus on reading and writing skills when you're basically trying to survive every day?"**

The state support has had an obvious impact on programming for students as well as on research. Massachusetts has the highest percentage of schools with GSAs in the nation, and no other state even comes close in using research to evaluate how school environments affect its LGBT student population. Kim Westheimer, who until last month was director of the Massachusetts Department of Education's Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students, believes the legislation and funding have enabled the state's educators to see LGBT-positive programming as "more possible," since it has the imprimatur of state-level officials. "Policy is important, particularly law, because it sets the parameters of what's allowable. Because of state and federal laws, for example, students who want to start a GSA know that they can do it."

Westheimer also believes that the Massachusetts program has been successful because officials there have avoided a heavy-handed approach. While state law prohibits discrimination against

public school students based on sexual orientation, and students in all 50 states have the right to form GSAs under the federal Equal Access Act, other provisions of the Massachusetts program have been framed as "recommendations." The Safe Schools Program has served primarily as a resource to educators and students by providing funding, training, and advice.

"We haven't had a mandate to go into schools and say, 'This is what you must do,'" Westheimer says. "Instead, we emphasize that these programs are about what schools already do. Students are there to learn, but they can't learn unless they have a safe environment. It really is that simple."

While Massachusetts stands alone in statewide programming, school systems in many major cities have also been at the forefront of addressing the needs of LGBT students. As early as 1984, teacher and counselor Virginia Uribe started a counseling and support project called Project 10 at Fairfax High School in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Aimed at lowering the high dropout, suicide, and substance abuse rates among sexual minority youth, as well as in-school harassment, components of Project 10 include professional and peer counseling of LGBT students, maintenance of a district resource center, ongoing workshops about homophobia and related issues for school staff, parent/guardian outreach, substance abuse and suicide prevention programs, and cooperation with health educators. Widely considered the first public school program specifically dedicated to the issues that affect sexual minority students, Project 10 has become a model for similar programs around the country, some of which have borrowed the name and mission of the original organization.

Also in Los Angeles, Human Rights Watch is following up its report with a three-year pilot research and implementation project, planned in cooperation with several local groups, to improve school climates for students in the city's schools. The project is expected to include an evaluation of school policies and procedures, peer mediation, and the training of students as researchers to document bias incidents and evaluate their data.

Another key element will be teacher training in how to intervene when the

rights of LGBT students are violated. "Most teachers feel very awkward around this issue," says HRW's A. Widney Brown. "Where 30 or 40 years ago, most teachers probably didn't know how to handle racial slurs, now there's a general sense of incompetence around LGBT issues. Teachers are afraid they're going to have to talk about sex."

As studies show, however, programs like these are the exception and not the rule. In most of the country change is slow, and many LGBT students are still attending school with no specific laws or policies to protect them, no on-site programming to meet their needs, and little or no support from school administrators, teachers, or staff. GLSEN's Jennings, who has worked with school personnel to develop programs in 43 states, believes that denial is a major barrier to more widespread implementation. "There's a tendency for everyone to think that the problem [of homophobia in schools] doesn't exist in their community, or that

you might be able to do this kind of fancy-schmancy stuff in Massachusetts and San Francisco, but you can't do it here," he says. "This problem does exist in every state and change is possible in every state."

### Drawing Heat

Other barriers can be more personal. Some school decisionmakers object to LGBT-positive programming based on their own religious or political beliefs. Others may not hold such beliefs themselves but fear a backlash from more conservative community members. Frank Zak, principal of Mahar Regional Junior Senior High School in the small town of Orange, MA, says he was unprepared for the level of community opposition that arose when a rainbow flag, often used as a symbol of gay pride, was hung in front of the building at the request of the GSA. Protests led to public hearings and a petition signed by more than 300 people to bring the flag down.

"I was surprised by the amount of heat that came from that, and I'm still surprised," Zak says.

After some impassioned testimonials from students and other advocates, the school committee ultimately decided to keep the flag in front of the school, where it still hangs along with the American and Massachusetts flags. While Zak admits that he was once ambivalent about providing specific support to LGBT students, he now stands behind the flag, the school's GSA, the integration of LGBT issues into classes, and other fairly recent changes at Mahar based on some deeply held professional principles: "I think we make this too big an issue when it really boils down to something simple," Zak says. "If a student were black, white, fat, skinny, there wouldn't even be a question. Do we want a child to feel unwelcome in our school because of who or what they are? How does that make sense in our profession? What kind of educator would want that to happen?" ■

## new and noteworthy

### Return of Segregated Schools?

Sometimes the topic of racial segregation in public schools seems like one for the history books. The U.S. Supreme Court's unanimous 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawing segregated schools, the deployment of federal troops in 1957 to escort black students into Little Rock's Central High School, the Boston busing crisis of the 1970s—we read about these and figure that segregation is no longer a problem in our increasingly diverse country.

Not so, say researchers from the Civil Rights Project (CRP) at Harvard University. Their new study shows racial and ethnic segregation in public schools is on the rise, threatening to widen the already troublesome gap between whites and minorities in educational opportunity and achievement. "This is ironic, considering that evidence exists that desegregated schools improve test scores and positively change the lives of students," says CRP co-director Gary Orfield, who directed and wrote the study titled *Schools More Separate: Consequences of a Decade of Resegregation*. Some findings:

- Seven in 10 black students go to a predominantly minority school, compared with six in 10 in 1980.
- More than one-third of blacks and one-third of Latinos attend schools where whites account for less than 10 percent of the student body.
- The percentage of blacks in schools with mostly white stu-

dents dropped from 43.5 percent in 1988 to 32.7 percent a decade later.

- The average black or Latino student attends school with twice as many poor students as the average white student—significant because poorer schools often have higher at-risk populations, fewer resources, and lower achievement levels.
- Whites remain the most segregated from other races. The average white student attends school with a minority population of less than 20 percent, despite the fact that more minorities are enrolled in school than ever before and more live in traditionally white suburban areas.

Although public opinion polls show that Americans of all races overwhelmingly support integrated education, a series of Supreme Court decisions since 1988 have undermined desegregation measures, the study finds. To stifle resegregation, CRP recommends several policy actions, including the creation of more integrated magnet schools in cities, better efforts by school districts to document the value of interracial schooling, and more active support by community groups and foundations for desegregation programs. ■

For further information, contact The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, 124 Mt. Auburn St., Suite 400 South, Cambridge, MA 02138; 617-496-6367; fax: 617-495-5210; email: [crp@harvard.edu](mailto:crp@harvard.edu)

A copy of the report can be downloaded at the Project's website, [www.law.harvard.edu/civilrights/](http://www.law.harvard.edu/civilrights/)