

THE BULLYING ZINE



April 2012

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

All year long, JFCY's Public Legal Education team has been talking about bullying, and how it relates to the law. There are a ton of connections between the two topics, and this zine is the result of some of our investigations.

The zine addresses different ways that bullying meets the law — Terrence starts us off with a word-search and some ideas about what exactly it means to be a bully or be bullied.

On page 4, Tracy's article explains how Ontario is attempting to respond to bullying in schools by introducing new laws that schools will have to

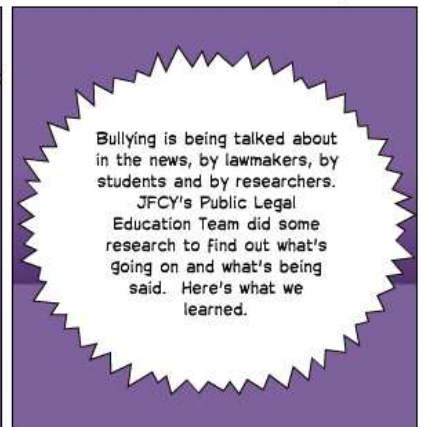
follow. Arif's comic on page 5 and Marsha's article on pages 6 and 7 both deal with criminal consequences to bullying. Bullying itself isn't a crime—but it has a strong connection to the criminal law, and certain bullying actions can actually be classified as crimes. This makes it clear just how serious some bullying activities can be.

On page 10, Cydney talks about what to do if you're accused of bullying, and the comic on the facing page tells you what your rights are if your school wants to suspend or expel you because you bullied

someone. Deby discovered that bullying isn't limited to the schoolyard. Cyberbullying is an increasingly large problem, and schools will take action to address cyberbullying when it has an impact on the school climate. Find out more on pages 12 and 13. Finally, Inez looked into programs that support students and attempt to prevent bullying. She talks about Gay-Straight Alliances and the challenges that students starting these clubs are facing in some of Ontario's Catholic Schools. We hope you enjoy getting informed about bullying and the law!

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LEARN

What is Bullying?

By Terrence Chen, grade 11

Bullying is a pattern of aggressive behavior meant to hurt or cause discomfort to another person.

Most bullies have more power than their victims due to physical size, strength, status, and support within the peer group. Most children have an idea of what it is as they probably witness it every single day. Victims have a difficult time defending themselves so support from others is essential

HOW COMMON IS IT?

Approximately one in 10 children have bullied others and as many as 25% of children in grades four to six have been bullied. Studies have found bullying occurs once every seven minutes on the playground and once every 25 minutes in the classroom



What are the effects?

Bullying makes people upset. It can make children feel lonely, unhappy and frightened. It can make them feel unsafe and think there must be something wrong with them, heavily lowering their self confidence. Children may stop wanting to go to school



VERBAL: name-calling, sarcasm, teasing, spreading rumours, threatening, making negative references to one's culture, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation, unwanted sexual comments.



PHYSICAL: hitting, poking, pinching, chasing, shoving, coercing, destroying or stealing belongings, unwanted sexual touching.



SOCIAL: mobbing, scapegoating, excluding others from a group, humiliating others with public gestures or graffiti intended to put others down



WORD SEARCH

E	M	B	A	R	R	A	S	S	E	D	M
E	V	I	S	S	E	R	G	G	A	P	L
S	N	W	O	R	T	H	L	E	S	S	O
G	N	I	S	A	E	T	I	S	A	D	N
T	P	R	E	N	C	O	U	R	A	G	E
L	A	W	A	R	D	H	T	I	W	K	L
D	E	P	R	E	S	S	E	D	T	C	Y
S	E	L	F	E	S	T	E	E	M	I	T
I	F	R	I	E	N	D	L	Y	X	S	J
P	M	A	N	I	P	U	L	A	T	E	Y
Y	E	T	A	C	I	N	U	M	M	O	C
E	C	N	A	T	P	E	C	C	A	P	X

What to know what researchers and professionals are doing about bullying?

Check out this informative report by A. Wayne Mackay, called "Respectful and Responsible Relationships: There's No App for That"

<http://cyberbullying.novascotia.ca/the-report.php>

In the report you find lots of good stuff about law and policy, as well as intervention, prevention, and education.

[Sources for pp.2 and 3 of this zine here:

<http://www.bullyingcanada.ca/>

<http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/bullying/whatis.html>

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| DEPRESSED | SELFESTEEM |
| EMBARRASSED | SICK |
| ENCOURAGE | STUPID |
| FRIENDLY | SUBTLE |
| LONELY | TEASING |
| MANIPULATE | WITHDRAWAL |
| REPORT | WORRIED |
| SAD | WORTHLESS |

DID YOU KNOW: BULLYING

- * Bullying stops in less than 10 seconds, 57% of the time when peers intervene on behalf of the victim.
- * Girls who bully tend to be physically weaker than other girls in their class
- * The same children are often bullied year after year
- * Boys and girls are equally likely to be bullied
- * Mainly occurs between same-sex peers
- * Bullying is reduced in a school if the principal is committed to reducing bullying



Changing the Laws on Bullying in Schools

{ By Tracy Chen, Ryerson U student }

The Ontario government recently introduced Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Acts, 2011, which is legislation to address bullying in schools. This bill would allow schools to permanently expel students for bullying, instead of being limited to suspensions.

standing and respect for people with disabilities and people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including groups with the name gay-straight alliance or another name

** Add a definition of bullying to the Education Act*

Bullying is considered a pervasive problem in Ontario schools. According to Education Minister Laurel Broten, at least one-in-three Ontario students have reported being bullied. This legislation was created following the recent suicide deaths of several bullied youth, including 15-year-old Jamie Hubley and 11-year-old Mitchell Wilson.

This legislation would also require school boards to:

** Develop policies and guidelines on progressive discipline, and bullying prevention and intervention that include supports and resources for students*

** Develop and implement equity and inclusive education policies*

According to the Government of Ontario website, this legislation will address bullying in several different ways:

** Create greater transparency and accountability by requiring boards to report on progress against goals for establishing a positive school climate for all students.*

Introduce tougher consequences, including expulsions, for bullying and hate-motivated actions.

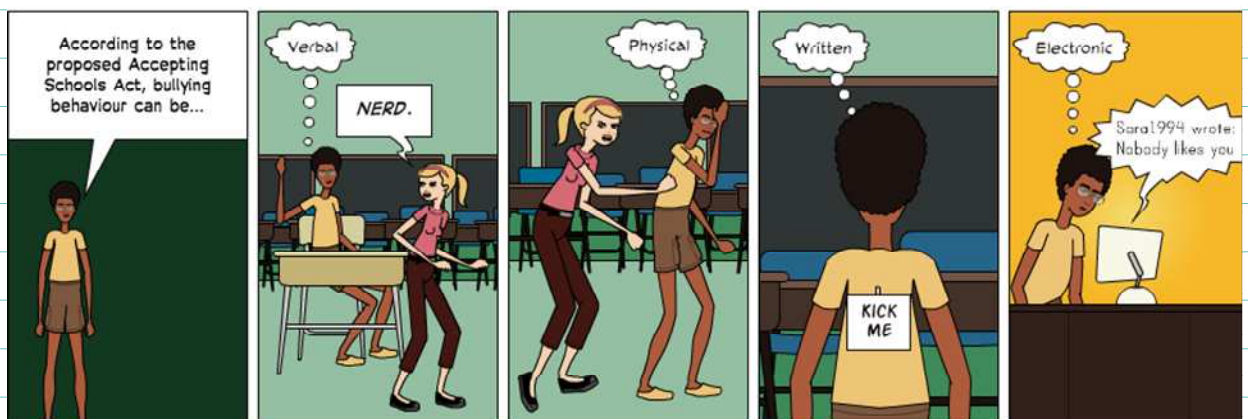
Require all school boards to support students who want to lead activities that promote gender equity, anti-racism, under-

One controversial aspect of the bill is that it would force school boards to accept-gay straight alliance clubs, as some Catholic schools have banned school clubs based on sexual orienta-

tion. Yet Premier Dalton McGuinty has said that an important part of the bill is to promote understanding and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth who are often the targets of bullying. The Premier has also released his own It Gets Better video, which aims to encourage people to do their part to help end bullying and intolerance.

The preamble to the proposed law recognizes that:

“everyone — government, educators, school staff, parents, students and the wider community — has a role to play in creating a positive school climate and preventing inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying, sexual assault, gender-based violence and incidents based on homophobia”



[Comic by Arif Hussain, UTS student]



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Could this really happen?

Bringing something that looks like a weapon to school, even if it is fake, will be taken very seriously by your school, but the police could also get involved.

Why? There is a section in the Criminal Code of Canada (which includes most punishable crimes) that makes it an offence (a crime) to threaten another person with serious injury or death.

S. 264.1: "Every one commits an offence who, in any manner, knowingly utters, conveys or causes any person to receive a threat to cause death or bodily harm to any person."

An "imitation firearm may be considered the same as a real gun for many sections in the Criminal Code.

Even though *he* knew the gun wasn't real, if he knew that other students might feel threatened and scared for their safety when he pulled out a gun that *they* thought was real, then he could be found guilty of s.264.1.

Fighting Back: Can there be criminal consequences for retaliating against bullying?

By Marsha Rampersaud,
Law and Society student, York U

On April 21, 2009 at Keswick High School in Ontario, a fight broke out between two male students during their gym class. This incident had racial connotations: one student was Asian and his aggressor was white. The fifteen-year-old Asian student, in a predominantly white rural Keswick community, is one of few Asian members in the town; the town has had racial tensions between the two communities in the past. 3 issues come out of this true story.

Issue #1: Harassment

The incident began as a verbal argument before becoming physical. In the course of the argument, the Asian student heard his white classmate throw an angry racial slur in his direction that he refused to retract. Does the aggressor's actions constitute harassment? Does the racial slur constitute a hate crime?



What the law says:

Section 264 of the Criminal Code defines harassment as conduct that causes another person to fear for their safety. Although the aggressor's behaviour might seem like harassment, it does not meet the legal definition. It might be a challenge to demonstrate how a racial slur would make this student fear for his safety.

Sections 318 and 319 of the Criminal Code pertain to hate crimes, and allow people to be prosecuted for expression that is intended to promote hatred. However, the legal definitions are narrow, so it is unusual that hate speech is prosecuted in Canada's criminal courts. Although this student's use of a racial slur may be awful, it is not considered a crime.

Some argue that hate crimes (and hate speech) are not adequately regulated in Canada. They might cite this case as proof! But it is always important to consider the alternative: what if our speech was more heavily regulated? Free speech is something that Canadians deeply value. When we look at both sides of the argument, the narrow legal definitions are more understandable.

Issue #2: Assault

What began as a verbal argument quickly escalated and became a physical fight between the two students. The white student initiated the physical fight by shoving his classmate, and also threw the first punch, punching his classmate in the mouth. These violent acts constitute assault.



Repeatedly threatening someone in ways that make the person fear for his safety can be criminal harassment

What the law says:

The Criminal Code, in Section 265.1 (a), says that an assault has taken place when, "without the consent of another person, [one person] applies force intentionally to that other person, directly or indirectly."

Based on this definition, both boys could be charged with assault, because each one applied force (a punch or a shove) to the other without receiving consent.

**Issue #3:
Self-Defence**

The fifteen-year-old was caught between a rock and a hard place. Having his black belt in martial arts, the student understood that he should never resort to violence in a fight unless in self-defence, and only as a last resort. He weighed his options and felt that he was doing his tormentor a favour when he fought back with his weaker left hand. He delivered a single blow in retaliation, a short and compact left handed punch to the nose of his white classmate. This blow broke the nose of his aggressor and effectively ended the fight.

What the law says:
If an individual fights back against their ag-



gressor using physical force, he or she can be charged with an assault under Section 265 of the Criminal Code. However, if the actions are deemed to be out of self-defence, the person could be protected under Sections 34-37 of the Criminal Code. These are self-defence provisions that allow the use of 'reasonable force' to protect oneself.

While you or I might consider the actions of the fifteen-year-old to be self-defence, the law has strict definitions for what counts as self-defence. For example, section 34(2) of the Code allows for someone who caused an injury to another to justify his or her actions as self-defence, but there are restrictions on this definition. In the context of the fight, here are two factors that would be considered:

The law will protect the actions of a person who reasonably believes that he or she is defending himself or herself against serious bodily harm or death. Although the fifteen-year-old student was responding to his aggressor's force, it would be difficult to prove that he believed he was in this kind of danger, or that the belief was reasonable. Using this definition, his actions would probably not be considered self-defence.

In addition, the person acting in self-defence also needs to believe, on reasonable grounds that there is no other way he can protect himself from the harm. Here, the student could have simply walked away.

Although we have already seen that his actions are not legally self-defence, it is still worthwhile to look at the one other consideration. If the student had met the requirements for justifying self defence, the law would also consider whether the student had intended to cause serious injury, and whether the force he used was the smallest force necessary to prevent the attack from continuing or from reoccurring.

The incident ultimately led to an arrest for the fifteen-year-old student, and he faced a charge of one count of assault causing bodily harm. His aggressor was not charged. Both boys were suspended from school. After the incident both boys issued apologies to each other, but the assault charge remained.

Students at Keswick High School were angered that the law would punish a student who had been provoked and assaulted by his classmate. 400 students organized and walked out of class in protest. Their voices were heard and in May of that year the Newmarket Crown Attorney withdrew the assault charges.

What the law says:

Prosecutors, who are in charge of proving to a judge that someone charged with a criminal offence is guilty, have something called "prosecutorial discretion." This means that they can drop, or withdraw, a charge of a criminal offence. This can happen for a number of reasons; for example, it might happen if the prosecutor (the Crown Attorney) thinks that there is no reasonable chance of getting a conviction. In this case, the charges were withdrawn – so there was never a trial, and there would be no legal record of the assault.

This is an instance where the court system might not have been able to account for the circumstances of an incident; but what the students demonstrated is that there are different ways to challenge the laws effectively.

Accusations of Bullying

By Cydney Kim, grade 11

What Happens If I'm Accused of Being a Bully?

Informal Accusations

Accusations of bullying don't necessarily have to come from the authorities to be taken seriously. Whether you are warned by a simple e-mail from a friend or a concern raised by a teacher, you should be taking these warnings seriously. If you are not sure why you have been accused, it may be a good time to find out why in order to try and avoid the problem in the future. However, if you have indeed been bullying someone, it needs to stop immediately. If these warnings are not taken seriously or if the situation grows larger, formal accusations may follow. This can include criminal charges and discipline from your school.

At this point, the good news may be that there is still an opportunity to resolve the problem before serious actions are taken. Bullying can happen even if you didn't mean to be a bully or if people were treating you unfairly, but that doesn't mean that it won't have consequences. This is a good time to talk to a parent, friend, teacher or any others that you trust in order to try and figure out why you are bullying and how you can stop. If accusations of bullying are true, learning to act in ways that don't involve bullying can be important in preventing bullying from having consequences on your life.

Formal Accusations

In many cases of bullying, especially if the victim feels mentally, physically or emotionally harassed, he/she or their guardians may choose to go to school authorities or the police. In any case, the bullying is documented. The physical condition of the victim (if physically bullied), threatening exchanges through mediums such as texts and e-mails as well as detailed reports of the bullying incidents can be used as evidence. Depending on the severity of the bullying, the consequences vary (e.g. a school can suspend or expel you, while if the bullying is serious enough to be a crime, you could be charged and made to attend court). Not all victims choose to pursue legal action. However, it is the police's decision whether or to charge someone. Some people may choose mediation or restorative circle, meaning that you attend a meeting with the victim and a third party member in order to come to an agreement. Depending on the goals of the people involved, the results of mediations vary. For example, in some cases, it may be suggested that the bully see a therapist or counsellor.

The consequences of being formally accused as a bully vary greatly because of many different factors such as the severity of the bullying, as well as the goals of the parties involved. For example, one factor for bullying cases at schools is the school policies themselves. Because some schools may have stricter anti-bullying policies and measures than others, if you are accused of bullying, you should investigate your school or institution's policies against bullying in order to learn more about the consequences that will be taken.

This letter from school says I am suspended pending expulsion for bullying Dan. It says that I keep bullying him even though I have already been suspended twice.

MY PARENTS ARE GOING TO BE FURIOUS. AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!

I'm not angry, just confused. You know you shouldn't bully other kids but you keep doing it. I know that school is hard for you sometimes, but that's no excuse. Now you'll have to face the consequences.

Sandra's principal will perform an investigation and decide whether she will be expelled. The school will consider whether Sandra can control her behaviour and understand the consequences, and whether Dan's safety is at risk if she is at school.

It will also consider "mitigating factors," like Sandra's history at the school and whether she has a learning disability.

so the school has recommended that Sandra be expelled from her school. I tried to explain that Sandra has just been identified with a learning disability and she's struggling, but they didn't care. she has been going to an expelled students program and we have a hearing on Friday with the school board

If a school wants to expel you, you will have a hearing before a panel of at least 3 school board trustees. The hearing must be held within 20 days of your original expulsion. At the hearing, the principal will present evidence as to why you should be expelled. You can also present evidence and question the principal's evidence.

SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEES

SO I'LL BE REPRESENTING YOU AT THE HEARING AS YOUR LAWYER. AFTER THE HEARING, THE BOARD WILL DECIDE WHETHER YOU SHOULD BE EXPELLED FROM YOUR SCHOOL, OR WHETHER YOU SHOULD NOT BE EXPELLED. THEY CAN ALSO CONFIRM, SHORTEN, OR CANCEL YOUR SUSPENSION

What happens if they agree that she should be expelled?

THE BOARD WILL GIVE YOU AND SANDRA WRITTEN REASONS FOR ITS DECISION. IT WILL ALSO TELL YOU WHERE SANDRA SHOULD BE GOING TO SCHOOL AND HOW YOU CAN APPEAL THE DECISION

You have the right to be represented by a lawyer.

IF YOU APPEAL, YOU WILL HAVE TO WRITE A LETTER TO THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW BOARD, EXPLAINING THAT YOU WANT TO APPEAL. YOU CAN APPEAL IF YOU THINK THE EXPELSION IS TOO LONG OR UNFAIR.

AT THE SCHOOL BOARD HEARING...

I know I shouldn't have done that to Dan. I've been having a hard time in school and it comes so easily to him. I know I need to stop and if I am allowed back to school, I will behave better. I am going to get a tutor to help me learn to manage my learning disability so I can do better in school.

WE HAVE FOUND THAT GIVEN SANDRA'S REGRET ABOUT HER ACTIONS, AND HER COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING HER BEHAVIOUR AND CIRCUMSTANCES, HER SUSPENSION SHOULD END AFTER 15 DAYS. SHE SHOULD NOT BE EXPELLED BUT SHE WILL NEED TO BEHAVE VERY WELL IN THE FUTURE OR RISK SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.

IF YOU ARE SUSPENDED OR EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL, YOU HAVE RIGHTS. CHECK OUT JFCY.ORG AND LOOK FOR OUR SUSPENSION AND EXPELSION PAMPHLETS TO LEARN MORE. YOU CAN ALSO CONTACT A JFCY LAWYER.

I'm sorry about how I've treated you. It wasn't fair.

THE END

CYBERBULLYING: What happens when bullying occurs outside school?

[By Deby Ko, PLE Team]

In the case *R.T v. Durham Catholic District School Board (EA s.311.7), 2008 CFSRB 94*, one individual cyberbullied another student outside of school and was then expelled.

Child A (Victim): Grade 8 student

Child B (Bully): 13 year old student in Grade 8

The identities of both students are protected by the law, so their names aren't released with the details of the case.

Child B had added Child A on Facebook with an account using a similar name to Child A in January 2008. In the same month, Child B then started writing threatening statements to Child A:

“...U DON'T WANT ME TO GET MAD BECAUSE THEN ILL KILL YOU RIGHT IN UR SLEEP OR AT SCHOOL ON MONDAY.”, and “...I am gonna come to school on Monday and kick ur ass. im gonna kill u. ok? ok!”

Child B had also started contacting Child A's friends.

Child A's parent informed the Vice Principal at the children's school of these messages, including one message where Child B indicated that Child A would be killed while attending the upcoming Grade 8 trip to Camp K. Facebook closed Child B's account 3 times and discovered that Child B was a computer expert who had set up 11 email accounts impersonating students. Due to these activities, when the school discovered who Child B was, Child B was suspended and then expelled from school.

Suspension and expulsion can occur even when bullying happens off school property or on the Internet.

What law covers school discipline?

The *Education Act* is the law that covers discipline in schools. Section 310 (1) reads:

A principal shall suspend a pupil if he or she believes that the pupil has engaged in any of the following activities while at school, at a school-related activity or in other circumstances where engaging in the activity will have an impact on the school climate:

1. Possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm;
2. Using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person;
3. Committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner;
4. Committing sexual assault;
5. Trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs;
6. Committing robbery;
7. Any other activity that, under a policy of the board, is an activity for which a Principal must suspend a pupil, and therefore in accordance with this Part, conduct an investigation to determine whether to recommend to the board that the pupil be expelled.



The Media Awareness Network describes the different forms that cyberbullying can take:

Why can off-school behaviour be punished?

The law talks about “impact on the school climate” of an activity. Since cyber bullying had an effect at school and on school activities, the school was able to suspend Child B after investigation. As the case was reviewed by the Child and Family Services Review Board (CFSRB), we can see how they considered the impact on “school climate” before and after bullying occurred.

“Witnesses testified on behalf of the school explained the effect the threatening emails had on Child A and her family. Child A described how she was affected by the threatening emails: she had trouble sleeping; she felt isolated; she was afraid for herself and for her family...There was also some evidence that Child A’s sister, a student at the school was also negatively impacted by the treats.”

As the School Board is responsible for the safety of all students, Child B’s actions were of serious nature and would be detrimental to the school climate if she returns.

Uploading: Sharing images of a person, particularly in an embarrassing situation, without her or his permission, or sharing emails without the writer’s permission.

Insulting: Posting or spreading false information about a person that will cause harm to that person or that person’s reputation.

Targeting: Singling someone out and inviting others to attack or make fun of her or him.

Excluding: Pressuring others to exclude someone from a community (either online or offline).

Harassment: Repeatedly sending someone nasty, mean and insulting messages.

Identity theft: Pretending to be someone else to make it look like that other person said things he or she doesn’t believe or that aren’t true about him or her.

Is there anything that can help lessen a punishment for bullying?

One important note is if bullying did occur, there may be mitigating circumstances that the School Board can take into account in determining whether someone should be expelled and the type of expulsion.

Some Mitigating Factors that the School Board may consider are:

- The ability to control his or her behavior
- The ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of his or her behavior
- The effect of a suspension or expulsion on the student’s ongoing education
- Age of the student
- Student’s history
- Progressive discipline
- Whether the student being at the school will put other students’ or teachers’ safety at risk

Conclusion:

It can be noted that bullying can occur outside of school and if it impacts school environment, the dire consequences can lead to expulsion and other serious acts. If you are accused of bullying and might be suspended or expelled, it is important to contact a lawyer for advice if you want to appeal (challenge) the decision.

Preventing bullying: Gay-Straight Alliances and Catholic Schools

{ By Inez Leutenegger, Paralegal student }

Bullying in the educational setting can occur anywhere: in any part of or around the school building, including in the classroom, hallways, at recess and on the school bus. It can be created by students themselves, or even by teachers and school system. Targets for bullies in schools are often those students who are seen as different and strange to their peers. They might be people perceived to be more passive, submissive and vulnerable than their authoritative bullies.

The past year has led to an increase in awareness of bullying that is directed towards members of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) communities. Such bullying involves intentional and unprovoked negative actions against a victim by one or more people that is based on a perceived imbalance of physical and physiological power due to one's sexual orientation.

One response to anti-LGBT bullying (and other forms of homophobia) are student organizations called gay-straight alliances (GSAs). These groups exist primarily within North American schools, to create and provide a safe and supportive environment for the LGBT community within a school's broader community. The goal of these organizations is to provide a safe environment within schools and welcome all students regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Caitlin Ryan is a faculty member at San Francisco State University and director of Family Acceptance Project, a research group that provides support for families with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children. She believes that GSAs provide benefits to students into adulthood, as they provide support for queer youth while helping prevent depression, victimization, substance abuse and suicide.

The prevalence of bullying within schools has caught the attention of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, who, on November 30th, 2011, introduced anti-bullying legislation, or Bill 13. Bill 13 would require all school boards to undertake policies that fight bullying and promote a posi-

itive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all students despite race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability. It also calls for activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including organizations with the name gay-straight alliance or another name.

While gay-straight alliances have become quite popular within public high schools, the Catholic School Boards in Ontario have had a different take on the subject. Teresa Pierre, director of Ontario Catholic Parent Advocates (OCPA) wants to see Bill 13 dropped. Her organization is concerned about the potential erosion of Catholic principles. Pierre said Catholic parents want to rid all schools of bullying and that can be done without changing Catholic social teaching. OCPA believes that Dalton McGuinty, wants to force Catholic schools to allow groups like gay-straight alliances, which would end up promoting homosexuality as acceptable, something that goes against official Church teaching. As Caitlin Ryan points out, "Many schools -- in both the US and

Turn to page 2 to learn more about Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.



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Canada -- continue to prevent GSAs and undermine the purpose of the groups," as the Catholic faith perceives homosexual acts as sinful and immoral."

In an attempt to address or even accommodate students wanting to start GSAs at Catholic schools, a small Catholic think tank in Ontario debated for eight months on what to call anti-homophobia clubs without calling them gay-straight alliances or offending the Catholic church. The committee suggested calling GSA's "respecting differences clubs" and requiring them to include a staff member who is committed to the Catholic faith and is forbidden to give personal counselling in a group setting. They believe that these groups are not meant to be a forum for advocacy or protest of anything that is not in accordance with the Catholic Church.

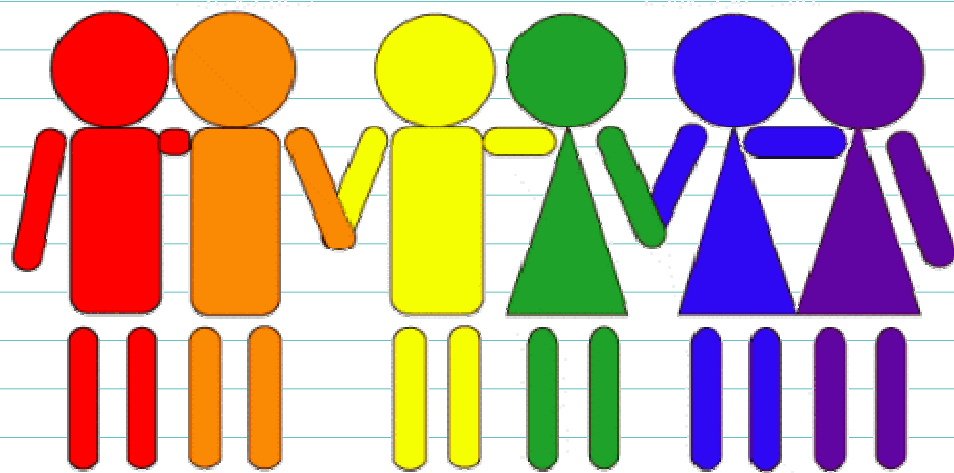
The Halton Catholic District School Board repealed their ban on gay straight alliances on

January 18th, 2012 to make sure that there is an increase of equality in their education system. Even though the school district has allowed for these groups to be formed, they leaned towards naming them with the broad term of 'diversity groups' rather than specifically using the title of 'gay-straight alliances'. Their belief is that this allows for not only acceptance of the sexual orientation of students but of the racial, sexist and financial differences of students in their schools.

However, many students believe that it is important to call these groups what they believe they should be named, specifically "gay-straight alliances" rather than having a more general term such as 'respecting differences clubs.'" So although Catholic boards in Ontario have allowed students to create gay positive clubs, they have not been allowed to use the term 'gay' in the title. Mississauga student Leanne Iskander, who is the founder of the

advocacy group 'Catholic Students For GSA's' believes that accurate names of support groups are very important because they will allow GSAs to become more visible at schools so that students looking for LGBT friendly community and support will know where to go.

I think the idea of supporting LGBT students in schools should not only come from the creation of GSA's but should also stem from the instruction and modeling schools give students within their environment and curriculum of respect of all students. Bullying students on the basis of sexual orientation, race, gender, religious beliefs and ethnicity should be prohibited, teachers, administrators so that a more inclusive environment is created within the school. Students should be taught proper character formation, a foundation for which children, teenagers and young adults can base their respect of those from all walks of life.



**gay-straight
alliance**

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Justice For Children and Youth aims to assist and empower children and youth in obtaining fair and equal access to legal, educational, medical and social resources.

JFCY provides legal information and educational materials that are more accessible to young people (under the age of 18) in Ontario.

We have lawyers that represent and advocate for youth under 18. If you have a legal problem or you have any questions you can contact us. We may be able to help you or tell you where you can get help. If you need help with welfare, education, the children's aid, getting off the street, your family or the criminal law, please call us.

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And much more...

Thanks to the following members of JFCY's Public Legal Education Team for contributing to the zine:

Terence Chen

Tracy Chen

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