



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* NORTH CAROLINA  
*at* CHAPEL HILL

# Leveraging Technology & Engaging Youth to Promote Behavioral Health and Educational Success

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# Funding Sources & Disclaimer

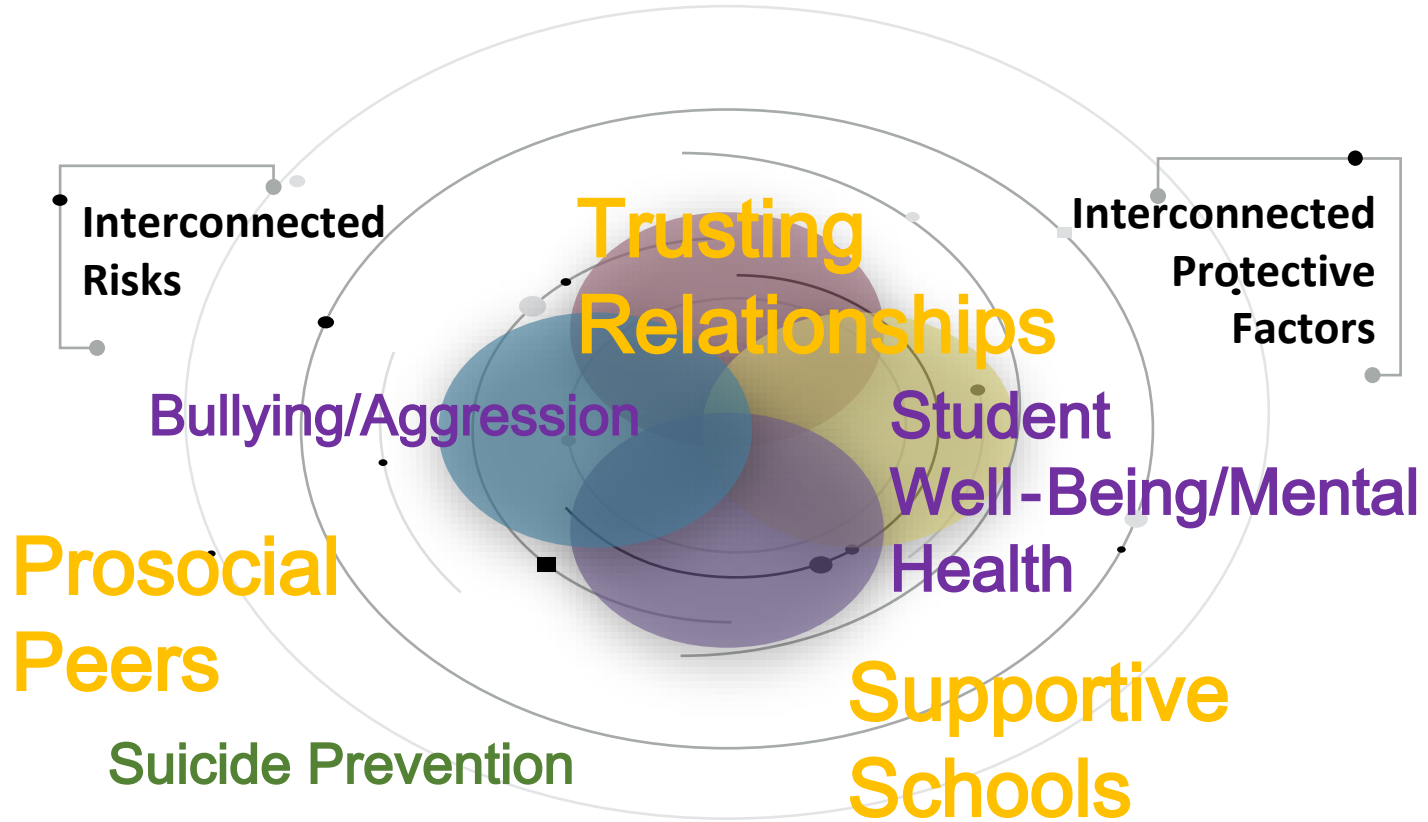
- **Research was supported by Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (#1U01/CE001677; 5u01ce002841) to Dorothy Espelage (PI);**  
*Opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the CDC*
- **Research was supported by NIH Grant (MUOFX-0022) to Dorothy Espelage (PI) & Sabina Low (co-PI);** *Opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice*
- **Research was supported by NIH Grant (#2015-MU-MU-K003 ) to Iris Ed, Vincent, Espelage, Walker (co-PIs);** Project SOARS (Student Ownership, Accountability, and Responsibility for School safety).  
National Institutes of Justice (IRIS Ed)

Policies & Procedures –  
Behavioral Expectations  
(PBIS)

Effective Bully/Violence Prevention

Social-Emotional  
Competences

Ongoing  
ALL-Staff  
Training



# Youth-Driven Interventions

- Youth do feel that schools should work harder to establish a positive school climate.
- Adults need to pay attention to **emotional and physical safety**.
- **Youth indicated that fairness & equity issues need to be addressed directly.**
- Research shows that **students in schools with positive climates are more likely to report on the situations, individuals and events that endanger a school's safety.**
- Such a climate can also improve student bonding and school engagement and serve as a protective factor against a host of negative outcomes over the long term within and beyond the school context.

(Vincent, Espelage, Walker, et al., 2017, 2018; Espelage et al., 2019, 2020, 2022)

How did this make you feel?

- Frustrated 🙄
- Afraid 😨
- Depressed 😞
- Angry 😡
- Worried 😟
- Other 😐

Tell us more about this:

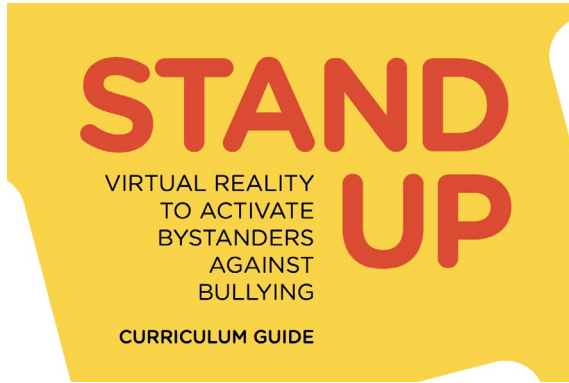
Type here ...

Submit



NIJ Grant (MU-MU-K003)

# Virtual Reality Bully Prevention Approach



**Funded by Google VR to Espelage**

- Original curriculum: *Stand Up: Virtual Reality to Activate Bystanders Against Bullying*
  - *Informed by the empirical base (e.g., Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012), developed by an advisory board of youth aggression experts and professional GoogleVR screenwriters.*
- 6 sessions delivered by a study staff member once per week
- 3 embedded VR experiences (created for Daydream) focusing on (1) the feelings of victims (2) the role of messages youth get about bullying in allowing it to continue and (3) being a change agent against bullying through small, realistic steps
- Each lesson also included processing discussions and perspective taking activities

(Ingram, K. M., [Espelage](#), D.L., Valido, A., Heinhorst, J., & Joyce, M., 2019)

# Virtual Reality Bully Prevention Approach

- Results of small scale RCT (two classrooms) – significant increases in empathy & willingness to intervene
- Youth liked the 5-6 minute VR experiences, but found the curriculum less attractive
- **... This pilot justifies further exploration of incorporating VR to reduce youth violence**



(Ingram, K. M., Espelage, D.L., Valido, A., Heinhorst, J., & Joyce, M., 2019)



# BullyDown: Social-emotional Learning App

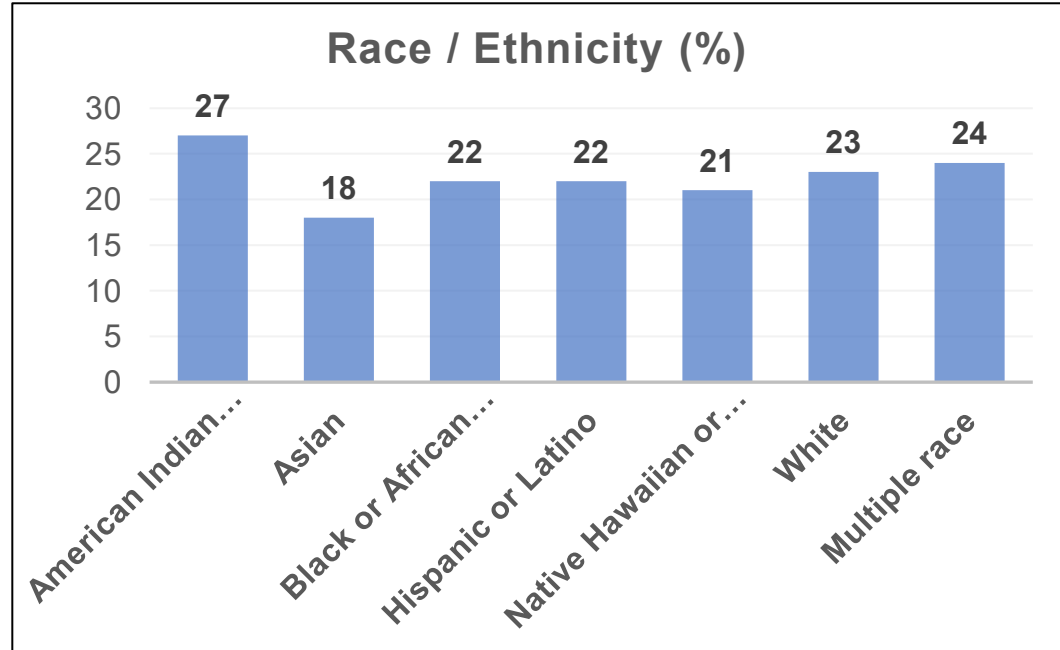
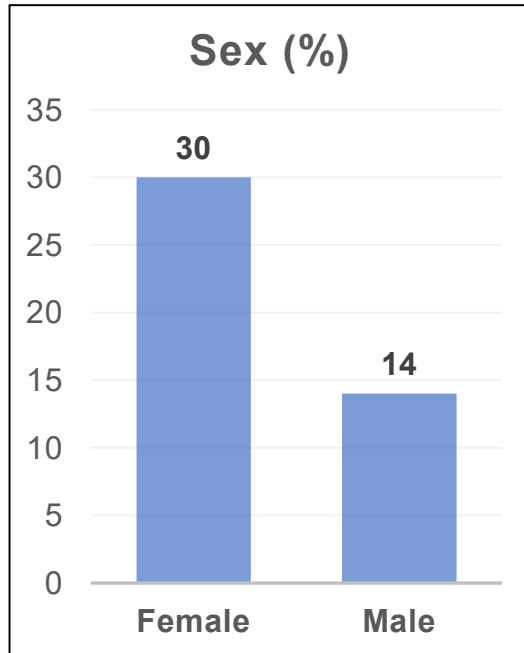


NICHD R21HD104369

Ybarra, Espelage, Valido, & Hong, 2019;  
Espelage et al., 2020

# Suicide Ideation 2021

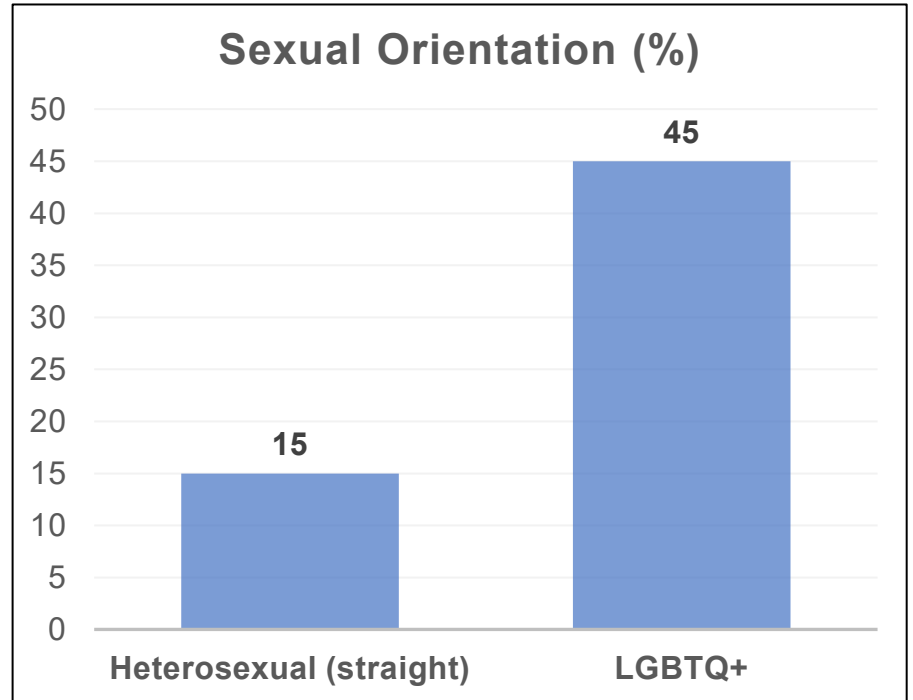
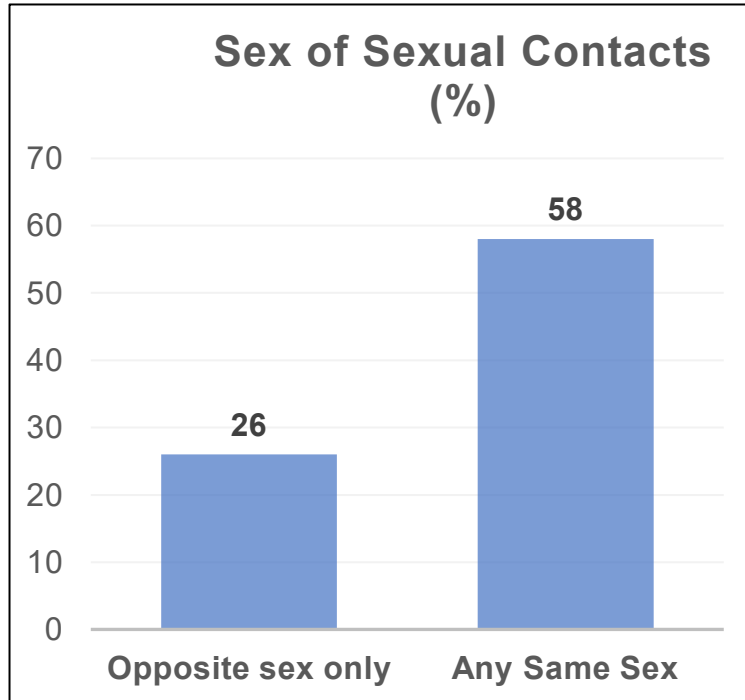
Seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months.



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)

# Suicide Ideation 2021

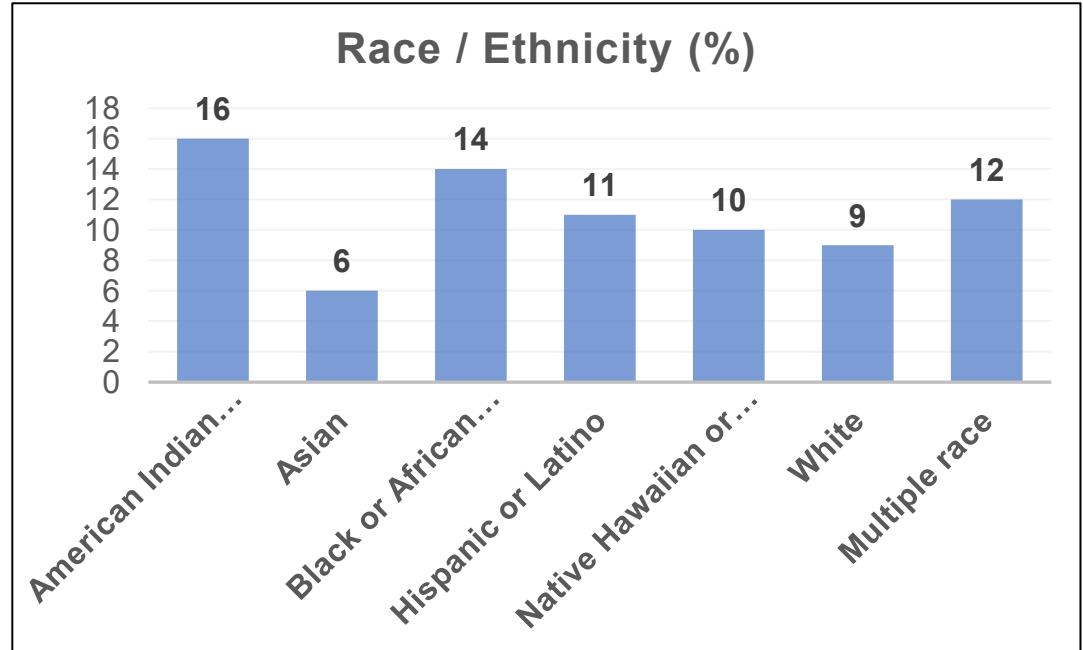
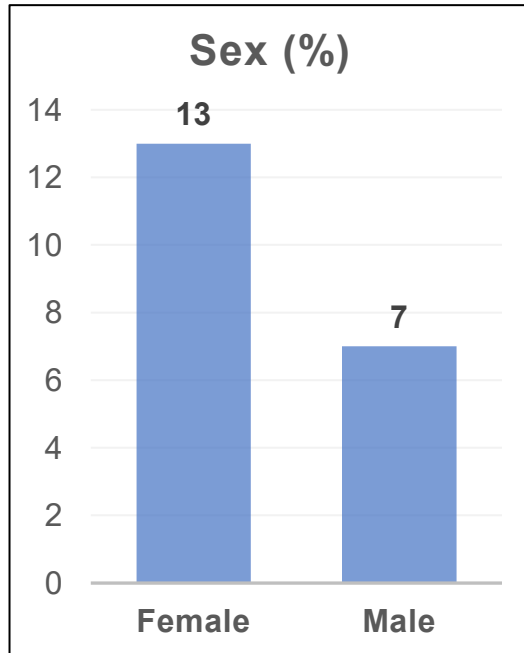
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# Suicide Attempts 2021

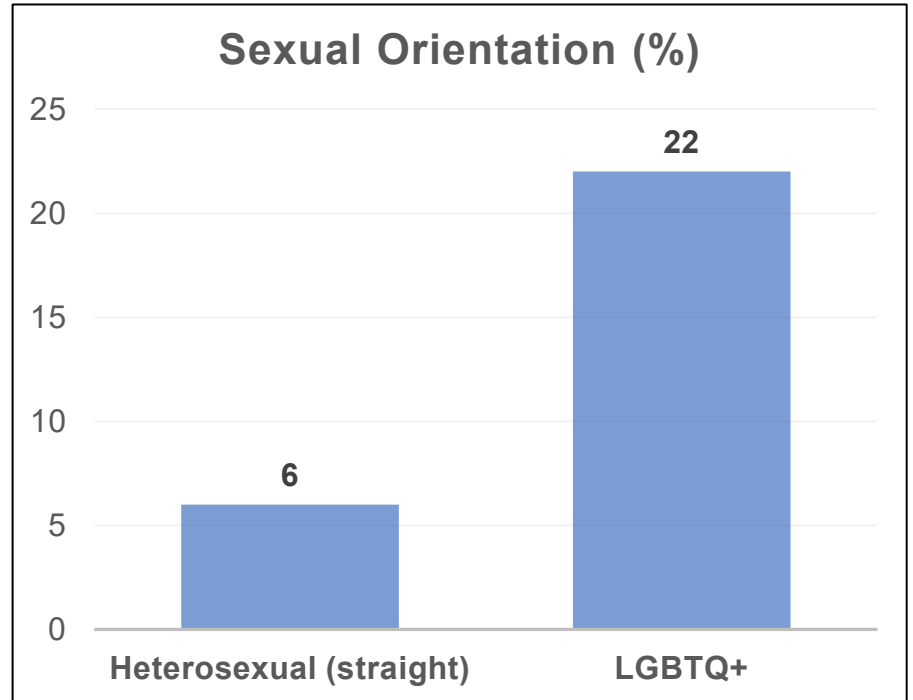
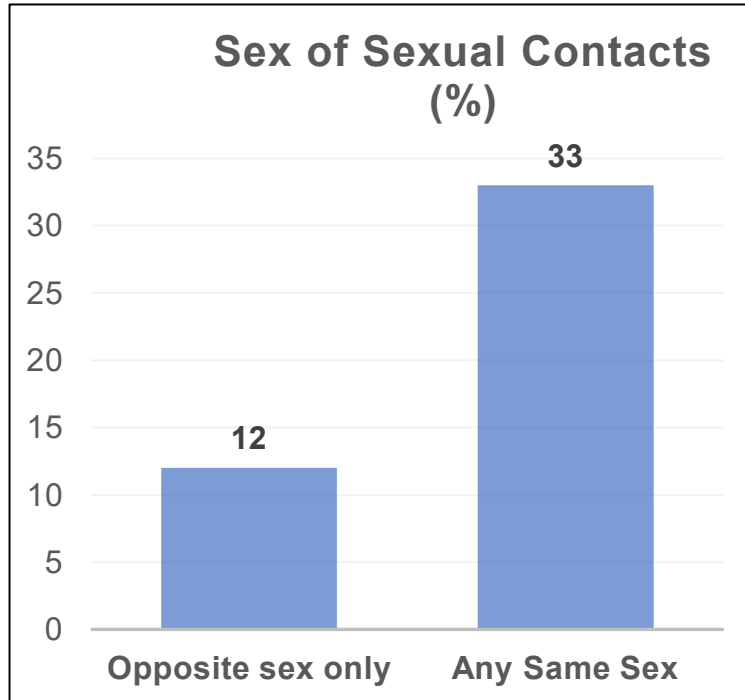
One or more suicide attempts during the past 12 months.



**Source:** Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)

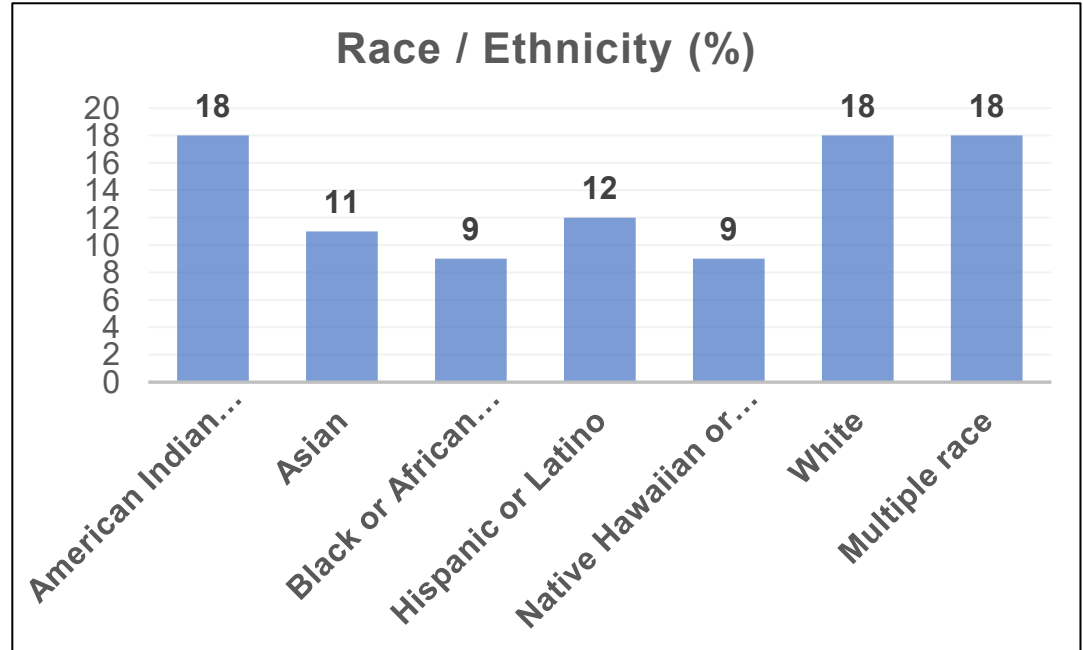
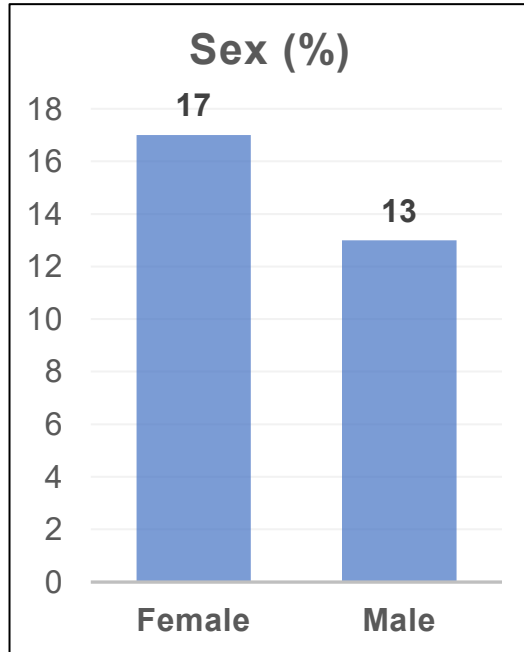
# Suicide Attempts 2022

One or more suicide attempts during the past 12 months.



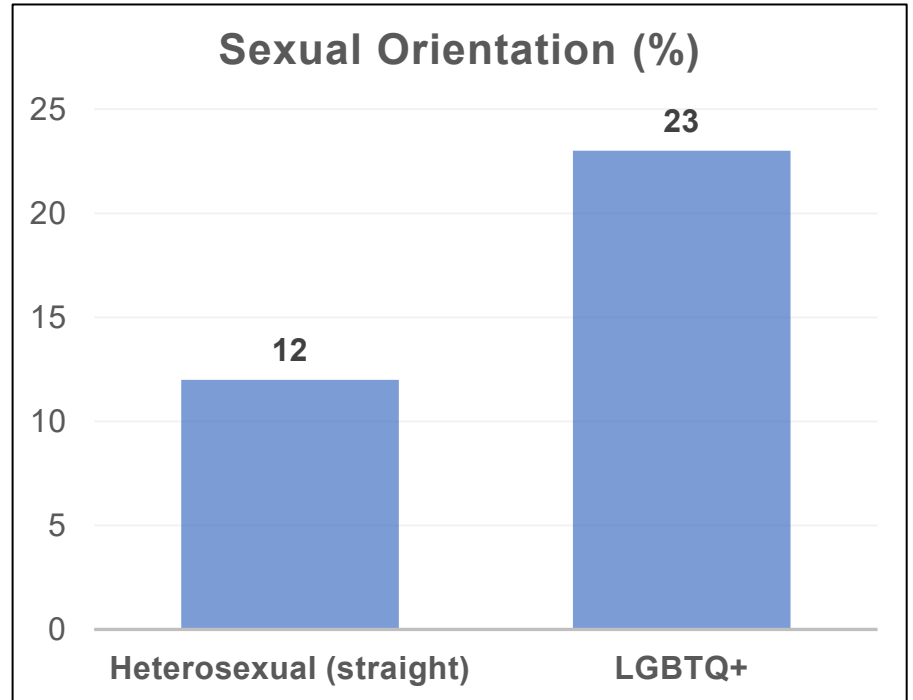
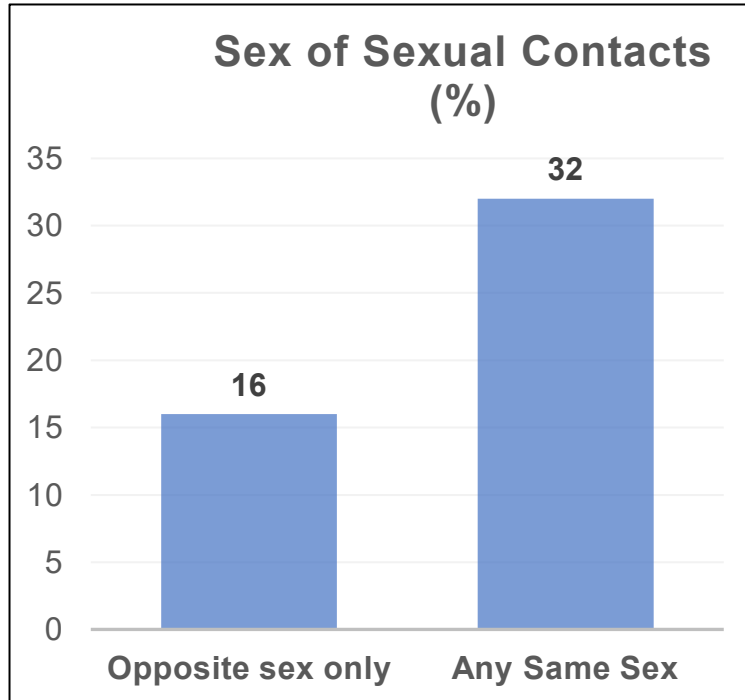
**Source:** Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)

# Bullied at School 2021



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)

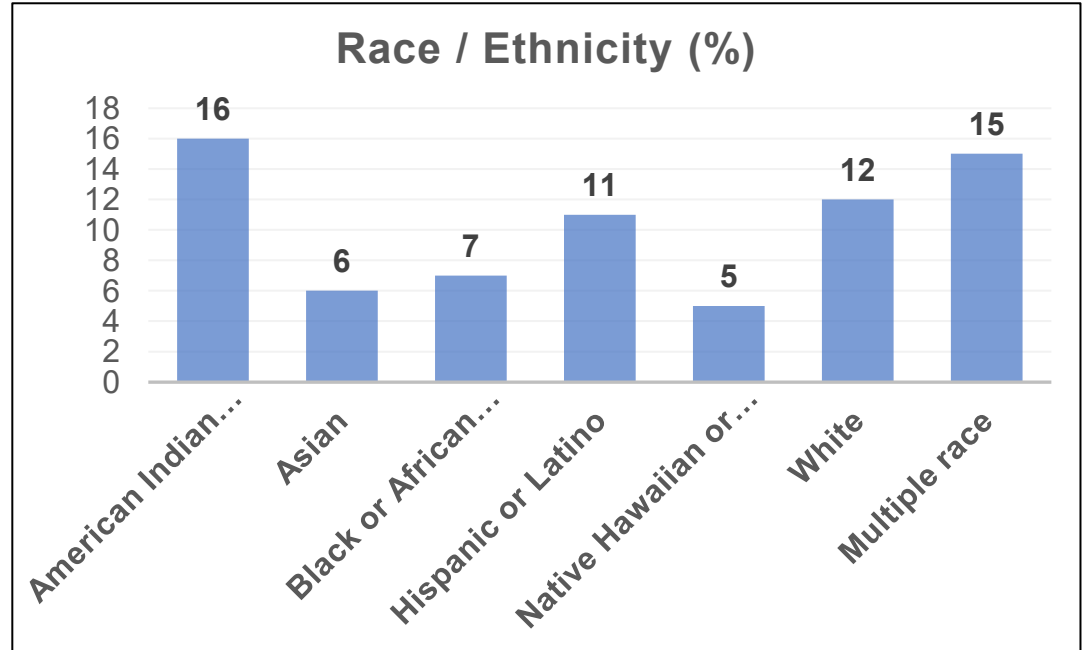
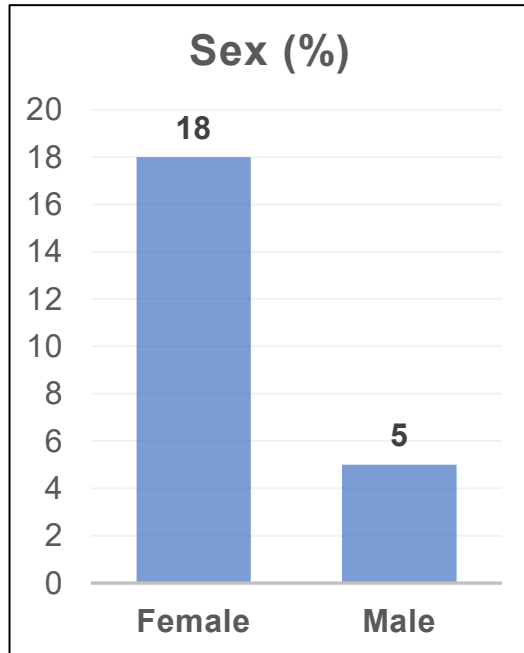
# Bullied at School 2021



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)

# Sexual Violence 2021

Experienced sexual violence from anyone during the past 12 months.

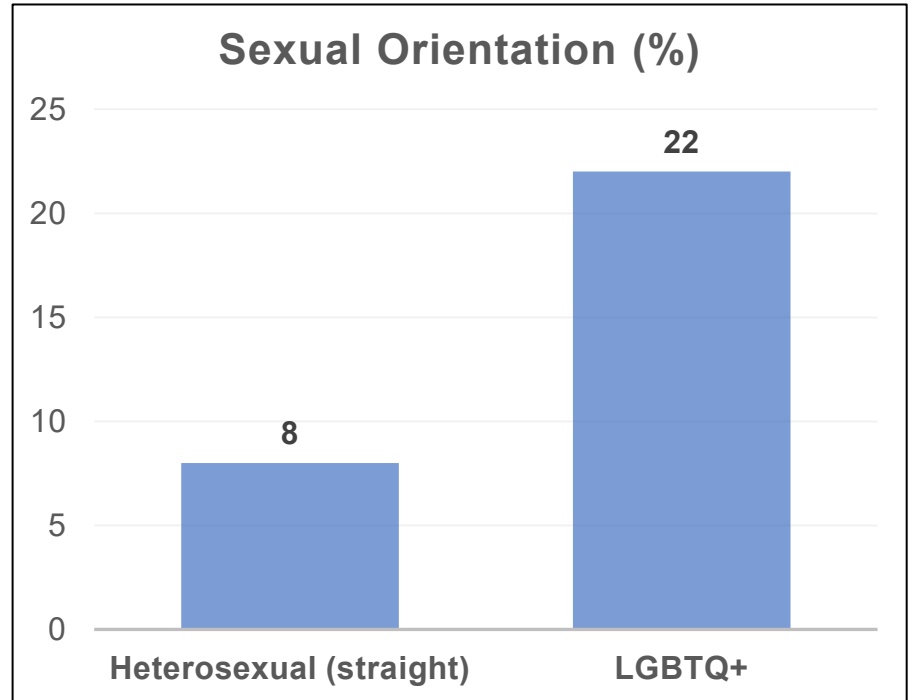
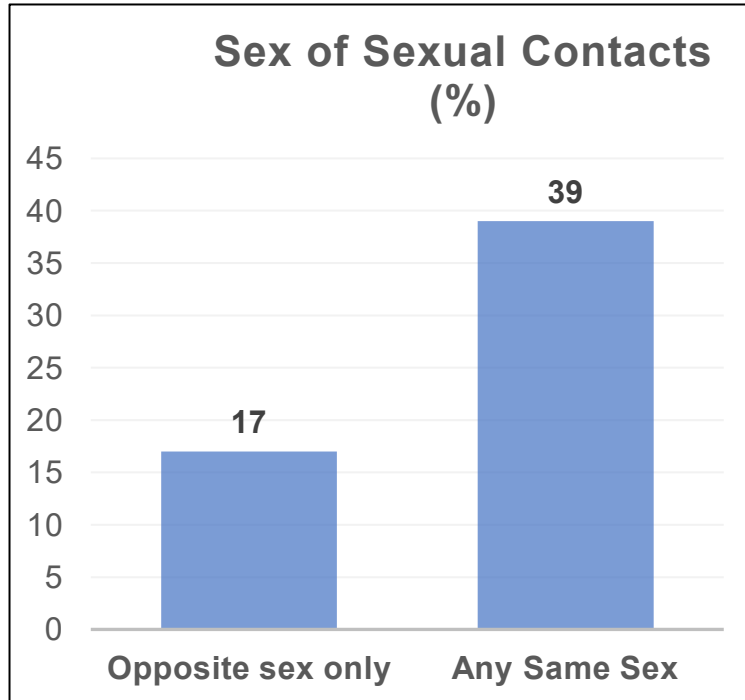


**Source:** Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)



# Sexual Violence 2021

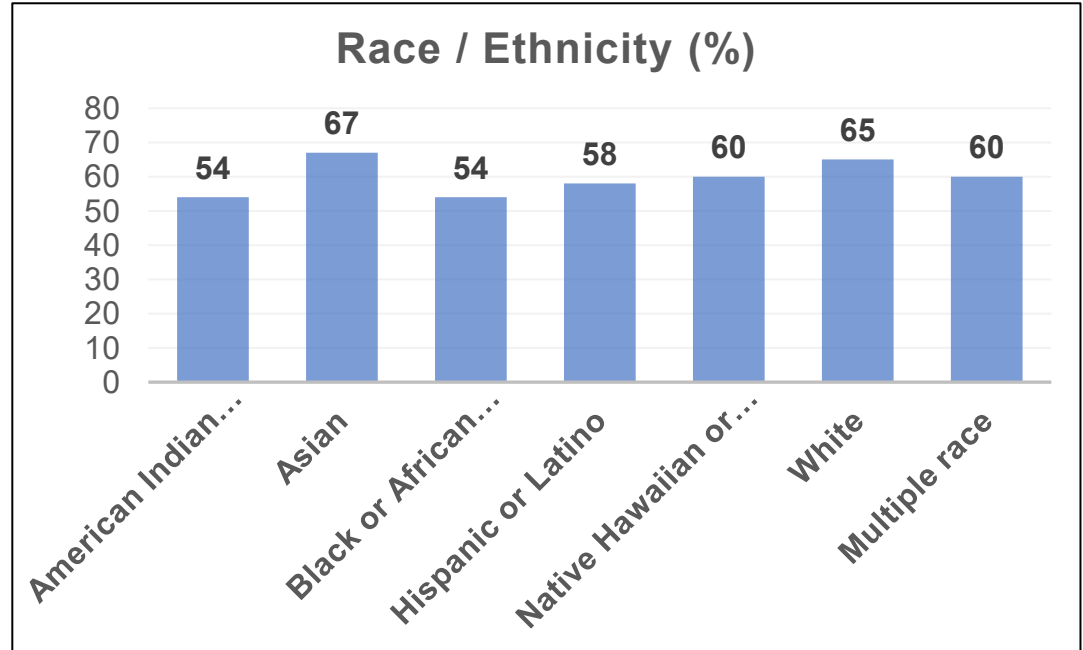
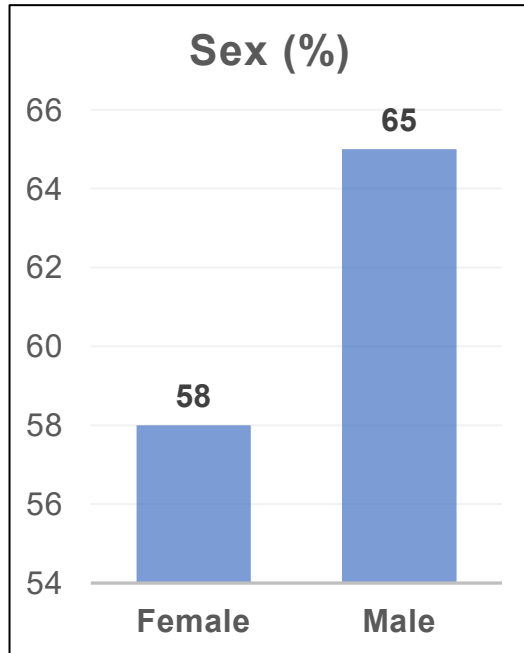
Experienced sexual violence from anyone during the past 12 months.



**Source:** Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)

# School Connectedness 2021

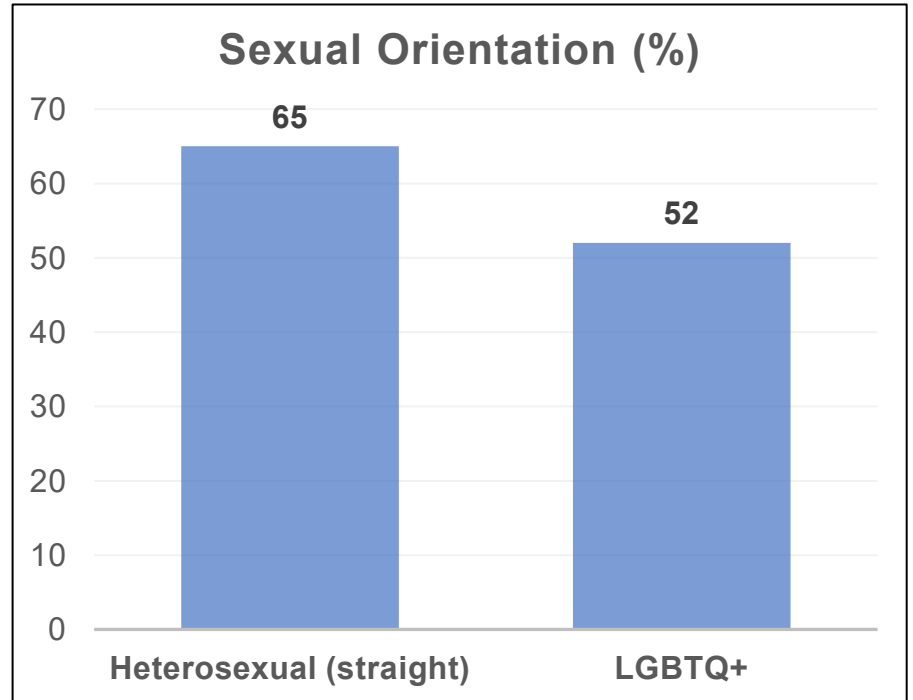
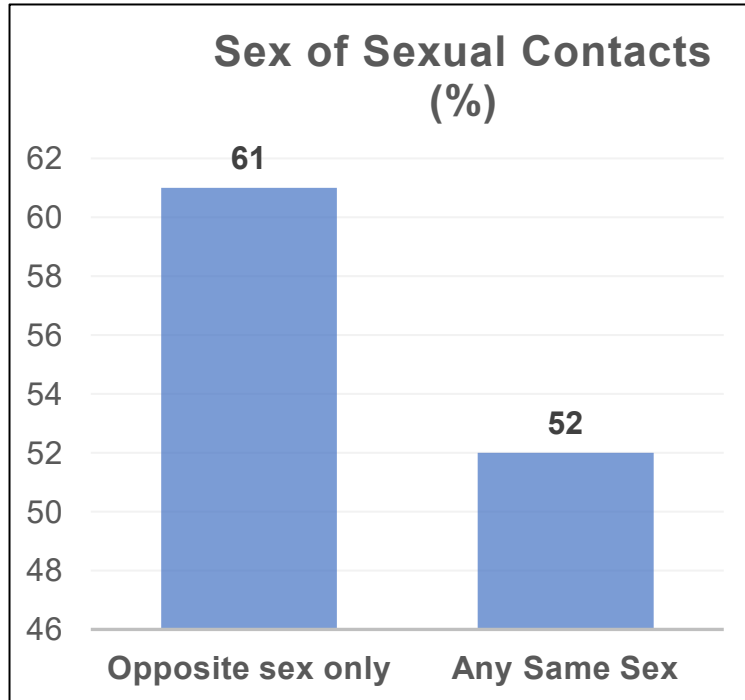
Felt Close to People at School.



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)

# School Connectedness 2021

Felt Close to People at School.



**Source:** Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022)

# Sources of Strengths

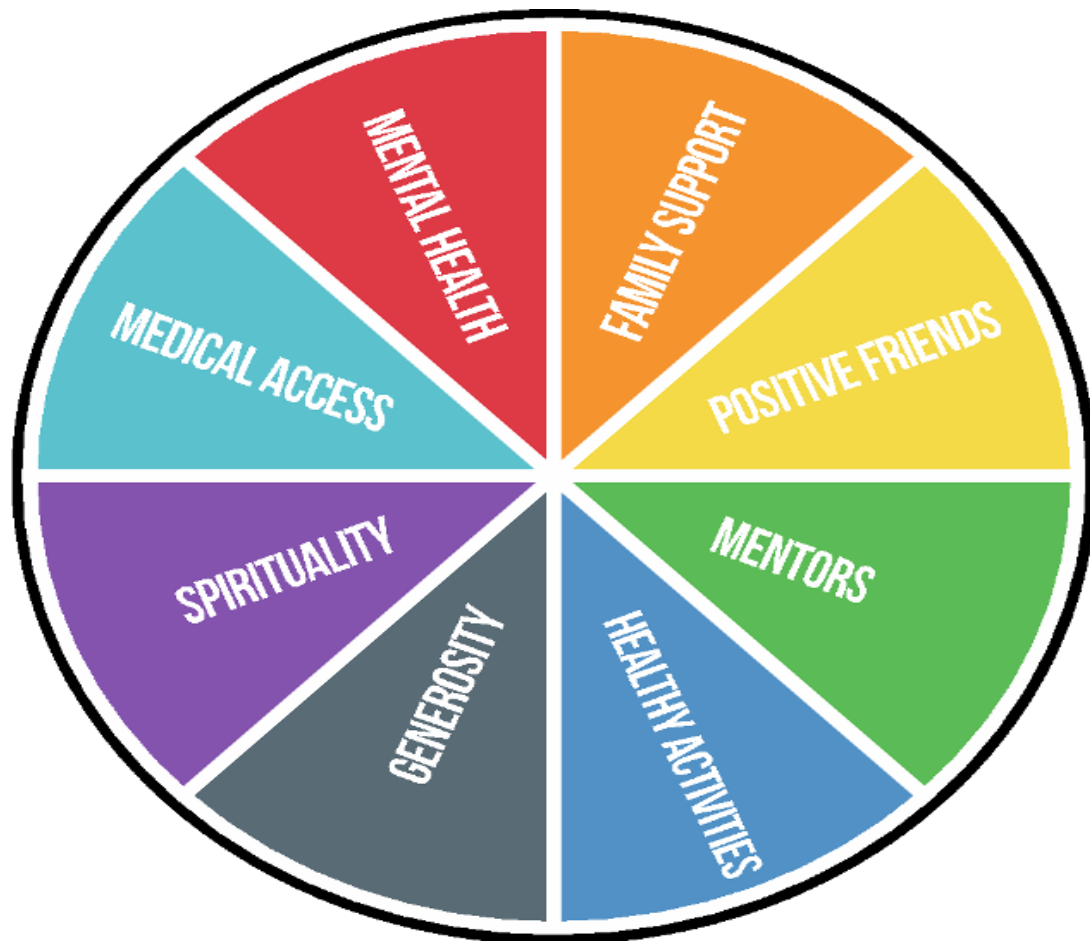
Sources of Strength employs a radically strength--based approach to prevention. in schools – PEER LEADERS/TRUSTED ADULTS.

Sources of Strength focuses on developing protective factors, using a model that is strength-based.

Using an active learning model, incorporating art, storytelling, small group sharing and games.

Sources of Strength explores the eight protective factors, depicted in the wheel of strength, to develop resilient individuals and communities.





# EVIDENCE-BASED

## High school program outcomes have shown:

- Increase in connectedness to adults
- Increase in school engagement
- Increase in likelihood to refer a suicidal friend to an adult
- Increased acceptability of seeking help
- Largest increases amongst students with a history of suicidal ideation (Wyman et al., 2010)
- Decreases in sexual harassment/violence & dismissiveness of sexual harassment (Espelage et al., 2023)
- Decreases in 2<sup>nd</sup> suicide attempt (Wyman et al., 2023)

CDC - 1UO1CE002841-01





**World  
Anti-Bullying  
Forum**

**OCTOBER 25-27, 2023  
NORTH CAROLINA, U.S.A.**

# Resources (espelage@unc.edu)

## The Choose Kindness Project

- <https://www.thechoosekindnessproject.org/resources-support/>

## Making Caring Common

- <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-by-topic/bias-bullying>

## Facing History and Ourselves

- <https://www.facinghistory.org/upstander>

## StopBullying.gov

- <https://www.stopbullying.gov>