



Towards Cultural Responsiveness in Sex Ed Classrooms

Deqa Dhalac, Family Engagement/Cultural
Responsiveness

Amelia Lyons, McKinney-Vento Homeless
Education

April Perkins, ESOL/Bilingual Programs



Maine
Department of
Education

Objective of Today's Session

Foster culturally- and linguistically-responsive sex education, with strategies to:

1

Empower students with knowledge and skills for a lifetime of health and safety

2

Ensure all students are represented in the sex education curriculum

3

Review and adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the unique students in your classroom

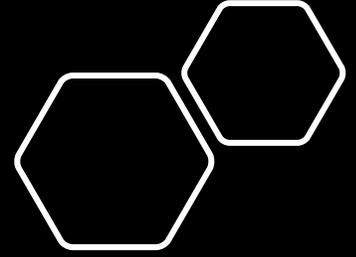
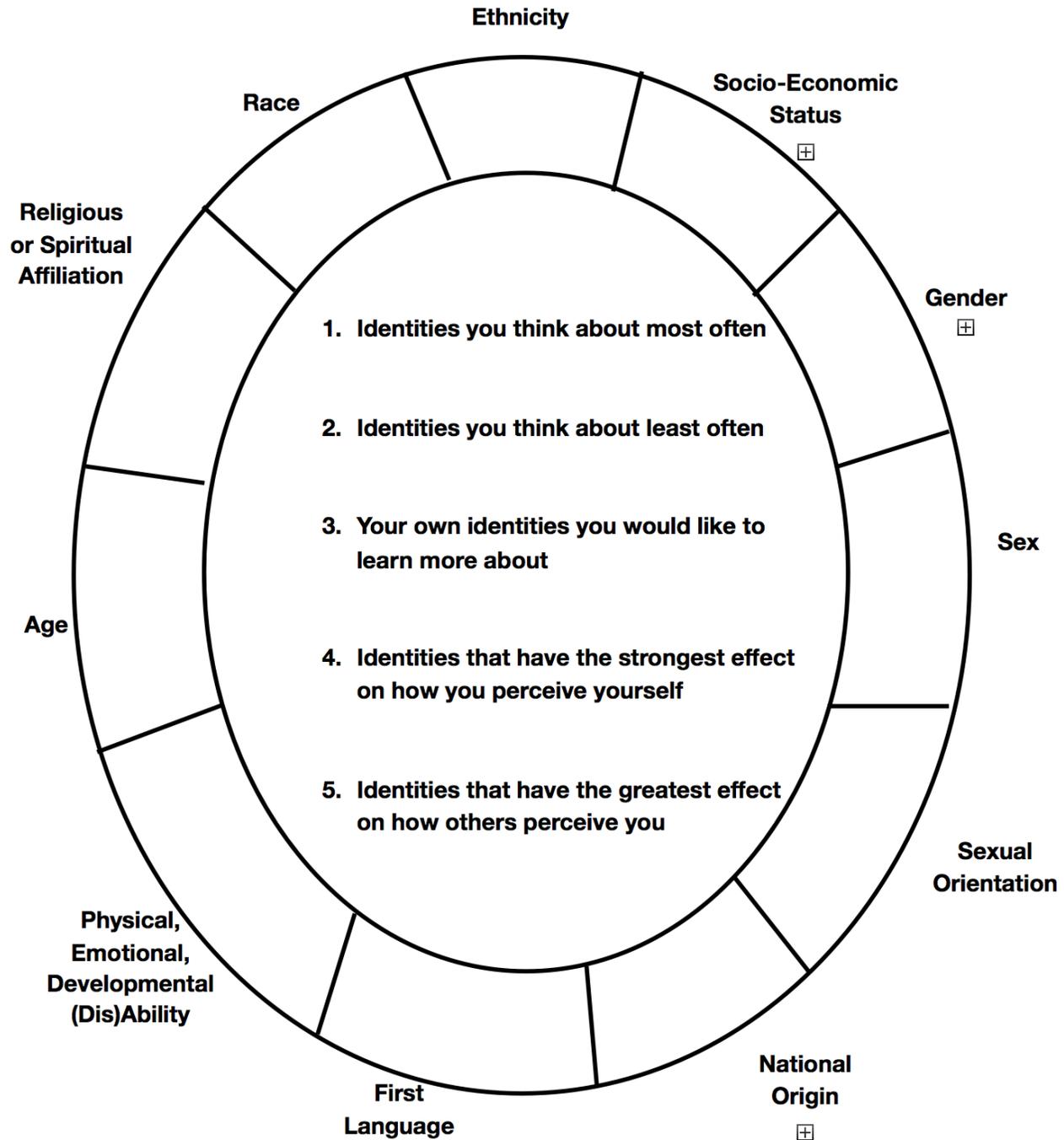
Icebreaker



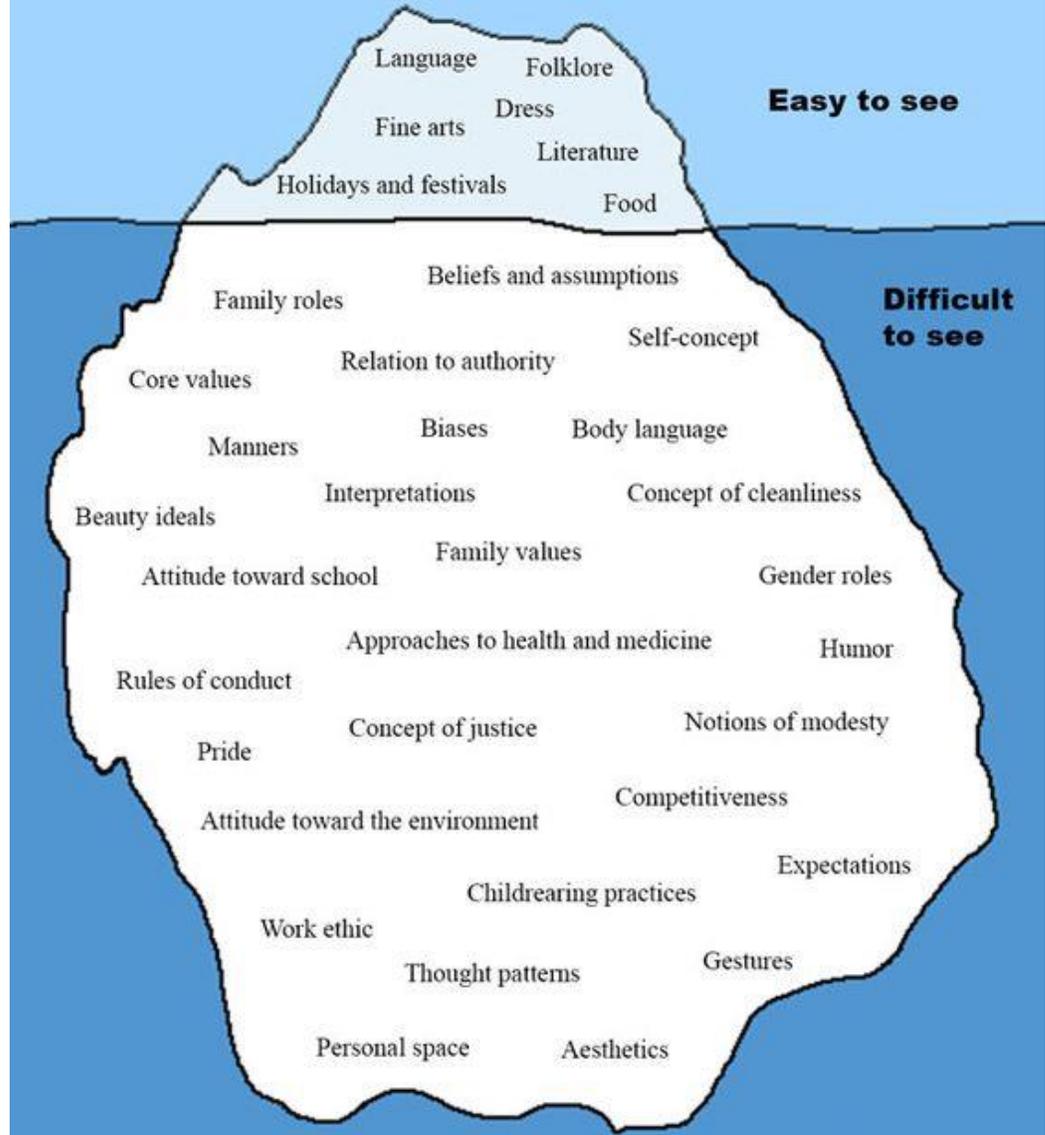
How prepared do you feel to navigate cultural differences in the sex education classroom?

<https://www.menti.com/9kevaskw3f>





The Cultural Iceberg



Cultural Competency

seeing others' cultural perspectives

Our own cultural perspective influences how we:

- Communicate
- Manage relationships
- Perceive ourselves and others
- Respond to situations
- View the world





Value
diversity



Be
committed
and willing
to change



Respect
difference



Work with
others



Acquire
cultural
knowledge



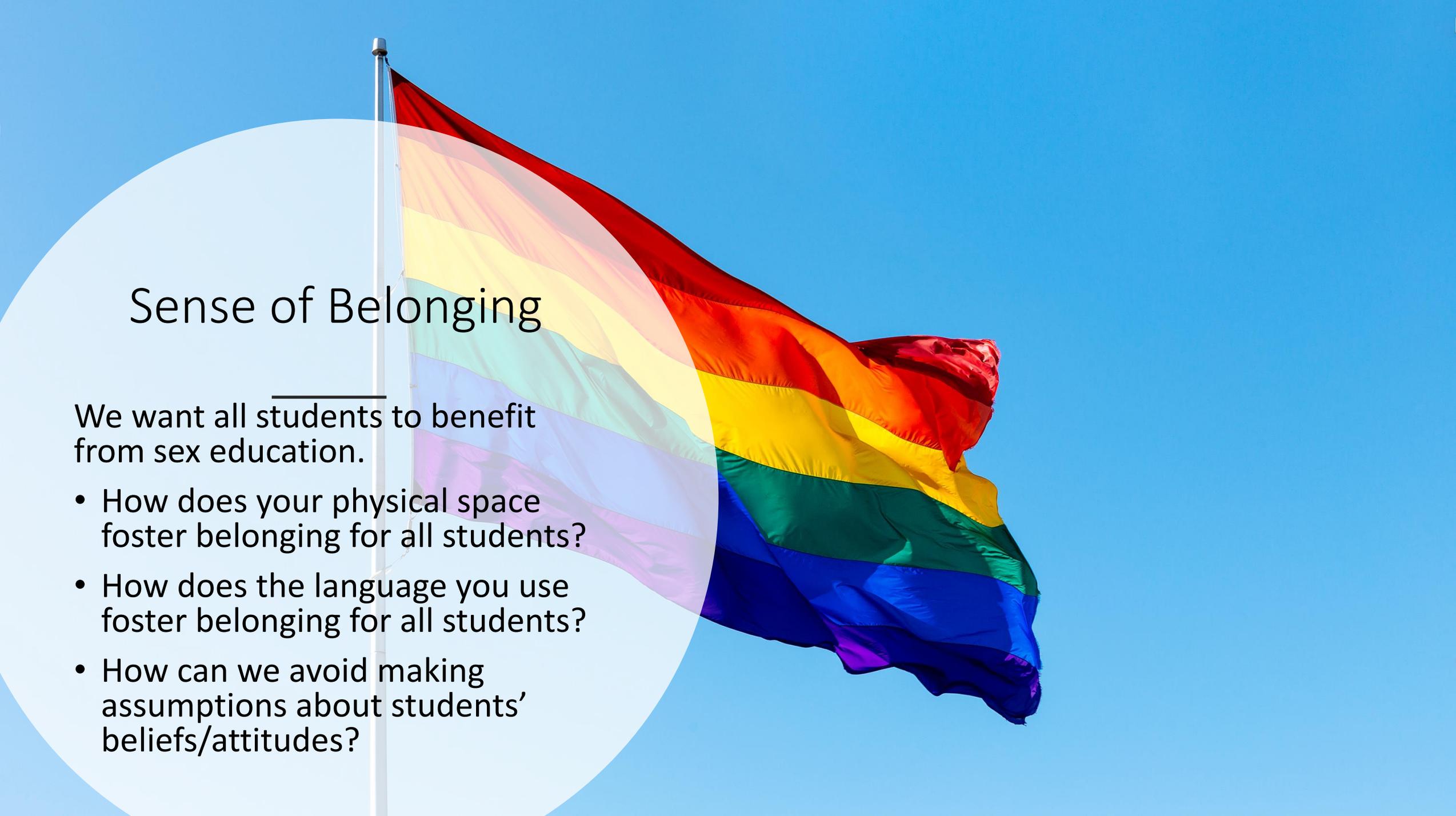
Be patient

Importance of Cultural Competency

Representation Matters

Are all students reflected in the images, videos, and books you're sharing? Posters around your school? In your curriculum?





Sense of Belonging

We want all students to benefit from sex education.

- How does your physical space foster belonging for all students?
- How does the language you use foster belonging for all students?
- How can we avoid making assumptions about students' beliefs/attitudes?

What do you know about your students' cultures?

- Cultural and spiritual beliefs, values, and norms
- Family structures
- Sexual norms and taboos
- Dating & marriage
- Contraception
- Abortion
- Sexual orientation
- Gender/gender identity



Addressing Potentially Sensitive Topics

How do you approach topics like sex, sexuality, and gender identity with students whose religious or cultural values may not align with what is taught through the curriculum?



Tips for Increasing Cultural Responsiveness

- Recognize your own cultural biases.
- Listen and learn from students' perspectives.
- Incorporate community leaders in discussions.
- Appeal to universal values of compassion.
- Approach sensitive topics from a science/health perspective.
- Understand and reduce power imbalances.



Parent/Guardian Involvement and Permission



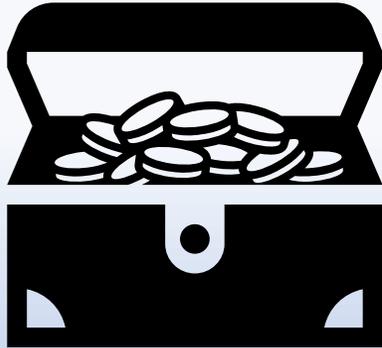
If parent/guardian permission is needed, ensure that forms are provided in the language parents/guardians can best understand.

Don't assume that all parents/guardians are literate. Interpretation may be needed for some families.

How can we minimize the number of parents/guardians who opt a child out of sex education or specific topics within the curriculum?

Linguistically-Responsive Practices

Asset Orientation



Increasing Comprehensibility



Instructional strategies



Asset Orientation



- Regard all students with an asset-based orientation, understanding that language proficiency is not a reflection of intelligence or knowledge.
- Maintain rigorous expectations for students at all levels of language proficiency.
- Educate yourself about the student's linguistic profile.
 - What is the student's level of English proficiency?
 - What can the student do in English at that level?
 - What language(s) does the student and the student's family speak?
 - Does the student speak/understand a particular variety of that language?
 - Is the student literate in a language other than English?
 - What are helpful similarities/differences to know about between the student's language(s) and English?

Increasing Comprehensibility



- Modify teacher talk:
 - Enunciate
 - Slow down (a little!)
 - Avoid idioms (or teach them!)
- Let students know the plan for the day's lesson in advance
- Pre-teach key vocabulary and concepts
- Use anchor charts
- Always give instructions in multiple forms
 - orally
 - in writing
 - by example
- Check for understanding frequently



Instructional Strategies



- Leverage student's linguistic and cultural knowledge
 - If possible, pair students with the same primary language to help support each other's learning
 - Encourage students to make comparisons between languages and cultures
 - If using translation tools, be cautious of the risk for poor translation of terms related to sex and sexuality
- Use images, videos, and realia to provide context and increase engagement
- Provide opportunities to participate that don't require speaking and opportunities for speaking that feel safe/comfortable for students
- Provide multiple ways to demonstrate learning



Considerations for Reviewing/Adapting Curriculum

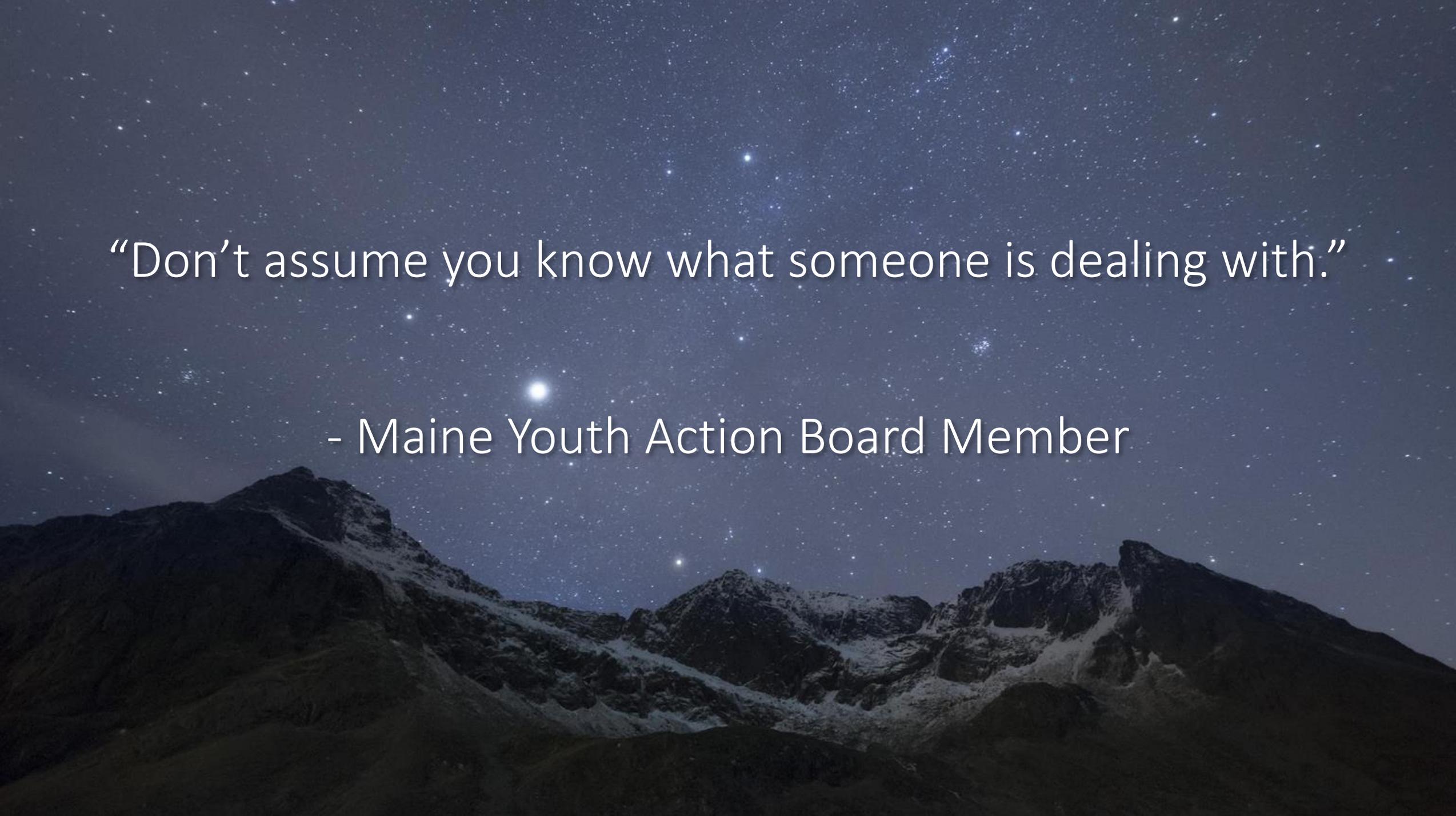
- Seek input from families.
- Collect baseline data about understandings and (mis)conceptions students have around sex education.
- Avoid making assumptions about a student's background or beliefs based on race, country of origin, religion, or other factors.
- Provide a safe space for asking questions and sharing feedback anonymously.
- Incorporate different cultural perspectives by using instructional materials from a variety of sources.
- Anticipate students' questions and concerns and be prepared to respond to them in a way that respects their cultural values.



Other
Diverse
Student
Experiences



McKinney-Vento
Homeless Education

A night sky filled with stars, with a dark mountain range visible in the foreground. The stars are scattered across the dark blue and black sky, with some appearing brighter than others. The mountains are silhouetted against the starry background, showing some texture and detail.

“Don’t assume you know what someone is dealing with.”

- Maine Youth Action Board Member

WHO QUALIFIES?

Are you temporarily staying with others? In between places? Staying in a place that is not home?

Your family could get extra support from your child's school with the McKinney-Vento program.

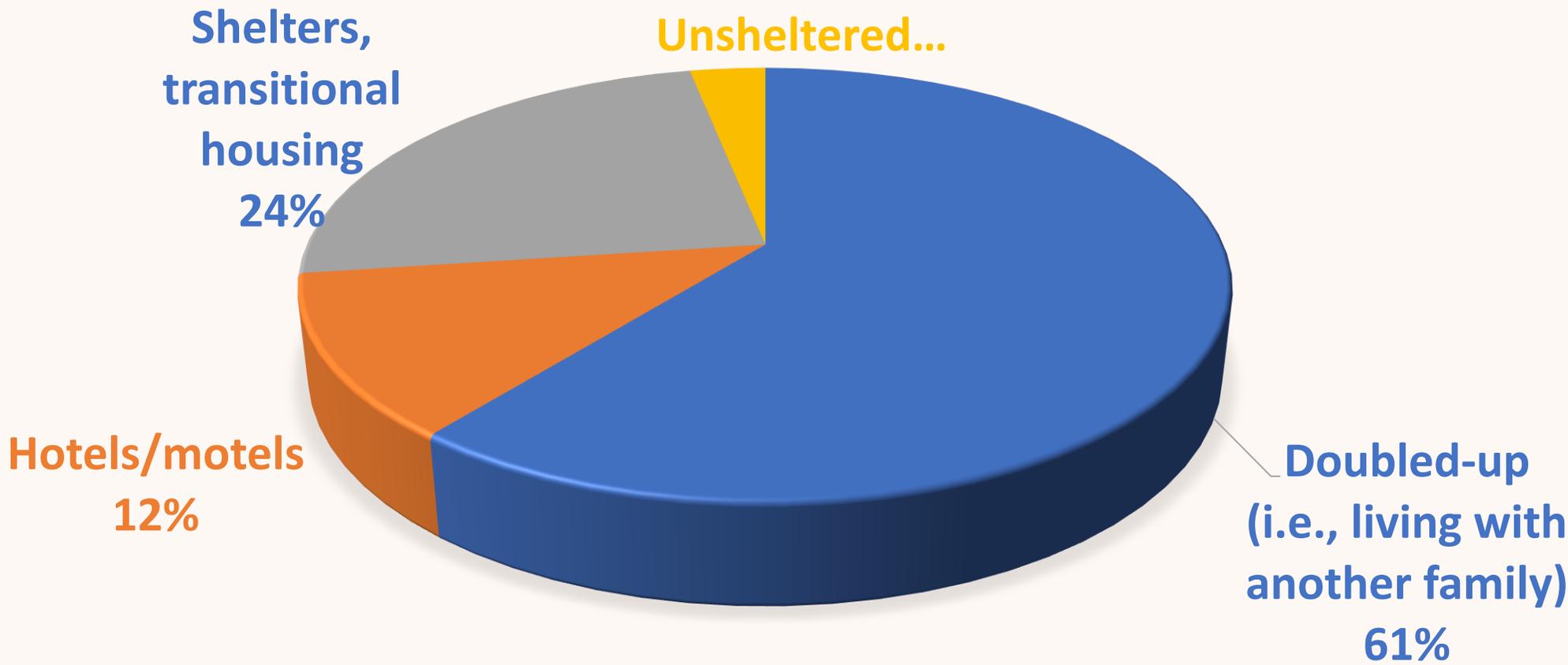
If you are not staying in your own home right now, talk to your child's school about it. Every school has a specific staff person whose job it is to support students in these situations.

Eligibility information

Homelessness is defined as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

- sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- hotels, motels, trailers, or camping grounds due to lack of adequate housing
- emergency or transitional shelters or housing
- children abandoned at hospitals
- car, tent, park, public spaces
- substandard housing
- migratory children living in one of these circumstances

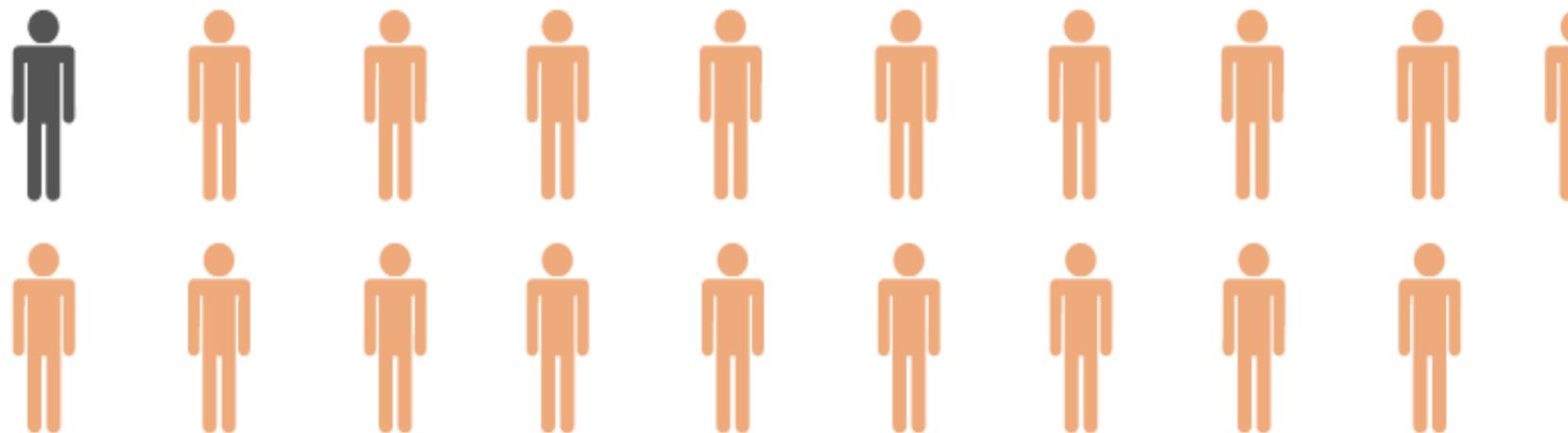
Reported enrollment, by primary nighttime residence: SY 2019-20



Survey results show:

5.4% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS INDICATED THEY HAD EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS IN THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR

For every 18.5 high school students, 1 has experienced homelessness.

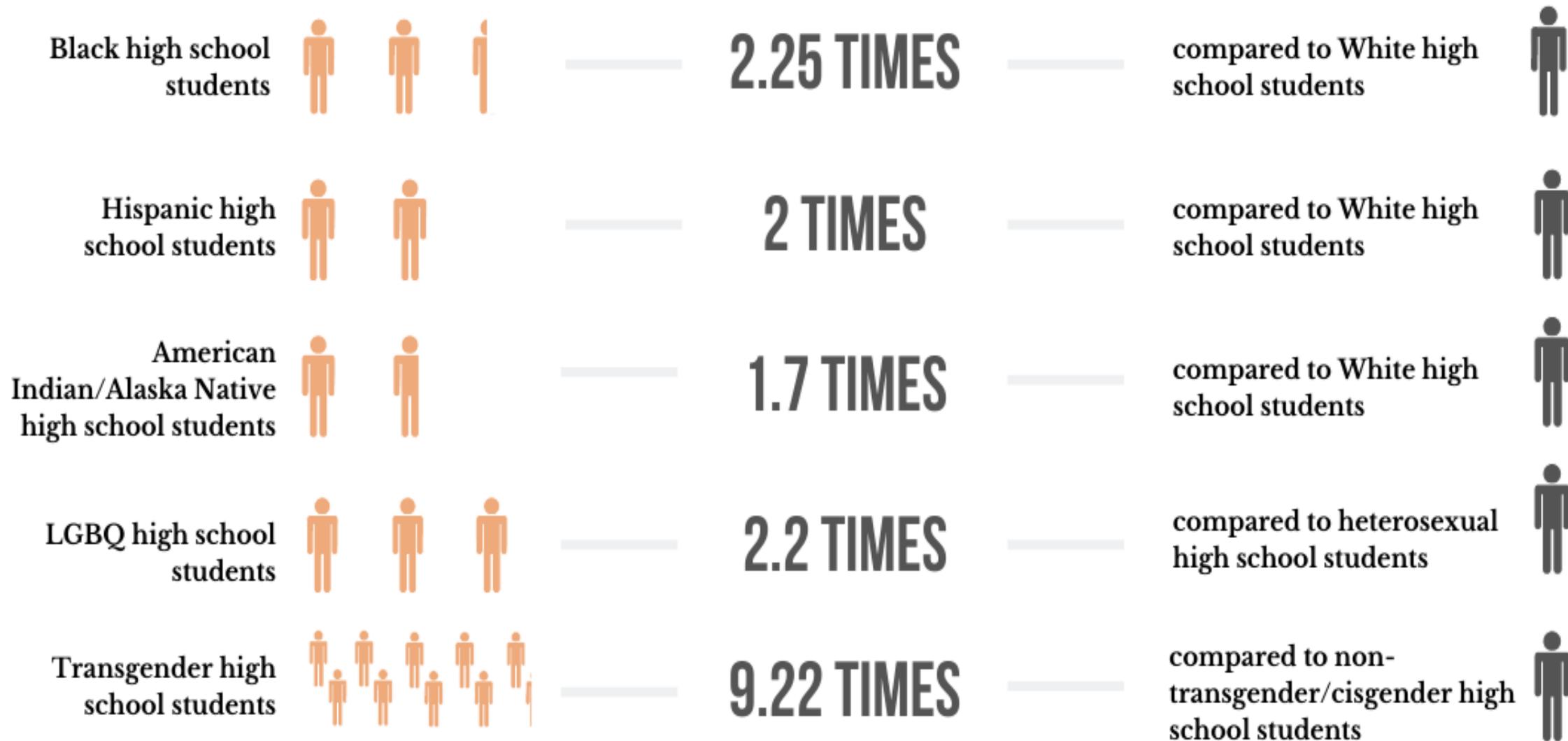




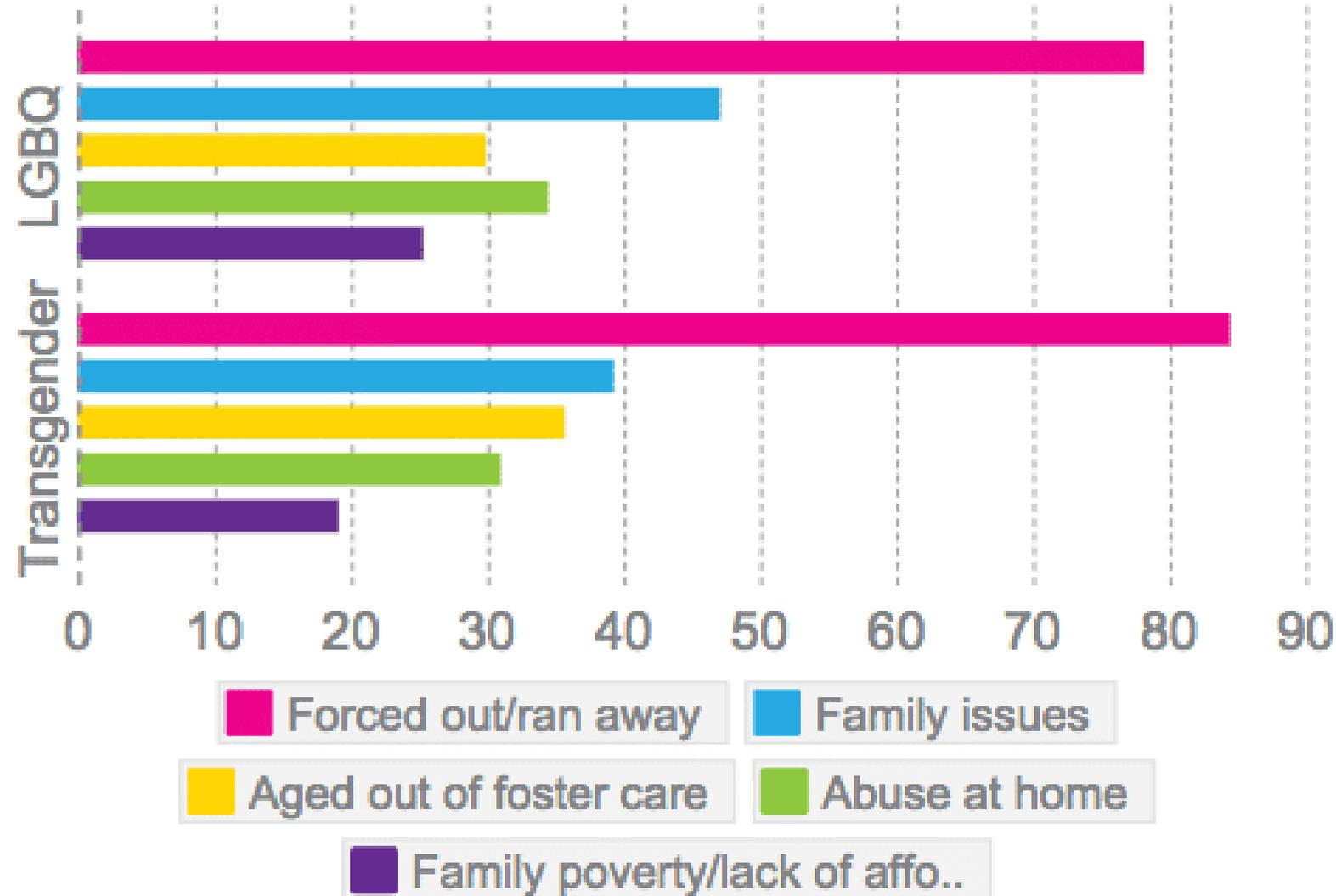
SchoolHouse
Connection

LIKELIHOOD TO EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

Data: All the numbers are from SchoolHouse Connection's analysis of 2019 YRBS data from 27 states (AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, HI, ID, IL, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MI, MT, NH, NM, NC, ND, PA, RI, SC, SD, VT, VA, WI).



Why Do LGBTQ Youth Experience Homelessness?



From True Colors United
<https://truecolorsunited.org>

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

- Not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian
- Often report family dysfunction as a reason they no longer live at home (blended families, substance use, pregnancy, sexual orientation)
- Includes youth who ran away or were kicked out
- A student's eligibility is based on their current nighttime living arrangement, not the circumstances that caused them to leave home



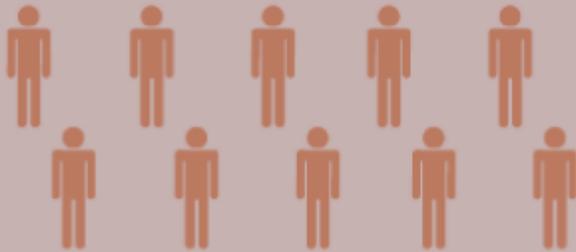


“If runaway youth would just follow their parents’ rules, they could live at home; why should we encourage their bad behavior?”

- Most runaway youth have fled abusive homes for their own survival
 - 20 – 50% percent sexually abused in their homes
 - 20 – 40% of homeless youth identify as LBGQTQ+
 - 10% of currently homeless female teenagers are pregnant
 - Over half felt that being homeless was as safe as or safer than being at home
 - Over 60% of homeless youth report being raped, beaten, robbed or assaulted while living on the streets
 - Homelessness is the largest risk factor for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors
- 

LIKELIHOOD TO EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

Students who have become or have gotten someone pregnant



10 TIMES

Students who have never been or gotten someone pregnant



[Schoolhouseconnection.org/student-homelessness-lessons-from-the-youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs](https://schoolhouseconnection.org/student-homelessness-lessons-from-the-youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs)



“Don’t talk to the student in front of other students. That’s embarrassing.

If you see something is off, touch base with your students and try to help them be comfortable.”

- Maine Youth Action Board Member



Me. Rev. Stat. §22:1503 Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Consent to Medical Care



A minor may give consent to all medical, mental, dental and other health counseling and services if the minor is living separately from parents. The minor may prove that status with documentation, including a written statement from a local educational agency McKinney-Vento homeless liaison.

Strategies



**PROVIDE ACCESS TO
MEDICAL CARE**



**COLLABORATE AND GET
TO KNOW YOUR
MCKINNEY-VENTO
LIAISONS**



**MEET STUDENT NEEDS
WITH COMMUNITY AND
PARTNERSHIPS**

Additional resources

- [A Place for Everyone: Welcoming Gender Diverse Youth Training Series, Teaching Students & Adults with Developmental Disabilities About Healthy Sexuality](#)
- [Student Homelessness: Lessons from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#)
- [Advocates for Youth - Culturally Responsive Instruction When Teaching Sex Ed](#)
- [Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Comprehensive Sex Education in the United States: Current Disparities, Pedagogy, and Public Policy Implications](#)

Questions?

Deqa Dhalac, Family Engagement/Cultural Responsiveness
Deqa.dhalac@maine.gov

Amelia Lyons, McKinney-Vento Homeless Education
Amelia.lyons@maine.gov

April Perkins, ESOL/Bilingual Programs
April.perkins@maine.gov

