



# Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Students:

## A Guide to Policies and Best Practices

**Fall 2022**



**CAMPAIGN FOR  
SOUTHERN  
EQUALITY**





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# About this Guide

This guide provides recommendations for schools that are seeking to create safe and supportive educational environments for all of their students, including students who identify as LGBTQ+. These guidelines may also help schools and school districts comply with Title IX and other federal laws.

## Introduction

The guide is divided into several sections, based on the most common concerns and questions received by the Supportive Schools team at the Campaign for Southern Equality. Each heading includes a summary recommendation on that topic, followed by sample policy language, additional background information, and links to other resources.

## Who is this guide intended for?

This guide is written for anyone who shapes or is affected by policy and practices at K-12 public, private, and charter schools in the United States, with a particular focus on schools in the Southeast. Administrators and school board members are encouraged to use it as a guide to crafting or revising school and district policies. Students, family members, teachers, and other school staff are encouraged to use it as a ‘know your rights’ resource and as a tool for advocacy with a school or district.

The primary purpose of this guide is to help schools create supportive learning environments for students of every gender identity and sexual orientation. Most of the recommendations in this guide will also be useful for other educational and youth-focused programs and organizations. Also, most of the legal rights and protections that inform these best practices are also [applicable to LGBTQ+ school district employees](#), as well as students.

## Terms and definitions

Some of the terms and definitions in this guide may be unfamiliar. [PFLAG](#) and the [Human Rights Campaign](#) both offer useful glossaries for frequently used terms and concepts.

## Disclaimer

*This document includes resources and information and it is not legal advice. Moreover, due to the rapidly changing nature of the law and our reliance on information provided by outside sources, we make no warranty or guarantee. For legal advice, it is advised to consult an attorney.*





# Implementing Policies & Best Practices

This guide includes recommendations for both policies and best practices. Both are important aspects of creating a supportive school, but when making changes in a school or district, it may be difficult to address both at the same time.

## So which comes first, policy or practice?

Either one! In some cases, a supportive administrator or school board may pass the policy, which then gets implemented through training and improvements in best practices, school to school, classroom to classroom. In other situations, teachers may begin implementing best practices in their classrooms, which gradually become part of the school culture and curriculum, and are only later formalized in policy. The strategy that works best for a given context is the best strategy for that case!

Depending on the policy and the district, the task may be different in different cases:

- **Enhance and enforce:** In some situations, such as bullying prevention or privacy, the school may already have existing policies, and the task is simply to be sure that they are robust enough and enforced appropriately to protect LGBTQ+ students.
- **Adjust and amend:** In other situations, the policy may need a small adjustment, such as adding the terms ‘sexual orientation’ and ‘gender identity’ to the school’s existing non-discrimination policy.
- **Revise or replace:** In some situations, a school may find that historical policies are no longer in compliance with federal civil rights protections, and the policy will have to be repealed, replaced or rewritten.
- **Initiate and implement:** And finally, there may be some situations where schools have no current policies or guidance and will need to develop policy in that area for the first time.

We hope that the recommendations and model policies provided in this guide can be useful in any of these circumstances.



# Making the Case:

## Why Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Students Are Needed

### What is the current context and landscape?

Schools should be supportive of all their students. Historically, most school policies, facilities, school cultures, and class curriculums were developed under the assumption that all or most students are heterosexual and cisgender, so support for students with those identities has rarely been an issue.

For LGBTQ+ students, however, the situation is very different. In a [2019 national survey](#) on the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth from The Trevor Project, less than half of LGBTQ+ students reported being out about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity at school. In the Campaign for Southern Equality's [2021 Southern LGBTQ+ Experiences survey](#), only 23% of respondents reported receiving support from school staff. Conversely, 28% of survey respondents were actively denied social and emotional support from school staff, and 33% reported that they avoided seeking support from school staff altogether. These low rates of support are particularly troubling, given that for LGBTQ+ students who may not be supported at home, the school provides the most critical source of social and emotional support, and could even be the only place where they feel comfortable being who they truly are.

LGBTQ+ students also experience discrimination and harassment at school, a place where all students should feel safe. In a [2019 national policy guidance report from GLSEN](#), almost 60% of LGBTQ+ students reported feeling unsafe at school and 89% reported experiencing victimization experiences. Sixty percent of LGBTQ+ students (compared to only 26% of heterosexual students) disclosed that they felt so sad or helpless at school that they stopped participating in usual activities.

Further, in the Campaign for Southern Equality's [2021 Southern LGBTQ+ Experiences survey](#), respondents reported missing school because they felt unsafe there. Five percent of respondents missed school during their elementary years because they felt unsafe, almost 22% in middle school, and 34% in high school.

The US is also in a historical moment when more young people are coming out as LGBTQ+ than ever before. In the [most recent Gallup poll of adults in the United States](#), 7.1% identified as LGBTQ+. For Gen Z adults (18 to 24 years old), the rate is nearly three times as high, with 20.1% identifying as something other than heterosexual and cisgender. Although this survey did not include minors, most educators agree that the rate is at least that high, or even higher, for students under 18. Consequently, school administrators should be aware that as many as 1 in 5 of their students identify as LGBTQ+, whether or not they are out at school.

Finally, it is important to note that all students benefit from attending a school that is supportive of LGBTQ+ students. [Research on supportive school climates](#) shows that positive learning environments that are welcoming and safe lead to improved behavioral, academic, and mental health outcomes for the entire student body. Diversity and inclusion are the hallmarks of success in the 21st century, and a school that fails to prepare its students to interact with others across lines of difference is preparing its students to fail in today's larger society. For more information on how to make a school a supportive, safe space for LGBTQ+ students, [GLSEN offers this resource guide](#).





# Making the Case:

## Why Supportive Schools for LGBTQ+ Students Are Needed

### How does anti-LGBTQ+ bias intersect with other forms of discrimination?

Every individual's circumstances are different. Still, when we look at the LGBTQ+ youth population as a whole, those most likely to be 'out' at school are those who have other supportive and protective factors – such as race and/or class privilege, a supportive family, a supportive peer group, access to counseling or therapy, an accepting faith community, club, team, or organization, etc. Students with fewer or none of these factors are less likely to be out, because they are less safe in being out. Consciously or unconsciously, this dynamic can skew assumptions about the overall LGBTQ+ student population, because the visibly LGBTQ+ students are most assuredly not the only LGBTQ+ students. On average, based on [The Trevor Project data](#) cited above, the students who are out at LGBTQ+ at school are less than half of the school's actual LGBTQ+ population.

Historically, schools have tended to treat various forms of discrimination as separate and distinct, but this does not reflect the daily lived experience of students who experience multiple forms of discrimination. For every population of students that faces barriers or disadvantages because of race, economic status, religion, ability,

immigration status, or other factors, some of those students will also be LGBTQ+. Students who face other forms of bias or discrimination may face more barriers to being out about their LGBTQ+ identities, but just because they aren't out at school doesn't mean they aren't there at school. Similarly, if a school implemented every policy and practice in this guide but failed to also look at equity and inclusion related to race, class, religion, ability, and other factors, the school would still be failing to adequately serve many of its LGBTQ+ students. By understanding the complexities and intersectionality of student identities, schools can better support students in all of their diverse aspects.

We wholeheartedly encourage schools to see these policies and recommendations as one part of the larger set of equity strategies and policies that every school should undertake. For those interested in learning more about intersectionality, George Washington University has compiled an [extensive set of resources](#), and [Learning for Justice](#) provides a wide range of articles and curriculum materials.



# Political, Cultural & Religious Considerations

## How do these recommendations fit into the larger cultural and political landscape?

For many years, school administrators and policy makers have been left with little support in navigating the confusing and sometimes contradictory landscape of court rulings, state legislation, executive orders, and agency guidance. Harassment legislation targeting LGBTQ+ students – particularly transgender students – has been proposed or passed in nearly every Southern state. Hyperpartisan politics and gridlock have left most Southern state Departments of Education unable or unwilling to offer guidance and model policies to the schools they serve. Meanwhile, as social acceptance grows, [a greater number of young people come out as LGBTQ+](#) every year. And the fundamental purpose of each school – to provide every student with a quality education in a safe and supportive environment – remains unchanged.

Against that backdrop, the Supportive Schools Program of the Campaign for Southern Equality has worked to answer questions and provide guidance to school administrators, school board members, educators, parents, guardians, and students. While cultural and political factors can be charged, complex, and changing, prioritizing different ideologies or interest groups, the values centered in these recommendations are the rights and well-being of students, including (but not limited to) LGBTQ+ youth.

## How do these recommendations fit into the larger legal landscape?

In June 2021, the [U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights](#) issued a [Notice of Interpretation explaining](#) that it will enforce Title IX’s prohibition on discrimination on the basis of sex to include: (1) discrimination based on sexual orientation; and (2) discrimination based on gender identity. This interpretation follows the Supreme Court ruling in [Bostock v Clayton County](#).

Consequently, discrimination against students on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation is prohibited in any school, public or private, that receives federal funds and is therefore subject to [Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972](#). These recommendations were developed to help schools remain in compliance with Title IX.

The [Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), which prohibits the sharing of students’ personal information without permission, also plays an important role in informing these recommendations.





# Political, Cultural & Religious Considerations

## What is ‘harassment legislation’?

Although students’ federal rights and protections have become increasingly clear, the legal landscape at the state level is more complex. Recent years have seen a [record number of anti-LGBTQ+ bills](#) being proposed, and sometimes passed, in state legislatures across the country and particularly in the South. (There is a similar pattern of [bills that would ban curricular materials and school discussions](#) about race and racism.) In many cases, the authors and sponsors of these bills are fully aware that they violate either the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution or various federal non-discrimination laws including Title IX. Transgender sports bans, for example, are by definition [discriminating against students on the basis of gender](#), which is prohibited under Title IX.

The purpose of this ‘harassment legislation’ is to foster a hostile environment for LGBTQ+ people at the state and national level. While these laws are being challenged in the courts, they still leave schools in a difficult place until they are overturned. In some cases, schools must choose between obeying federal or state laws. If they choose to follow state law, then it is the school districts and their employees who face the complaints and lawsuits about harassment, discrimination, and privacy violations, not the legislators who crafted the law. When state and federal laws are in conflict, we encourage administrators to return to the fundamental purpose of the school – to provide every student with a quality education in a safe and supportive environment – and to work with school district attorneys to provide the legal justifications for doing so.

Even when harassment legislation doesn’t become law, it contributes to social hostility toward LGBTQ+ (and particularly transgender) students that manifests as everything from increased bullying in the school to public protests at school board meetings. Those advocating for such bills use the opportunity to spread stereotypes, prejudice, and disinformation about transgender people. Whether the bills pass or fail, they contribute to a ‘chilling environment’ that makes trans students less likely to stand up for their rights and schools less likely to protect them. Despite these obstacles, the school’s mission remains clear: to provide every student with a quality education in a safe and supportive environment.

We fully recognize that standing up for the civil rights and legal protections of LGBTQ+ students may be both risky and controversial in many Southern communities. However, given that the sphere of influence of school administrators includes the policies, practices, and culture within a school building or campus – where children spend most of their waking lives – it means that these individuals have a particularly critical responsibility and opportunity to create safe and inclusive school communities for students in their care, despite the social backdrop of widespread disinformation and harassment legislation.



# Political, Cultural & Religious Considerations

## What about religious freedom and freedom of speech?

Although LGBTQ+ equality is often positioned as being in opposition to religious freedoms and First Amendment free speech protections, that is a false dichotomy, and one that has been amplified for political purposes. In any case, schools have long experience with negotiating such issues. The fundamental principles are that students, staff, faculty, and parents are entirely free to hold their own religious and political beliefs, and that no religious or political belief is sufficient justification for harassment or discrimination. Similarly, free speech protections are not a sufficient justification for discriminatory or harassing speech and behaviors. People are entitled to their own beliefs, but they may not impose those beliefs on others or punish those who believe differently.

It can be useful to look at other examples in which schools legitimately place boundaries on personal beliefs.

- A Muslim teacher may choose to wear *hijab*, and she has a right to do so, even if dress codes would otherwise prohibit head coverings. However, she may not require her students to do so, or discriminate against students who wear more revealing clothing.
- A Jewish, Muslim, or vegetarian student may not be required to eat pork products, but they also cannot prevent other students from eating bacon or BBQ in the cafeteria.
- A teacher may privately believe that interracial marriages are in opposition to God's will, but he may not use that belief as a justification for mistreating or disrespecting biracial students.
- A student may adhere to the Judeo-Christian tenet 'Thou shalt not kill,' but they may still be required to study wars, genocides, and capital punishment in a social studies curriculum.





# Political, Cultural & Religious Considerations

## A final word for school administrators caught up in the culture wars

There are many situations – perhaps most situations – where a school administrator must weigh competing needs and interests and arrive at a solution that is workable for everyone involved. However, the safety and civil rights of students and faculty are not among these compromise situations.

In the experience of the Supportive Schools team at the Campaign for Southern Equality, we have seen that the school districts that have the best student outcomes and face the least political backlash are those that take an immediate, decisive, and unified stand on protecting students' safety and civil rights. In contrast, school districts that try to avoid LGBTQ+ issues as 'too divisive' or because 'we don't want to take a stand on a controversial issue' are in fact communicating that they might be moved to an anti-LGBTQ+ position, and are thus inviting further political pressure. School districts that accommodate or encourage any anti-LGBTQ+ policies or practices are creating a welcoming environment for anti-LGBTQ+ activists to push for even more institutional discrimination, in the same way that giving a bully your lunch money on Monday makes it more likely that they are going to keep robbing you for the rest of the week.

An example of this may be seen in North Carolina, where several school districts have faced parent opposition to teachers who are

openly LGBTQ+. Some of these districts took a firm stand that "We have worked hard to create a diverse faculty, we stand by our LGBTQ+ staff, and we are firmly committed to complying with all state and federal non-discrimination laws." The faculty felt supported, and the opposition – which had been organized by state and national anti-LGBTQ organizations – faded away as those organizations focused on other districts. On the other hand, some districts responded by asking teachers to accommodate that bias by taking down rainbow flags and Safe Space stickers, or refraining from talking about their same-sex spouses at work. These districts found that they had simultaneously created an environment that encouraged further anti-LGBTQ+ activism, opened themselves up to a number of discrimination complaints by the targeted faculty members, and created lasting damage to the morale of the entire staff and faculty.

As difficult as it may be for a school administrator in the South to take a decisive stand in support of the safety and equality of LGBTQ+ staff and students, in the long run it is easier than the alternatives, and more importantly, creates the best possible working and learning environment for students, staff and faculty.



# What If These Recommendations Just Aren't an Option for Us?

Many Southerners are long familiar with the experience of having rights that exist on paper, but not in the actual experience of daily life. Even in the best times, laws and civil rights are only as strong as the willingness of the courts and authorities to enforce and uphold them, and for LGBTQ+ Southerners, these are far from the best of times. Many school administrators are reluctant to uphold the rights and protections of LGBTQ+ staff and students, or may actively work to pass discriminatory policies (such as banning rainbow flags and Pride stickers, or censoring books with LGBTQ+ themes or characters). State legislators are proposing harassment legislation which targets the LGBTQ+ community, and passing state laws that actually require educators to violate federal civil rights protections, such as 'Don't Say Gay' laws, transgender sports bans, or mandatory 'outing' laws. Against such a backdrop, we recognize that a list of recommended policies and best practices may seem idealistic and unrealistic.

Even so, you have options. The list of strategies and tactics below may provide some ideas about how some change might happen, even if full civil rights protections feel out of reach.

- **Know your rights.** Knowledge is power, and even if – especially if – your rights are being violated, you should know clearly and specifically what those rights are.
- **Educate.** Very few educators or administrators have received sufficient training in understanding LGBTQ+ identities or working in a culturally responsive way with LGBTQ+ students, but most have been exposed to stereotypes, hate speech, and anti-LGBTQ+ disinformation campaigns. It shouldn't have to be your job to educate the educators, but many effective strategies are based on first providing clear, accurate and unbiased information about LGBTQ+ people, their rights and legal protections.
- **Share this guide.** The policies and best practices in this guide are presented with an audience of administrators and decision-makers in mind, and we hope it will be an effective tool for both education and advocacy.
- **Take incremental steps, and choose your battles.** In a hostile school or district, it is common for LGBTQ+ students to face many different forms of discrimination and bias, which can feel overwhelming. Tactically, it may work best to choose one area of change where progress seems possible, and then build from there. Many student and faculty advocates choose to start with addressing bullying and harassment, since most schools have strong anti-bullying policies in place; they just need to be applied to protect LGBTQ+ students.
- **There's power in numbers.** It can be difficult for one individual to make change in a school or district, but when students, faculty and adults organize and speak with a collective voice, it is much more difficult for the administration to ignore or dismiss.
- **Find local allies.** Supportive faculty, guardians, or community members can be a valuable resource. You might talk with individuals who you know to be sympathetic, or you might find an existing community group with a commitment to social justice. National organizations like GLSEN, the GSA Network, and PFLAG provide guidance and support for organizing groups both inside and outside of school. Finding affirming clergy or faith leaders can be a powerful step, because so much anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment is rooted in a misinterpretation of the Christian scriptures.
- **Find outside allies.** Local, state, regional and national LGBTQ+ groups and organizations can provide information, support, and even resources for your organizing and advocacy efforts. Other organizations may be able to provide legal assistance, or a school-based training.



# What If These Recommendations Just Aren't An Option For Us?

- **Those most affected should have the loudest voices.** As you organize and find allies, do your best to stick to the principle that those who are most affected by discrimination and at the most risk of retaliation should have the greatest say over choosing priorities, tactics and strategies. This often means that adults and allies should step back or quiet down so that student voices can be heard.
- **Step by step, one by one.** Best practices can sometimes be put into place incrementally, even when policy change isn't possible. For instance, a school district should have a policy that requires school staff to respect the names and pronouns of all students. If the district refuses, however, a small group of students can still go around their school, talk to each teacher, and ask that teacher to commit to respecting the names and pronouns of all students. Some teachers may agree, and some may refuse, but in either case, the students are raising awareness and shifting the culture of the school.
- **Document, document, document.** Schools are bureaucracies and bureaucracies like things written down. Telling your principal that LGBTQ+ students often get bullied is one thing; handing the principal a list of six bullying incidents in the last two weeks, including what happened, who participated, who witnessed it, and where and when it happened is much more difficult for the principal to ignore. Sometimes the act of documenting can be a strategy in and of itself; for example, if a teacher is known for making anti-LGBTQ+ comments, they may be less likely to do so if they know that students are going to get out a notebook and write down what they said. Documentation is also an important part of preparing to file a complaint.
- **File a complaint.** The bottom line is that you do have civil rights that the school may not violate – but you may need to file a complaint before those rights are respected. Our [Stand Up for Your Rights guide](#) may provide you with additional useful information; but in general, you should know that you have the right to file a complaint at the district level, or with the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Education. It sounds intimidating, but isn't actually too difficult, especially if you already have documentation. Once a complaint is filed, the district has many legal requirements and responsibilities that come into play, which increases the scrutiny they are under and may make it more difficult for them to continue to discriminate.
- **Have someone else file a complaint.** If retaliation is a concern, then it's important to know that any person may file a Title IX or other civil rights complaint on behalf of someone who is experiencing discrimination. Talk with a trusted ally about this option.
- **Express a willingness to file a complaint.** Sometimes the possibility of a Title IX complaint is enough to motivate an administrator to take action, but don't bring up the possibility if you aren't ready and willing to follow through. At the Supportive Schools Program, our most effective strategy has been to respectfully communicate the following six points with a principal or superintendent. This formula has been effectively used in letters, emails, phone calls and face-to-face meetings. Your evidence should be as specific and factual as possible, and your solution should be something that is reasonable and realistic.
  - » We believe that your school / district is not currently complying with (reference and link the law or policy).
  - » This belief is based on the following evidence (share information about discriminatory incidents, actions, policies or practices).
  - » Students / faculty / guardians are currently documenting additional violations of this law/policy.
  - » We believe that the situation may be effectively addressed through (share your solution).
  - » We would prefer for the school to implement this solution and come into compliance with the law without the need for a formal complaint process, but we are willing to file a complaint if necessary.
  - » We would like to see (name the next steps you'd like to see from the school or administrator) by (give them a reasonable deadline), and at that time we will be deciding upon our own next steps.



# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Safety, Harassment & Bullying

Every school is expected to keep all of its students safe. This requires actively constructing a culture of respecting and appreciating diversity in all its forms. Anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies should explicitly include the categories of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

### Best Practices

- Include ‘sexual orientation,’ ‘gender identity,’ and ‘gender expression’ in all non-discrimination and anti-bullying statements.
- Bullying or harassment related to any identity – race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class, etc. – should be taken equally seriously and handled in similar ways.
- Anti-bullying policies should explicitly include how to report bullying and harassment, as well as what the steps the school will take to address the report. LGBTQ+ students feel more safe at school when they believe the perpetrators will be held accountable for their actions, and when they feel the school can and will protect them from future retaliation.
- Anti-harassment policies should take a proactive, not reactive approach to safety in schools. Start by creating a widely-shared vision statement of an ideal school climate that focuses on inclusivity, safety, and respect. This statement should be created with the input of all stakeholders in the school community, especially the students.
- After envisioning an ideal school climate, reward positive behaviors that help students and the school move closer to the ideal vision. Further, offer restorative justice discipline practices like nonviolent conflict resolution, focusing on repairing relationships, and building community to eliminate exclusionary discipline practices that take students out of school.
- Periodically, the school or district should conduct a student survey to assess the school climate, and take action based on the survey results. Many survey tools are available for free online, including the [GLSEN Local School Climate Survey](#) and the [US Department of Education School Climate Survey](#).

### Why It Matters

- Including LGBTQ+ issues in safety and harassment policies is a proactive and preventative measure which addresses the concerns of LGBTQ+ students and their families.
- Safety protections like these will help maintain an affirming culture for students and staff, as well as provide a foundation upon which to create future anti-harassment policies.
- There is strong evidence that reinforcing positive behaviors in schools improves school culture, decreases issues with student discipline, and increases academic achievement for students.





# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Safety, Harassment & Bullying

### Model Policies

Safety and harassment policies should take a proactive approach to inclusion by setting the stage with a mission statement against discrimination of LGBTQ+ students.

- **Example:** “Maryland schools have a history of commitment to educating all students to reach their highest potential. School safety is a vital component of that commitment. Safety and prevention efforts, long the hallmark of Maryland’s success, have provided students with safe, respectful, engaging, and welcoming environments in which to grow and learn. In growing numbers transgender and gender non-conforming students are becoming more comfortable with who they are and are more visible in schools. Providing schools with information, support, and best practices is an important step in assuring welcoming, caring, respectful and affirming environments for all students.” ([Maryland State Dept. of Education](#), 2015, pg. 5)

Anti-bullying policies should address the fact that some students are more likely to be bullied because of their culturally marginalized identities.

- **Example:** “It is important for school staff, students and parents to be aware that transgender and gender non-conforming students may be at a higher risk for peer ostracism, victimization, and bullying because of bias and/or the possibility of misunderstanding and lack of knowledge about their lives.” ([Buncombe County NC School Board](#), 2020, pg. 1)

Anti-bullying policies should also explicitly include how to report bullying and harassment, as well as what the steps the school will take to address the report.

- **Example:** “Any staff member who witnesses student-to-student discrimination, harassment, intimidation and/or bullying or who has knowledge or information or receives notice that a student may have been the victim of such behavior by another student is required to promptly verbally report the alleged act to the RFA [Respect for All] liaison(s) or to the principal/designee within one (1) school day and submit the Complaint Reporting Form describing the incident to the RFA liaison or the principal/designee no later than two (2) school days after making the verbal report. The principal/designee must ensure that hard copies of the Complaint Reporting Forms are readily available... Students, parents, and individuals other than staff may report allegations of student-to-student discrimination, harassment, intimidation and/or bullying verbally or in writing, including by submitting the Complaint Reporting Form to the principal/designee, RFA liaison, or any other school staff member, for gender-based conduct notifying the Title IX Coordinator (by phone, email, or in person via the information listed in Section IX below), or via the online portal.” ([NYC Department of Education](#), 2021, pg. 4)

### More on This Topic

Additional resources for creating proactive school policies:

- [GLSEN’s Respect for All policy guidelines](#)
- [Measuring Bullying, Victimization, Perpetration, and Bystander Experiences: A Compendium of Assessment Tools](#)
- [GLSEN’s Discipline and Restorative Justice policy guidance](#)
- [GLSEN Local School Climate Survey](#)
- [US Department of Education School Climate Survey](#)



# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Privacy

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) protects the private information of all students. Schools may not disclose a student's gender identity or sexual orientation without the explicit consent of the student or a legal guardian. The student can share what they want about their sexual orientation or gender identity, but this does not constitute permission for the school to share the same information. School records and data systems should be organized in such a way that a student's privacy is protected, particularly privacy about their transgender identity.

FERPA does not establish a student's privacy from parents or legal guardians, and in fact it includes a provision that allows legal guardians to view any of their student's school documents and records. For more about parents and privacy, see the Families section.

### Best Practices

- Ensure that all staff and faculty are aware that information about a student's gender identity and sexual orientation is private and legally protected.
- Inform teachers, staff, and school administrators of a transgender or non-binary student's legal name only as needed and legally required.
- Make it easier for students and parents to maintain privacy by introducing a simple, accessible process to request a change of name and/or gender markers in school registration documents.
- Only include the student's legal name on paperwork that requires the legal name (see "Documents and Records" section for more information on this).
- Make sure all public reference to the student uses their affirmed name and pronouns (class and club rosters, awards and honors, etc.) to avoid inadvertent privacy violations.

### Why It Matters

- Decisions about how 'out' to be are among the most personal and sensitive choices that an LGBTQ+ individual can make. If a school discloses that information without the student's consent, they have taken away the student's power of self-determination.
- Transgender students should get to choose who knows about their gender transition and how they find out. It's their information to disclose on their own terms.
- By sharing that information, teachers and administrators could expose that student to social consequences, including harassment and bullying. The harm done by privacy violations is difficult or impossible to undo.





## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Privacy

#### Model Policies

Privacy policies should express the school's obligation to uphold FERPA, as well the right of students to disclose information about their gender identity and sexual orientation when/if it feels right to them.

- **Example:** *“Except as set forth herein, school personnel should not disclose information that may reveal a student’s transgender status. As provided in FERPA, only school employees with a legitimate educational need should have access to a student’s records or the information contained within those records. Transgender students are permitted, as are all students, to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and decide when, with whom, and how much of their private information to share with others.”* ([Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC](#), 2013, Section JICK-R, (C.))

#### More on This Topic

- Chapter 3 of the HRC’s [Schools in Transition guide](#) contains more helpful information about student privacy regarding their legal names and public/private gender transitions.
- Lambda Legal provides [FERPA guidance and FAQs](#) about privacy violations and how to address them.
- Students and families have the right to file a FERPA complaint if the student’s right to privacy has been violated at school. The complaint [can be filed online](#) through the Department of Education’s website.



# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Names and Pronouns

Schools should respect the affirmed names, gender markers and pronouns of all students. (Also referred to as ‘chosen name’ or ‘preferred name’.)

### Best Practices

- Create a culture that takes responsibility for educating all students and teachers about gender identity and expression, like [training and resources on pronouns](#), affirmed names, and gender identities.
- Establish a school culture that normalizes the practice of all students and faculty sharing their pronouns if they wish (in introductions, on name tags, using pronoun buttons, etc.)
- Encourage faculty to use gender inclusive language (for example, using “students,” “friends,” or “scholars” instead of “boys and girls.”)
- Use a student’s affirmed name in all school records that do not require a legal name (this should be almost every school record). See the Documents and Records and Privacy sections for more information.
- Create a school culture that can handle accidental, occasional misgendering and “deadnaming” (using a transgender person’s pre-transition name). In most cases, a quick apology and correction and then moving on is the best strategy, because making a big deal about it draws even more attention to the transgender student.
- If there is a pattern of misgendering or “deadnaming” students, or if “deadnaming” a student has violated their privacy and ‘outed’ them as transgender, then the issue is considerably more serious. Staff and faculty should be made aware that such incidents could be grounds for Title IX and FERPA complaints.
- If the student is socially transitioning during the school year, let the student decide the degree to which their transition affects their day to day life at school. Normalize the student’s change in pronoun and/or name by using it whenever one would have used their previous designations – don’t avoid it.
- When a student decides to transition socially, discuss what that will look like for them: do they want their homeroom teacher or a counselor to tell the class about their change in name and pronoun? See our Gender Support Plan section for more information.

### Why It Matters

- Frequent misgendering can lower transgender and non-binary students’ self-esteem around appearance and reduce their “sense of strength and continuity in their identity” ([Healthline](#)).
- According to [GLSEN’s 2019 National School Climate Survey](#), 22.8% of LGBTQ+ youth were prevented from using their chosen names and pronouns at school.





## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Names and Pronouns

#### Model Policies

Policies should explicitly state the school's commitment to respecting the affirmed names and pronouns of every student.

- **Example:** *"Notwithstanding the name and/or sex in a student's permanent education record, school staff shall address students by the name and pronoun corresponding to their gender identity. Students are not required to obtain a court ordered name change or to change their permanent education records as a prerequisite to being addressed by the name and pronouns that correspond to their gender identity."* ([Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC](#), 2013, Section JICK-R, (D.))

Policies should explicitly clarify (as much as possible) the specific school publications and records in which affirmed names and pronouns are to be respected.

- **Example:** *"Use the student's preferred name for classroom rosters, identification badges, announcements, certificates, newspapers, newsletters, yearbooks and any other record where the use of the legal name is not specifically required by law."* ([Maryland Department of Education](#), 2015, pg. 10)

Offering an explanation of the importance of affirming student names and pronouns will help the school's population (faculty, staff, and students) understand why the school is committed to doing so, which in turn will help create a more inclusive school climate in general.

- **Example:** *"When students are referred to by the wrong pronoun by peers or school staff, students may feel intimidated, threatened, harassed or bullied. School staff can ensure a more respectful environment for all students when efforts are made to correct the misuse of pronouns, as well as names, in student records."* ([Minnesota Public Schools](#), 2017, pg. 7)

#### More on This Topic

- [Gender Pronouns: What They Are and Why They Matter](#). A two-page informational handout from CSE.
- Here is more information on why pronouns matter from [GLSEN](#), as well as the [effects of gender affirming pronouns](#) on mental health.

# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Documents and Records

If a student's legal name is different from their affirmed or chosen name, the legal name should only be used when it is legally required. All other lists, records and documents should use the affirmed name, in order to respect the student's identity and protect their privacy.

### Best Practices

- In most states, legal requirements dictate that a student's permanent record needs to include their legal name, but daily use and all other records should use their affirmed name and gender identity. This includes any email accounts, guidance logs, non-permanent records, yearbook and graduation announcements, class attendance lists for substitute teachers, team and club rosters, and so on.
- The student's legal name should only be used on legal documents, such as a school transcript. Which school documents are considered "legal documents" varies from state to state; consult your school district attorney for more information.
- If the student obtains a legal name change, then all records, files and documents should reflect that change. Schools should recognize that there are many financial and legal barriers to obtaining a legal name change, and not every student is able to change their name legally.
- Students should not have to provide schools with legal documentation to correct their first name or gender within student records, lists, reports, and other non-legal documents. A simple request from the student or a parent / guardian should suffice.
- Schools should pay particular attention to avoiding situations where use of a student's legal name might result in a privacy violation by disclosing the student's transgender identity. See the Privacy section for more information.

### Why It Matters

- The safety of all students should be at the forefront of all school decisions. Publicly "deadnaming" (using their old name) or misgendering a transgender or non-binary student due to simple database oversights can cause them real trauma.
- Formally protecting a student's legal name and sex assigned at birth is upholding their privacy, as required by FERPA. Failing to do so could be grounds for a FERPA complaint with the Department of Education.



# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Documents and Records

### Model Policies

Record-keeping policies need to explicitly protect the affirmed names and pronouns of all students.

- **Example:** *“Nonofficial school records, such as class lists, yearbooks, school event programs, diplomas, report cards and class rosters shall refer to students by their preferred names and pronouns.”* ([Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC](#), 2013, Section JICK-R, (D.))

Providing information on how exactly to respect a preferred name and pronoun will help avoid unnecessary confusion.

- **Example:** *“Schools should not assume a student’s name or pronoun. School officials should ask the student and use the requested name and pronouns. Students need not provide schools with legal documents to correct their first name or gender within their student records.”* ([Minnesota Public Schools](#), 2017, pg. 7)

Policies that contain information on how the school will communicate preferred names and pronouns will help LGBTQ+ students and families feel protected, as well as set clear expectations for faculty and staff members.

- **Example:** *“To the extent the capability is available in the official electronic student records database, students’ preferred names and pronouns shall be recorded, in addition to their legal name, in order to conveniently inform teachers and other staff of the name and pronoun to use when addressing students. To the extent the student records database does not have this capability, the administration will work to develop systems to produce class rosters that reflect students’ preferred names and pronouns.”* ([Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC](#), 2013, Section JICK-R, (D.))

### More on This Topic

- Lambda Legal’s [A Transgender Advocate’s Guide to Updating and Amending School Records](#) is a detailed resource for individuals who would like more information about their rights and protections regarding school records.
- This resource from [Gender Inclusive Schools](#) provides model policies for schools and districts to protect students’ privacy in school records.



# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Restrooms and Facilities

When using multiple-person restrooms, locker rooms, and other facilities, students must be allowed to use the facility that matches their gender identity. Additionally, every student should have access to a private, single-stall restroom, but no student may be required to use a single-stall restroom.

### Best Practices

- Transgender and non-binary students have a right to use the bathrooms and locker rooms which correspond with their gender, or as discussed in their gender support plan.
- Provide a single stall restroom for any student to use without stigma or hardship. This could include non-binary students, transgender students that do not feel safe in gender-segregated restrooms, and students who have a need or desire for increased privacy for any number of other reasons. If any students object to sharing multiple-stall restrooms with their transgender peers, then they have the option of using the single stall restroom themselves.
- Single-stall restrooms should be offered, but may not be required of any student. Multiple court cases have found that requiring a transgender student to use a separate restroom constitutes illegal discrimination.
- Multiple stall restrooms, locker rooms and showers should be constructed or upgraded with stall doors, curtains, and other privacy features. No student should have to be unclothed or use the toilet in view of other students or adults. This level of privacy should be available to all students, whatever their gender identity.
- Additional alternative arrangements that a student needs to protect their privacy may be covered in the student's gender support plan.

### Why It Matters

- GLSEN's [2019 National School Climate Survey](#) reported that many LGBTQ+ youth avoided gender-segregated spaces in school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. Approximately 45% avoided bathrooms and 44% avoided locker rooms.
- This survey also reported that LGBTQ+ students were actively discriminated against in school when trying to use facilities that corresponded to their gender identity. Over 28% were prevented from using bathrooms aligned with their gender identity, and 27% were prevented from using locker rooms aligned with their gender identity.
- These barriers make it challenging for LGBTQ+ students to participate fully in school life and activities, which can result in negative academic and social outcomes.





## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Restrooms & Facilities

#### Model Policies

School policies should explicitly state that all students have a right to use the multiple-stall restrooms and facilities that align with their gender identity, and that any student has the option to access a single-stall restroom if they choose.

- **Example:** *“Transgender and gender non-conforming students must be provided access to safe facilities (restrooms, locker rooms or changing rooms). A transgender student may not be required to use a facility that conflicts with the student’s gender identity consistently asserted at school. Schools must provide reasonable alternative arrangements for any student who expresses a need or desire for increased privacy. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include a single occupancy restroom, use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a non-stigmatizing way and in a manner that protects a student’s ability to keep their transgender status confidential.”* ([Buncombe County Schools NC](#), 2021, pg. 6)
- **Example:** *“Schools should work with transgender and gender non-conforming students to ensure that they are able to access needed facilities in a manner that is safe, consistent with their gender identity and does not stigmatize them.”* ([Maryland Department of Education](#), 2015, pg. 10)

#### More on This Topic

- The [US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit](#) ruled in 2020 that not allowing transgender students to use the restrooms that align with their gender identity is a violation of their Title IX rights.
- Here is a list of [frequently asked questions from parents concerned about transgender students](#) using facilities that align with their gender identity. This can be a helpful resource for schools to know how to address these concerns.

# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Gender Transitions

Many people's social transitions of gender occur during the K-12 years. The school has a key role to play in supporting the student and the family during transitions, in much the same way that schools support students and families during other major life events.

### Best Practices

- Let the student decide the degree to which their transition affects their day to day life at school. It is empowering for students to name their own needs in this process.
- Create school policies that proactively address gender diversity, so that a student's transition occurs within a well-established context for learning, rather than being the precipitating event for conversations. The school should take responsibility for educating the transgender or non-binary student's classmates and teachers, rather than expecting the student or their parents to do so.
- If the student decides to transition socially, discuss what that will look like for them; for example, do they want their homeroom teacher to tell the class about their change in name and pronoun? Gender Support Plans are one tool that can help students plan and shape their gender transition at school.

### Model Policies

School policies should always defer to the students' expertise on their own gender identity, as well as how/if they would like to disclose their identity to their peers and teachers.

- **Example:** *"Transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals use various words to describe their lives and experiences.... The individual student/staff member is the best person to determine their own identity. School staff should be sensitive to, and use, the terminology that supports and respects the wishes of the individual student/staff member."* ([Buncombe County Schools NC](#), 2021, pg. 2)
- **Example:** *"In appropriate situations, school staff should work with students and families on a plan to inform and educate the student's peers at the school about the student's transgender status."* ([Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC](#), 2013, Section JICK-R, (C.))

### Why It Matters

- There is no universally "correct" way to support a student in their gender transition. The process is unique to every individual, as well as a monumental moment in their lives.
- Gender transition support from their school will help make the student feel safe and accepted, and can also help family members in understanding and supporting their child with their transition at home.

### More on This Topic

- See Gender Spectrum's Gender Transition Plan template, located on page 56 of [Schools In Transition](#).
- Gender Spectrum's [Gender Communication Plan template](#) is a useful tool for planning communications around a student's transition.



# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Gender Support Plans

Gender Support Plans are documents that aid the student, the family, and school staff in assuring the student's safety, privacy, and support.

### Best Practices

- Ask the student what they need to feel safe and comfortable at school.
- Create school policies that proactively address the needs of transgender and non-binary students and their families during a student's gender transition process.
- If the student consents, organize a meeting between the school administrator(s), the student support specialist (i.e. school counselor or school social worker), the student, and their parents or guardians to discuss the school's role in supporting the student's transition.
- Use the Gender Support Plan templates from Gender Spectrum as a guide to prepare for a formal gender transition at school and put in place measures for supporting the student. Be prepared to change the plan as needed.
- Make resources available to parents who have questions or concerns, including parents and students who are not knowledgeable and/or supportive of transgender and non-binary identities.

### Model Policies

It should be school policy to offer transitioning students the opportunity to develop Gender Support Plans, and such policies should clarify what exactly students and staff can expect during the planning process.

- **Example:** *"Schools should work closely with the student and family to develop an appropriate plan regarding the confidentiality of the student's transgender status that serves the needs of both the student and the school."* ([Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC](#), 2013, Section JICK-R, (C.))
- **Example:** *"This meeting should include, but not be limited to, discussion of the timing of the transition, planning responses to questions from school staff and students, and changing the student's information in school records."* ([Orange County Schools, NC](#), 2020)

### Why It Matters

- Centering the student's needs and preferences will signal to them that the school and its staff support their growth and are on their team. Further, being prepared to provide educational and supportive resources for families and students will make everyone feel safer and more comfortable with the school's practices.
- Having a plan in place allows school staff to support transgender and non-binary students on the student's terms. Crafting a plan allows the school to be thoughtful and deliberate in the process, mitigating or eliminating missteps or oversights that might otherwise happen.
- One section of the Gender Support Plan explores the question of parental awareness, giving the school some direction on communicating with parents and guardians while protecting the student's safety.
- Every student is different, and every LGBTQ+ student has their own needs and preferences. A Gender Support Plan creates a process and an avenue for respecting and supporting those individual differences.

### More on This Topic

- Schools can use or adapt [Gender Spectrum's Gender Support Plan](#) template.



# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Dress Codes

All students have a First Amendment right to dress in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity, as long as it complies with the school's dress code. Ideally, dress codes should not be gendered, but if the school has a gender-based dress code, students must be allowed to wear clothing that corresponds with their gender identity. Policies may outline what types of clothing are appropriate or inappropriate for school, but should apply to all students regardless of gender.

### Best Practices

- Removing gendered language from dress codes clarifies the rules for students. The requirements should be the same for all students, regardless of gender.
- Simplifying the rules so they apply to everyone will also make it easier for staff to know when to intervene.
- Dress codes should also be reviewed and revised to eliminate any religious, cultural, or ethnic bias; dress guidelines are an opportunity to create inclusive schools for all.

### Model Policies

Schools should have blanket dress code policies that are not organized by gender.

- **Example:** “Permit all students to wear any clothing that is appropriate for students under the school dress code, regardless of the student’s gender or gender identity.” ([Maryland Department of Education](#), 2015, pg. 9)

### Why It Matters

- 18.3% of students in [GLSEN’s 2019 National School Climate Survey](#) were prevented from wearing clothes considered “inappropriate” based on their gender.
- Dress codes which regulate students’ clothing choices by gender allow for transgender and non-binary students to be punished for dressing appropriately for their genders.
- Classifying students by gender creates stress and anxiety for transgender and non-binary students, and encourages gender stereotyping by (and even of) cisgender students.

### More on This Topic

- Equality Florida’s [Equitable Dress Code For Students](#) provides further exploration into best practices for inclusive and affirming school dress codes, as well as some proactive and protective model dress code policies.





# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Sports and Athletics

For many students, sports and athletics are an essential part of the educational experience. If physical education and intramural sports are gender segregated, students have the right to participate with the group that matches their gender identity. Interscholastic sports are usually required to follow the guidelines of the state athletic association, which gets more difficult during a time when so many states are considering anti-trans athletic policies. Even in the face of this bias, the best practice is for students to compete in line with their gender identity.

### Best Practices

- Transgender athletes should participate and compete under the same terms and conditions as their cisgender peers.
- State athletic associations should provide policy guidance for local education agencies and schools to support the rights of transgender and non-binary students to participate in sports teams that align with their gender identity.
- Schools should work with each transgender and non-binary student individually to ensure that they can participate on the athletic teams that feel the most safe and affirming to them.
- Coaches and officials should make every effort to honor a student's affirmed name and gender, as well ensure that their teammates, opponents, fans, and announcers do the same. This includes instilling a sense of respect, appreciation for diversity, and student empowerment in the values of school athletic departments.
- Prohibit hazing activities, which frequently involve forms of gender-based harassment.
- A student's gender identity, including their health records and personal information, must be kept confidential to the school in question. The student should be consulted on whether and how much they would like to disclose to their teammates about their gender identity.
- Schools should support and encourage all-gender athletic activities, such as ultimate frisbee, which offer all students an option free from gender segregated sports.
- Many states have proposed or passed harassment legislation that excludes transgender students from competitive athletics (like [West Virginia HB 3293](#)). These laws are being challenged in the courts, and [have been found to violate both Title IX and the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution](#).
- Even when the transgender sports bans are not passed, or are overturned by the courts, they can have a chilling effect on transgender students' sense of safety in athletics. Schools should be proactive in creating an athletic culture that welcomes and celebrates students of every gender identity and athletic ability.



## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Sports and Athletics

#### Model Policies

School athletic policies should ensure that every student be allowed to play sports with groups that match their gender identity. As a standard practice, no student should have to prove their gender in order to be allowed to participate.

- **Example:** *“Sports provide youth with unique opportunities to improve their physical fitness and develop valuable life skills such as goal setting, perseverance, teamwork and a commitment to fair play. Title IX requires schools provide transgender students with the right to participate in such activities, including athletics, in a manner consistent with their gender identity.”* ([Minnesota Public Schools](#), 2017, pg. 8)

With several states taking action against transgender students playing sports that align with their gender identity, the state athletic association should explicitly outline how they plan to affirm gender identities during athletic eligibility and registration processes. It is imperative that the process be unbiased, apolitical, sensitive to the privacy and mental health concerns of the student, and conducted by qualified and culturally competent professionals, as in this model policy from NCLR. Note in particular that the review is not required as a standard practice, but is available in the event of a challenge, or as a preemptive, voluntary process by the student.

- **Example:** *“Should the [state athletic association] receive a timely petition from a member institution challenging a student’s participation in a sex-segregated activity consistent with his or her gender identity, or, although not required, a student seeks to preemptively confirm his or her eligibility, it will review that student’s eligibility for participation by working through the procedure set forth below:*
  - a. The [state athletic association] will convene an eligibility committee specifically established to hear gender identity appeals. The Gender Identity Eligibility Committee will be comprised of a minimum of three of the following persons one of whom must be from the physician or mental health profession category:*
    - i. Physician with experience working with youth whose gender identity different than the sex they were assigned at birth, and familiar with the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care and other standard-setting documents.*
    - ii. Licensed mental health provider with experience working with youth whose gender identity different than the sex they were assigned at birth, and familiar with the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Standards of Care and other standard-setting documents.*
    - iii. School administrator from a non-appealing school.*
    - iv. [State athletic association] staff member.*
    - v. A gender-affirming advocate familiar with issues affecting youth whose gender identity different than the sex they were assigned at birth.”* ([National Center for Lesbian Rights](#), 2016, pg. 2-3)





## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Sports and Athletics

#### Why It Matters

- GLSEN's 2019 National School Climate Survey [reported](#) that one-tenth of LGBTQ+ students were prevented or discouraged from participating in school sports teams because of their gender identity and sexual orientation. Further, 60% of LGBTQ+ students reported being very uncomfortable discussing LGBTQ+ issues with their coaches and P.E. teachers.
- Concerns about unfair competitive advantages for transgender girls are unfounded and based on sex stereotypes about the athletic abilities of males versus females. According to the [Women's Sports Foundation](#), experts agree that the effects of taking female hormones during a male-to-female transition negate any strength and muscular advantages provided by testosterone. If a transgender female student has completed transition, her strength and performance will be in the same general range as her cisgender female teammates. Further, if a student starts hormone therapy before puberty, no accommodation is necessary. These concerns also disregard the wide range of athletic abilities among cisgender students.
- The psychological benefits of youth participation in sports include improved emotional regulation, academic improvement, decreased hopelessness and suicidality, fewer depressive symptoms, and higher rates of self esteem and belonging. All students should have the right to engage in such an opportunity.

#### More on This Topic

- A [November 2021 issue brief from GLSEN](#) includes the state of inclusive athletic participation policies across the US, as well as best practices for creating inclusive school athletics policies.
- The [National Center for Lesbian Rights published an extensive report](#) about transgender students in school athletics, including the importance of sports on student health, school policy guidance, best practices for schools, and research disproving notions that female transgender students have a competitive advantage over their peers.
- Transathlete provides a substantial [list of resources for transgender inclusion](#) in sports.
- The [ACLU uses this website](#) to update state policies regarding exclusions of transgender youth in sports. It is updated weekly.



# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Gender in School and Classroom Activities

Classroom practices, student attendance lists, and extracurricular activities are often oriented around gender out of habit, not out of any sound educational purpose. Changing these practices is in the best interest of all students, and provides support for LGBTQ+ students specifically.

### Best Practices

- Review school practices and policies, and take gender out of the picture unless categorizing or segregating students by gender serves a clearly articulated educational purpose.
- Create a school culture in which daily language is gender inclusive, for example, using a term like “students,” “friends,” or “scholars” instead of “boys and girls.”
- Be proactive by preparing to address concerns raised in response to transgender and non-binary students participating in gender-separated facilities and activities. Prepare resources, data, policies and even a set of Frequently Asked Questions for concerned parents and students. Remind these individuals that being uncomfortable is not the same as being unsafe.
- School policies and norms should also proactively establish, clearly outline, and enforce expectations about how students should respect each other’s social identities as well as respect their personal boundaries, regardless of gender identity.
- If health and sexual education classes are gender-segregated, students should attend the class that coincides with their gender identity. If school staff are unsure, they should follow the wishes of the student. More and more schools are moving away from having any gender-segregated classes, including health and sex education.
- Health and sex education classes should reflect the full range of diversity in human bodies, genders, and sexual orientations, rather than reinforcing the bias that only heterosexual and cisgender people are “normal.” See the “More on this topic” section for a sample curriculum.
- In gendered traditions like electing prom kings and queens, transgender and non-binary students should always be allowed to participate. Just because their identities are outside of the gender binary does not mean that participation in school traditions is not important to them. A better alternative is to establish gender-inclusive or non-gendered versions of the tradition (such as ‘prom royalty’ or the ‘prom court’).





## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Gender in School and Classroom Activities

#### Model Policies

Affirming school policies explicitly state why gendered practices are harmful, and how exactly the school plans to evaluate such practices to ensure they are inclusive and respectful of all students.

- **Example:** *“Gender-based policies, rules, and practices can have the effect of marginalizing, stigmatizing, stereotyping and excluding students, regardless of whether they are transgender or gender non-conforming. Students must be permitted to participate in all school activities (e.g., overnight field trips) in accordance with their gender identity consistently asserted at school. Requests for accommodations to address privacy concerns will be addressed on a case-by-case basis in a Gender Support Plan developed with the student and parent(s) or guardians... Schools and departments shall evaluate all gender-based activities and practices and maintain only those that have a clear and sound pedagogical purpose. Students shall be permitted to participate in any such activities or conform to established practices consistent with their gender identity. Examples of such gender-based activities and practices include but are not limited to:*

1. *Dress Codes*
2. *Single Gender Classes (e.g. physical education classes)*
3. *Classroom Structure and Activities*
4. *School Ceremonies*
5. *School Pictures*
6. *Extracurricular Activities*
7. *Overnight Field Trips*

*Activities that may involve the need for accommodations to address student privacy concerns will be addressed on a case-by-case basis considering the factors set forth above.”* ([Buncombe County Schools NC](#), 2021, pg. 6-7)



## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Gender in School and Classroom Activities

#### Why It Matters

- Unnecessarily gendering school activities reinforces the idea that gender is binary and encourages thinking based on gender stereotypes.
- Student participants in [GLSEN's 2019 National School Climate Survey](#) reported constant discrimination and restrictions in gender segregated activities that negatively affect their mental health, self-esteem, and feelings of social belonging. The majority of LGBTQ students (62.4%) experienced gendered spaces or practices at school, from gender-specific homecoming courts to school required gendered attire for graduation or senior portraits.
- Not protecting transgender and non-binary students through inclusive and respectful policies regarding gendered activities could disclose any private gender identities, thus increasing the likelihood that “stealth” students (students who are not public about being transgender) get harassed, bullied, or are otherwise physically and emotionally unsafe.
- Evidence from schools that offer inclusive and affirming policies surrounding gendered activities has shown that allowing non-binary students to participate in these activities creates a positive school climate for all students.

#### More on This Topic

- This [2015 article from Media Matters For America](#) uses data and evidence from school districts around the nation to debunk myths about the “danger” of allowing transgender and non-binary students to participate in traditionally gender-segregated activities.
- [Planned Parenthood has free online resources](#) for teachers on how to include inclusive health sexual education conversations in their curriculums.
- The [Molalla School District in Oregon](#) has a sample health and sexual education curriculum separated by grade level, starting on pg. 16.





# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Inclusive Curriculums

Culturally diverse and inclusive school curriculums are play a critical role in shaping the culture of the school and emotionally supporting students who are LGBTQ+, transitioning, or questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. They also help create an affirming and inclusive culture among all students. As always, school policies should explicitly state their goals of creating an inclusive school culture, including what is taught in the classroom.

Book censorship and harassment legislation like “Don’t Say Gay” laws directly target the inclusion of LGBTQ+ identities in school curriculums. School staff and administrators must be resolute in standing up against censorship practices. Every student has a right to see people with identities like their own reflected in the school curriculum, and every student benefits from seeing people with identities different than their own (often referred to as the [“mirrors and windows” principle](#) of curriculum development).

### Best Practices

- Schools should provide age-appropriate lessons on gender and sexuality, integrated into lessons that help students understand and celebrate human diversity. Further, “appropriate” gender behavior based on gender stereotypes should never be taught, and instead educators should use gender neutral language and phrases like “some people like the color pink,” or “many kids like to play sports.”
- School and classroom libraries, both print and digital, should be intentionally curated to offer a diverse and inclusive representation of authors, characters, and historical figures.
- In social studies classes like history, geography, economics, and civics, lessons should include historical figures that represent diverse identities, as well as address important historical contributions and perspectives of diverse communities.
- In science and health classes, topics like human development, sexual health and wellness, personal boundaries, gender identity, and non-heterosexual sexual orientation need to be discussed in an affirming and scientifically accurate way. Not discussing these topics does not make the topic disappear in student’s lives – instead, it just makes them more confusing for students and increases the risk of future social, emotional, and sexual harm.
- Schools should require their faculty and staff to attend professional development workshops about gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and how to ensure that what they are teaching in class is inclusive and affirming for all students.

## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Inclusive Curriculums

### Model Policies

School and state policies regarding school curriculums should express the school's commitment to representation of the identities of all students, and should include representation of LGBTQ+ identities whether or not the policies explicitly outline what this representation looks like.

- **Example:** *"Instruction in social sciences shall include the early history of California and a study of the role and contributions of both men and women, Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and members of other ethnic and cultural groups, to the economic, political, and social development of California and the United States of America, with particular emphasis on portraying the role of these groups in contemporary society."* ([California Department of Education](#), 2011)
- **Example:** *"On August 9, 2019, Governor J.B. Pritzker signed House Bill 246 (Public Act 101-0227) into law. This made Illinois the fifth state in the nation requiring public schools to include instruction and adopt instructional materials that accurately portray the political, economic, and social contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. The law took effect July 1, 2020 with the intent of implementing during the 2020 - 2021 school year. The Inclusive Curriculum Law offers public school students a more accurate, complete, and equitable picture of American society and provides LGBTQ+ students the opportunity to see themselves represented in history."* ([Illinois Safe Schools Alliance](#), 2020, pg. 2)

### Why It Matters

- According to [GLSEN's 2019 School Climate report](#), LGBTQ+ students in schools with inclusive curriculums report less hostile language and victimization throughout the school's population, less student truancy, greater senses of belonging at school, better academic performance, and higher rates of students who plan on pursuing higher education. However, 66% of students reported that their classes did not include representations of LGBTQ+ people, events, or history.

### More on This Topic

- [GLSEN provides guidance](#) for schools in their efforts to increase inclusivity in their curriculums and beyond. This resource also includes the civil rights of LGBTQ+ students, as well as some best practices for record-keeping, names and pronouns, and gendered activities and facilities.
- Here are some [sample LGBTQ+ inclusive lesson plans](#) from HRC's Welcoming Schools program.
- [GLSEN's Inclusive Curriculum Resource](#) to assist schools in making their own inclusive curriculums.
- [Learning for Justice](#) is an excellent resource for teachers and schools in creating inclusive curriculums including lessons, lesson planning, student tasks, teaching kits, and film kits.
- The [American Library Association](#) has a guide for how to include LGBTQ+ materials in school libraries and classrooms.





# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Staff Training and Cultural Responsiveness

Staff should be skilled at working in culturally diverse classrooms, including working with LGBTQ+ students. Schools should provide ongoing training for teachers and staff who may not be familiar with human diversity in the areas of sexual orientation and gender identity.

### Best Practices

- Establish policies that require school staff to be proactive in their support of transgender and non-binary students, and pair it with regular staff education about the needs of LGBTQ+ students.
- Staff and faculty should receive regular training about implicit bias and strategies for bias reduction. Implicit bias training should include gender bias and binary thinking bias.
- Title IX and other non-discrimination training should explicitly include issues and examples of legal protections for LGBTQ+ students.
- Training should include information on best practices for the school and classroom, grounded in the ‘why’ of student safety and well-being.
- When other students misgender a transgender or non-binary student, all informed staff should respond as discussed in the student’s plan. Do not ignore the situation. If the student wishes, staff members should gently correct any misgendering and move on with the conversation. When an administrator, faculty, or staff member misgenders the student, they should set a good example by apologizing and correcting themselves.
- Make sure active support is available to staff and faculty members. Identify a support person, such as a counselor or social worker, that faculty can approach with questions or challenging situations.
- Assess for LGBTQ+ cultural competency, as well as other forms of cultural responsiveness, when interviewing and hiring new staff.

# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Staff Training and Cultural Responsiveness

### Model Policies

Schools should always be committed to the continuing education of their staff in order to best serve the needs of their students.

- **Example:** *“The board believes a strong relationship exists between the quality of education provided to students and the competency and training of all personnel employed by the school system. The board places a high priority on securing the most competent personnel available and, once they are employed, providing them with opportunities for professional growth and development throughout their careers. The goal of professional and staff development programs and opportunities for licensed professional employees and support staff is to improve the instructional program and create a safe learning environment for all students by improving and expanding the skills of the professional staff and support personnel.”* ([Buncombe County Schools NC](#), 2018, pg. 1)
- **Example:** *“Each principal in CMS is required to assure all school staff are aware of the rules set forth below and that school level staff training is provided for this purpose. In addition, any plans developed to address particular needs of individual transgender or gender non-conforming students shall be consistent with these rules.”* ([Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC](#), 2013, Section JICK-R, (A.))

### Why It Matters

- Teachers are second only to parents when it comes to students feeling either supported or traumatized based on their identity. Empowering staff to respond confidently to the needs of LGBTQ+ students can have an enormous effect on student success.
- In 2019, [GLSEN noted](#) that “52.4% of students reported hearing homophobic remarks from their teachers or other school staff, and 66.7% of students reported hearing negative remarks about gender expression from teachers or other school staff. Less than one-fifth of LGBTQ+ students (13.7%) reported that school staff intervened most of the time or always when overhearing homophobic remarks at school, and less than one-tenth of LGBTQ+ students (9.0%) reported that school staff intervened most of the time or always when overhearing negative remarks about gender expression.”
- Further, “60.5% of the students who did report an incident said that school staff did nothing in response or told the student to ignore it.”
- It is also important to note that administrators, staff, and faculty members who discriminate against or harass LGBTQ+ students are risking a Title IX sexual harassment complaint, with consequences that could include the termination of staff members.

### More on This Topic

- The [Safe Zone Project](#) has trainings and resources available for free. Student support specialists can use these to facilitate workshops for faculty and staff.
- This [Safe Space Kit](#) is another free resource for school faculty to learn more about gender identity, their own implicit biases, how to create a safe and inclusive space for their LGBTQ+ students, as well as how to handle microaggressions and overt harassment of LGBTQ+ students by other students.
- [My Gender Journey](#) and [Understanding Gender](#) from Gender Spectrum are great resources for professional development for school faculty and staff members.
- This resource from [Learning for Justice](#) is for teachers looking to understand intersectionality and elevate the experiences of students with intersecting identities, specifically BIPOC students.





# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Social and Emotional Support

Students who identify as LGBTQ+ may be among the most vulnerable, particularly if they are also students of color, rural students, low income students, or live with a disability. Schools have a key role to play in offering social and emotional support, both formally through counseling and social work, and informally through active acceptance from faculty and staff.

### Best Practices

- Creating explicit and proactive school policies to protect LGBTQ+ students is paramount in creating a safe and welcoming school for everyone.
- In addition to the creation of inclusive school policies, such policies should be regularly evaluated for effectiveness.
- School counselors, social workers, and other mental health professionals have professional codes of ethics that guide their support and advocacy for LGBTQ+ students, including creating a safe and affirming school environment, and protecting all vulnerable students from harassment and discrimination. Schools should understand and support the professional obligations of counselors and social workers.
- Encouraging the formation of a GSA at school is an important step in providing social and emotional support for LGBTQ+ students. The term “GSA” originally stood for “Gay-Straight Alliance,” but now typically stands for the more inclusive “Gender and Sexuality Alliance.” GSAs are traditionally student-led and student-organized and open to all students, regardless of gender and sexual identity. They allow students to work together to address issues that affect all students, like harassment and discrimination, as well as educating others in their school about the LGBTQ+ experience.

### Why It Matters

- Creating a sense of school belonging and connectedness is essential for the academic and social success of all students.
- Multiple school climate reports and recommendations provide evidence that LGBTQ+ students in schools with GSAs hear fewer homophobic slurs, experience less harassment, have better attendance, and generally feel safer at school.



## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Social and Emotional Support

#### Model Policies

Policies that explicitly promote and explain safe and inclusive school cultures will help students and families feel safe, respected, and included.

- **Example:** *“Essential to making a school safe and supportive is building an acknowledgement of and a sense of urgency to address systemic inequities, including racism, trauma’s impact on learning, and other structural issues... Schools that foster a safe, positive, healthy & inclusive whole-school learning environment: i.) Enable students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being; and ii.) Integrate services and aligns initiatives\* that promote students’ racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, and supports their behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching, suicide prevention, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children’s mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives.”* (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework](#), pg. 7)
- **Example:** *“The Equal Access Act (1984), 20 U.S.C. §7905 requires public secondary schools to provide equal access to school premises for extracurricular clubs; Ensures that non-curricular student groups are afforded the same access to public secondary school facilities as other similarly situated student groups; and reaffirms the principles that prohibit unlawful discrimination against any student-initiated groups and speaks specifically to the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students to form gay-straight alliances (GSAs) and similar student organizations.”* ([Maryland Department of Education](#), 2015, pg. 17)

#### More on This Topic

- This checklist from [Project Thrive](#) offers strategies for creating a safe and inclusive school for LGBTQ+ youth.
- This [Respect for All](#) policy recommendation guide is a resource for schools working to socially and emotionally support their LGBTQ+ students by creating and evaluating inclusive school policies and climates.
- The [ACLU](#) and [GLSEN](#) provide step by step guides to creating a school GSA, which can serve as critical places for providing social and emotional peer support for students.





# Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

## Families

Like all diverse populations, LGBTQ+ students come from a wide range of homes and family dynamics. There will be some students who experience support in their homes, their faith communities, and their neighborhoods, and there will be some who do not. It is essential for schools to provide a supportive and welcoming environment for all students to explore and express their identities away from the family-integrated spaces they inhabit outside of school.

Several states have considered or passed harassment legislation that requires school staff to notify parents if students may identify as LGBTQ+. These ‘mandatory outing’ laws are promoted as protecting a parent’s right to information about their student, but the underlying purpose and actual effect is to keep students from seeing school teachers, counselors, and social workers as adults who are safe to approach with questions and concerns. The most vulnerable LGBTQ+ students are those who lack a safe and supportive home environment, and laws like these keep those students isolated and unsupported at school as well, significantly increasing their risk of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

The tension between a student’s right to privacy and self-determination and a parent or guardian’s right to information about their child can create complicated situations for school staff. The student’s safety should always be the primary concern. Also, remember that questioning, coming out, and gender transitioning are all processes, and processes take time. Allowing the student as much self-determination and control over the process as possible tends to create the best outcomes for both the student and their family.





## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Families

#### Best Practices

- As in all aspects of LGBTQ+ student health, center the student's safety as the primary concern.
- Ideally, a “triangle of trust” exists between the student, the parents or caregivers, and school staff. In cases where caregivers have broken that trust with their child through expressing hostility to LGBTQ+ people, the school staff must be extra careful to maintain trust with the student. In many cases, school staff can act as a third party educator or mediator to provide accurate information to uninformed or misinformed parents, and help them rebuild a trusting relationship with their child.
- School staff should communicate with the student about their parents' level of awareness of the student's LGBTQ+ identity, and insofar as possible, respect the students' wishes around privacy and confidentiality.
- School staff should follow the student's lead on which name and pronouns to use when communicating with parents and caregivers.
- School staff should also communicate to students the limitations of privacy from parents and guardians, including the fact that legal guardians have a right to request the student's files, documents, and records.
- School staff should be aware that many LGBTQ+ young people have negative experiences when parents and guardians first learn of their identity, including verbal abuse, physical violence, and being kicked out of their home. If a student communicates that they feel at risk if their parents should learn of their identity, this concern should be taken very seriously. It is often appropriate to involve a school counselor or social worker in working with the student to create a safety plan.
- If a student's parents are not supportive of the student's LGBTQ+ identity, the school is entitled by Title IX to provide the student with a safe staff member to support them in making sure their civil rights are not violated at school. This is a complex issue, and should be addressed on a case by case basis with the student's safety, wishes, and privacy at the forefront of all decision-making.
- Even caregivers who are fully supportive of their LGBTQ+ child might need or desire the school's assistance in finding accurate information about LGBTQ+ identities and how to support their child. Parents also may benefit from a referral to a family / caregiver support group, such as a [local PFLAG chapter](#).





## Specific Areas of Policy & Practice

### Families

### Model Policies

The privacy and safety of students should always be emphasized in school policies. As every family is different, school policies should not assume that all families are supportive of their child's LGBTQ+ identity and should instead allow the student to determine what level of family involvement is right for them.

- **Example:** *"In deciding whether to involve a student's parents or guardian in developing a plan, school staff should work closely with the student to assess the degree to which, if any, the parent or guardian will be involved in the process and must consider the health, wellbeing and safety of the student."* ([Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC](#), 2013, Section JICK-R, (C.))
- **Example:** *"In some cases, transgender students may not want their parents to know about their transgender status. These situations must be addressed on a case-by-case basis and will require schools to balance the goal of supporting the student with the requirement that parents be kept informed about their children. The paramount consideration in such situations is the health and safety of the student."* ([Buncombe County Schools NC](#), 2018, pg. 3)

### Why It Matters

- According to the [Trevor Project](#), 68% of LGBTQ+ students disclose their sexual orientation to their parents. Further, only half (51%) disclose their gender identity at home.
- Schools can provide a safe space for students who don't feel supported in their homes.

### More on This Topic

- [Section D of GLSEN's Model Local Education Policy](#) is an excellent resource for schools on how to navigate supportive and unsupportive family members.



# Additional Resources

## Data

### [Coming of Age as an LGBTQ Southerner: Family, Faith, Education & Health](#)

- This report from the Campaign for Southern Equality and Campus Pride details the findings of the 2021 Survey of Southern LGBTQ Experiences, a survey of 4,186 LGBTQ people who live in the South. Questions capture respondents' experiences with their families, in religious settings, at school, and with regard to healthcare.

### [The Trevor Project's National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2019](#)

- With over 34,000 respondents, this survey is the largest survey of LGBTQ+ youth mental health ever conducted and provides a critical understanding of the experiences impacting their lives.

### [GLSEN's 2019 LGBTQ+ School Climate Report & GLSEN's 2017 LGBTQ+ School Climate Report](#)

## Legal Resources

### [Explaining \*Bostock v. Clayton County\*](#)

- In 2020, the Supreme Court in *Bostock v. Clayton County* concluded that discrimination based on sexual orientation and discrimination based on gender identity inherently involve treating individuals differently because of their sex. It reached this conclusion in the context of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq., which prohibits sex discrimination in employment.

### [Department of Education's Interpretation of \*Bostock\*](#)

- The U.S. Department of Education issued this interpretation to clarify the Department's enforcement authority over discrimination based on sexual orientation and discrimination based on gender identity under Title IX.

### [Title IX](#)

- This is the U.S. Department of Justice's in-depth explanation of Title IX, the law that prohibits discrimination of any sort in public schools.

### [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

- This is the U.S. Department of Education's explanation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which protects the privacy of student education records.





## Additional Resources

### General Resources for Creating Supportive Schools

#### [Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools](#)

- This is a comprehensive guide for supporting transgender students in schools, compiled by the National Center for Lesbian Rights, Gender Spectrum, the Human Rights Campaign, and the American Civil Liberties Union.

#### [GLSEN Respect for All Policy Recommendations](#)

- This resource provides education policymakers and practitioners, particularly at the district and school levels, with concrete recommendations related to creating safe and affirming learning environments that uphold the dignity of all students.

#### [Project Thrive Checklist for Creating Safe and Inclusive Environments for LGBTQ Youth](#)

- This checklist from the HRC offers strategies for creating a safe and inclusive school for LGBTQ+ youth.

#### [George Washington University Intersectionality Resource](#)

- This site provides a plethora of resources for further explanations of intersectionality by some of the theory's founding scholars.

### Safety, Harassment, and Bullying

#### [Measuring Bullying, Victimization, Perpetration, and Bystander Experiences](#)

- This compendium from the Center for Disease Control provides researchers, prevention specialists, and health educators with tools to measure a range of bullying experiences: bully perpetration, bully victimization, bully-victim experiences, and bystander experiences.

#### [Guidance from GLSEN: Replacing Punitive Discipline with Restorative Policies and Practices](#)

- GLSEN offers school policy guidance for the elimination of punitive and exclusionary discipline policies that differentially impact LGBTQ+ students, especially those who are also students of color and students with disabilities, and the introduction of proactive and positive restorative discipline practices.

#### [GLSEN Local School Climate Survey](#)

- A free assessment tool to survey students about how they experience their school climate.

#### [US Department of Education School Climate Survey](#)

- A school climate assessment survey from the US Department of Education.

### Privacy

#### [Lambda Legal's FERPA guidance and FAQs](#)

- Lambda Legal provides information and guidance about student privacy violations and how to address them.

#### [How to File a FERPA complaint](#)

- Students and families have the right to file a FERPA complaint if the student's right to privacy has been violated at school. This is the online portal for filing FERPA complaints with the Department of Education.



# Additional Resources

## Names and Pronouns

### [Healthline's Information on Misgendering](#)

- Frequent misgendering can lower transgender and non-binary students' self-esteem around appearance and reduce their "sense of strength and continuity in their identity." This resource explains why pronouns matter and how individuals can prevent misgendering a student.

### [GLSEN's Pronoun Guide](#)

- This is a helpful resource for understanding pronouns and why they matter for people who identify as LGBTQ+. This can be used for professional development for school staff.

### ["The role of gender affirmation in psychological well-being among transgender women" from The National Library of Medicine](#)

- This journal article touches on mental health outcomes for transgender people and women as related to their affirmed names and pronouns.

## Documents and Records

### [Lambda Legal's A Transgender Advocate's Guide to Updating and Amending School Records](#)

- This is a detailed resource for students who are interested in amending their school records with their affirmed name and pronouns, as well as how FERPA protects their right to do so.

### [Gender Inclusive Schools Student Records School Policy Guidance](#)

- These are model policies for schools and districts across the U.S. to protect students' privacy in school records.

## Restrooms and Facilities

### [Grimm vs. Gloucester County ruling](#)

- The US Court of Appeals ruled in 2020 that not allowing transgender students to use the restrooms that align with their gender identity is a violation of their Title IX rights.

### [Transgender Students and School Bathrooms: Frequently Asked Questions from Gender Spectrum](#)

- This is a list of frequently asked questions from parents concerned about transgender students using facilities that align with their gender identity. This can be a helpful resource for schools to know how to address these concerns.

## Gender Transitions and Support

### [Schools in Transition: Gender Transition Plan template](#)

- This 4-page document in Appendix D supports the necessary planning for a student's transition of gender. Its purpose is to create favorable conditions for a successful experience and to identify the specific actions that will be taken by the student, school, family, and other support providers.

### [Gender Spectrum's Gender Communication Plan template](#)

- This document supports the necessary planning for a student to communicate with the school community a change in one or more aspects of their gender.

### [Gender Spectrum's Gender Support Plan template](#)

- Guidance and a template for a Gender Support Plan to "create a shared understanding about the ways in which the student's authentic gender will be accounted for and supported at school. School staff, caregivers, and the student should work together to complete the document."





## Additional Resources

### Dress Code

#### [Equality Florida's Equitable Dress Code For Students](#)

- This resource provides further exploration into best practices for inclusive and affirming school dress codes, as well as some proactive and protective model dress code policies.

### Sports and Athletics

#### [ACLU Legislative Tracker](#)

- The ACLU tracks legislation affecting LGBTQ rights across the country, including state policies regarding exclusions of transgender youth in sports. It is updated weekly.

#### [Women's Sports Foundation's Position on Transgender Athletes](#)

- This is statement about the legitimacy and science behind transgender athletes' participation in sports teams that align with their gender identities.

#### [Transathlete Resources and Research](#)

- Transathlete.com has a substantial list of policy resources and medical research regarding transgender athletes in schools.

#### [Equal Opportunity for Transgender Athletes Report from NCLR](#)

- The National Center for Lesbian Rights published an extensive report about transgender students in school athletics, including the importance of sports on student health, policy guidance, best practices for schools, and research disproving notions that female transgender students have a competitive advantage over their peers.

#### [Model High School Policy for Transgender Student Athletes](#)

- This the full model school policy from the National Center for Lesbian Rights regarding transgender inclusion in school sports.

### Gender in School and Classroom Activities

#### [Media Metters for America "17 School Districts Debunk Right-Wing Lies About Protections For Transgender Students"](#)

- This 2015 article uses data and evidence from school districts around the nation to debunk myths about the "danger" of allowing transgender and non-binary students to participate in traditionally gender-segregated activities.

#### ["Sex-Ed To Go" from Planned Parenthood](#)

- These are free 15-20 minute videos for teachers to learn some best practices for creating inclusive health and sexual education programs in schools.

#### [K-12 Comprehensive Sexuality Education Plan from Molalla School District in Oregon](#)

- This is a sample health and sexual education curriculum separated by grade level (starting on page 16).



# Additional Resources

## Inclusive Curriculums

### [GLSEN's Nondiscrimination Protections and Inclusion of LGBTQ+ Students in K-12 Learning Communities](#)

- GLSEN provides guidance for schools in their efforts to increase inclusivity in their curriculums and beyond (see page 18). This resource also includes the civil rights of LGBTQ+ students, as well as some best practices for record-keeping, names and pronouns, and gendered activities and facilities.

### [HRC's Welcoming Schools Lesson Plans to Create LGBTQ+ Inclusive Classrooms and Schools](#)

- This resource includes sample lesson plans, reading materials, and trainings for teachers.

### [GLSEN's Inclusive Curriculum Resource](#)

- This guide was created to assist schools in making their own inclusive curriculums that are tailored to their school's standards and social climate.

### [Learning for Justice Classroom Resources](#)

- Resources for teachers and schools in creating inclusive curriculums. This website contains sample lesson plans, assistance with creating personalized lesson plans, ideas for student engagement, teaching kits, and film kits.

### [American Library Association Defending Intellectual Freedom: LGBTQ+ Materials in School Libraries](#)

- This is a guide for school librarians on how to choose LGBTQ+ inclusive materials that are right for their school's collection. It follows the commitments of inquiry, inclusion, exploration, engagement, exploration, and curation.

## Staff Training and Cultural Responsiveness

### [The Safe Zone Project](#)

- The Safe Zone Project has trainings and resources available for free. Student support specialists can use these to facilitate workshops for faculty and staff.

### [GLSEN's Safe Space Kit](#)

- This is another free resource for school faculty to learn more about gender identity, their own implicit biases, how to create a safe and inclusive space for their LGBTQ+ students, as well as how to handle microaggressions and overt harassment of LGBTQ+ students by other students.

### [Intersectionality in the Classroom](#)

- This resource from Learning for Justice is for teachers looking to elevate the experiences of students with intersecting identities, specifically BIPOC students.

### [My Gender Journey](#) and [Understanding Gender](#) from Gender Spectrum

- These resources offer professional development strategies for school faculty and staff members to explore their own gender identities and implicit biases.

## Social and Emotional Support

The [ACLU](#) and [GLSEN](#) guides to creating a school GSA (Gender and Sexuality Alliance)

- These resources provide step-by-step guides to creating a school GSA, which can serve as critical places for providing social and emotional peer support for students.

## Families

### [Section D of GLSEN's Model Local Education Policy](#)

- This guide may help schools navigate supportive and unsupportive family members of LGBTQ+ students.

### [PFLAG Chapter Finder](#)

- PFLAG is a national organization providing regular, free spaces for parents and caregivers of LGBTQ+ youth to support and connect with each other.