Safe and Supportive Schools for All Students: Creating Inclusive Spaces for LGBTQIA+ Youth

Creating Inclusive Spaces for LGBTQIA+ Youth

Division of Student Support and Federal Programs

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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is committed to equitable practices which support the educational and social-emotional needs of all students. School safety, both physical and psychological, is a vital component of that commitment. Safety and prevention efforts that are inclusive, intentional, and impactful can provide students with safe, respectful, engaging, and welcoming environments in which to grow and learn.

This document provides technical guidance and assistance as each Maryland local education agency (LEA) works to support the rights of all students, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) youth. Providing schools with information, support, and best practices is an important step in assuring welcoming, caring, respectful, and affirming environments for all students. This guidance document is designed to serve as a suggestion for consideration for school systems and administrators who may want to develop internal policy, procedures, and/or guidelines.

Definitions

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) suggests that Behavioral health providers, parents, schools, and communities can best provide support to children, adolescents, and their families and caregivers and improve their behavioral health when they have access to the most current information about sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in youth. The following overview provides the most current understanding and definitions of key terms related to LGBTQIA+ Youth (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

Asexual: Individuals who do not experience sexual attraction. An individual can also be aromantic, meaning that they do not experience romantic attraction (GLAAD, 2021).

Bisexual: Describes an individual who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to those of the same gender or to those of another gender (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

Cisgender: Describes individuals whose gender identity is congruent with their sex assigned at birth (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

Gay: Describes individuals whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same gender (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

Gender diverse: A broad term that includes individuals whose gender identities and/or gender expressions are incongruent with those culturally expected based on sex assigned at birth. This includes those who are exploring their gender and is used interchangeably with "gender minority." (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023)

Gender expression: The external ways a person communicates their gender, such as clothing, hair, mannerisms, activities, or social roles (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

Gender identity: A person's deep internal sense of being female, male, or another identity (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

Intersex: An umbrella term used to describe people with variations in sex characteristics, including chromosomes or hormones that do not fit typical definitions of male and female. (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

LGBTQIA+: The acronym for describing sexual and gender minorities has been through many iterations and will likely continue to change. Each letter corresponds to an identity that has a corresponding definition. However, any attempt to use a single acronym to identify a heterogeneous grouping of people is likely going to unintentionally exclude someone. As is customary, the use of the "+" is intended to recognize the great diversity between and within gender and sexual minority populations that cannot be ascribed to an abbreviated acronym. These persons remain an integral part of the expansive community and are recognized inclusively in the term LGBTQIA+ (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023, Cannava & Lorig, 2023).

Lesbian: Describes individuals whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same gender (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

Queer: Historically, this has been a pejorative term used to describe LGBTQI+ people, but is now used by some people, particularly younger people, whose sexual orientation is not exclusively straight/heterosexual. Some people may use queer, or more commonly genderqueer, to describe their gender identity and/or gender expression (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

Transgender: Describes individuals whose gender identity is incongruent with their sex assigned at birth (GLAAD, 2021, SAMHSA, 2023).

Current Data for LGBTQIA+ Youth

LGBTQIA+ youth represent a diverse subset of the school population. Data from the Trevor Project (2021) indicates that LGBTQIA+ youth face disproportionate challenges, such as harassment, abuse, misgendering, and public/private scrutiny.

Nationwide, the majority of LGBTQIA+ students regularly hear biased language at school, and most experience some form of identity-based harassment or assault. Data reported by Maryland LGBTQIA+ youth on the GLSEN National School Climate indicated that many youths regularly heard anti-LGBTQIA+ remarks at school, experienced LGBTQIA+ victimization at school, reported discriminatory policies or practices at their school, and had limited access to in-school resources and supports (Kosciw, Clark, & Menard, 2022).

Results from the 2021 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), in which Maryland participated, also showed that LGBQ students are experiencing alarming rates of violence, poor mental health, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors (Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report, 2023). Specifically, LGBTQIA+ youth of color reported that schools nationwide are hostile environments for LGBTQIA+ youth of color, where they experience victimization and discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, or gender identity, or all the above simultaneously (Truong, Zongrone, & Kosciw, 2020).

Despite these difficulties, LGBTQIA+ youth display enormous resiliency, in fact being LGBTQIA+ is *not* a risk factor, but instead it is the intersection of environmental factors, knowledge, attitude and skills that create risk (Cannava & Lorig, 2023). Findings from the 2021 GLSEN National School Climate Survey

demonstrate that students attending schools with affirming LGBTQIA+ resources and supports report more positive school experiences, including lower victimization and absenteeism, and higher academic achievement (Kosciw, Clark, & Menard, 2022).

The need for protections for LGBTQIA+ youth is clear. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students play an important part in creating and sustaining a healthy and respectful environment. Additionally, it is important that educators be particularly attentive to the needs of students who exist at the intersection of multiple forms of bias (Truong, Zongrone, & Kosciw, 2020). All students need a safe and supportive school environment to progress academically and developmentally.

Legislative Policies and COMAR Regulations that Support LGBTQIA+ Youth

In 2014, the State of Maryland prohibited discrimination based on gender identity and expression with regard to public accommodations, housing, and employment in the Fairness for All Marylanders Act of 2014.

In 2018, the State of Maryland prohibited mental health or childcare practitioners from engaging in the harmful practice of conversion therapy with individuals who are minors and barred the use of state funds for conducting or providing health coverage for conversion therapy, or providing a grant to any organization that conducts or provides insurance for conversation therapy.

In 2019, MSDE approved Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.01.06 *Educational Equity* which required MSDE to establish systems of structure and support for school systems, students, teachers, and other stakeholders that ensure educational equity and excellence. Furthermore, COMAR 13A.01.06 states each local education agency shall develop an educational equity policy and regulations, to be reviewed every three years, with the goal of providing educational equity to all students. This educational policy should include elements to address academic achievement and growth; leadership and human capital; school climate and culture affecting school success; and educator and staff capacity. In response to this regulation, MSDE also developed the *Equity and Excellence: A Guide to Educational Equity in Maryland* to support equity within the local education agencies.

In July 2022, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation amending Education Article, §2-303(b) and implementing Education Article, §26-701 et seq., Annotated Code of Maryland, prohibiting unlawful discrimination and retaliation in education in Maryland public and nonpublic schools that receive state funds. Specifically, the law prohibits all Maryland public and nonpublic schools from discriminating or retaliating against a student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student because of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

School and classroom libraries are essential for making the connection between instruction and the real-world. In April 2024, Governor Wes Moore enacted the Freedom to Read Act (Education Article, §4-142), ensuring equitable access to library media within each local education agency. Also in April 2024, Governor Moore enacted School Employee Antibias Training (Education Article, §6-129), which requires anti-bias training for all school employees.

Professional Development

RATIONALE

Data collected in the 2021 GLSEN National School Climate Survey suggests that LGBTQIA+ students who attend schools with an increasing number of supportive educators' report experiencing:

- Increased feelings of safety related to gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation,

- Fewer missed school days due to feelings of insecurity,

- Higher levels of self-esteem,

- Lower levels of depression,

- Lower likelihood to consider suicide,

- Increased feelings of school belonging,

- Lower levels of victimization, and

- Higher GPAs.

Research indicates that it is essential that educators have the confidence, skills, and resources to contribute to positive outcomes for LGBTQIA+ students in school. The affirmative practices model described by Van Den Bergh and Crisp (2004) and Crisp and McCave (2007) includes three aspects: knowledge, attitude, and skills which support professional development.

KNOWLEDGE

The first step in supporting LGBTQIA is an understanding of the population through knowledge. Increased knowledge about gender, sexuality, and identity, particularly among school-aged youth, would contribute to better strategies, awareness, responsiveness and proactiveness when supporting LGBTQIA+ youth. School staff should be knowledgeable regarding terminology, demographics, symbols, historical dates, contemporary figures, experiences with oppression, community resources, culturally sensitive practice models and LGBTQIA+ identity theory (Van Den Berg & Crisp, 2004).

ATTITUDE

The second component of the affirmative practices model addresses attitudes or dispositions. This requires school staff to self-reflect on personal opinions, biases, and experiences. More knowledge about gender, sexuality, and identity, particularly among school-aged youth, would contribute to better strategies, awareness, responsiveness and proactiveness when dealing with situations where LGBTQIA+ identity is involved (Cannava & Lorig, 2023).

SKILLS

The final component of the affirmative practices model is enhancing skills. Within this model, 10 skills are identified to support culturally competent practices with LGBTQIA+ youth: (1) Create a safe environment for LGBTQIA+ youth that ensures comfort in disclosing sensitive information; (2) Allow students to self-identify rather than verbalizing or making assumptions; (3) Help students work through the stages of coming out process; (4) Ensure school staff are not in violation of a student's confidentiality; (5) Address the presenting challenge, rather than the youth's sexual identity; (6) Explore

the impact of intersectionality; (7) Support families; (8) Refer to community resources; (9) Acknowledge personal biases' and (10) Engage in ongoing professional development to strengthen skills (Cannava & Lorig, 2023, Van Den Berg & Crisp, 2004) .

RESOURCES

- GLSEN Professional Development
- GLSEN Safe Space Kit
- Supporting LGBTQ Youth of Color - GLSEN
- Creating Safe Schools for LGBTQ+ Youth - CDC
- Welcoming Students - Human Rights Campaign
- Respect Workshop - American Psychological Association

Inclusive and Affirming Curriculum for All Students

Educators can promote safer school environments is by developing lessons that avoid bias and that include positive representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people, history, and events (GLSEN, 2023).

Inclusive and affirming curriculum can serve as a mirror when it reflects individuals and their experiences back to themselves. At the same time, curriculum can serve as a window when it introduces and provides the opportunity to understand the experiences and perspectives of those who possess different identities.

LGBTQIA+ inclusive curriculum benefits all students by exposing students to more inclusive and accurate accounts of history, helping them have better understanding of LGBTQIA+ people, encouraging them to question stereotypes about LGBTQIA+ people, and promoting acceptance (GLSEN, 2023).

CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

School environments which are inclusive of LGBTQ+ history, culture, and people are safer learning environments for LGBTQ+ youth and have better educational outcomes (American Psychological Association, n.d.). The implementation of an inclusive curriculum strengthens a student's ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, and encourages respect for all. However, according to GLSEN, only 26.7% of LGBTQ+ youth in Maryland were taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, history, or events (GLSEN, 2021).

While positive representations of LGBTQIA+ history and culture can and should be included in all content areas at all grade levels, there are clear opportunities for LGBTQIA+ inclusive curriculum in the areas of social studies and health education.

The Maryland State Standards and Framework outlined in COMAR 13A.04.08.01 state that social studies curricula should include:

- concepts and processes of authority, power, and influence.
- historically grounded, multidisciplinary approach in order to recognize multiple narratives and acknowledge the diversity and commonality of the human experience.
- decisions made by individuals and groups using economic reasoning.
- significant events, ideas, beliefs, and themes to identify patterns and trends and to analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time to make connections to the present in their communities, Maryland, the United States, and the world.

By teaching LGBTQIA+ history and culture, within the Maryland Social Studies Standards (COMAR 13A.04.08), students can acquire knowledge in the concepts and processes of authority, power and influence and the diversity and commonality of the human experience. Additionally, students have the opportunity to develop skills to analyze significant events, ideas, beliefs, and themes to identify trends and explore how individuals and societies have changed over time.

In addition to LGBTQIA+ inclusive curriculum in social studies, similar inclusion components can be implemented within the health education curricula. According to the 2021 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results, youth who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual report participating in risky sexual behaviors at much higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts.

The [Maryland Comprehensive Health Education Framework (2021)](#) provides age-appropriate, scientifically based, medically accurate guidance to local education agencies on the development of and LGBTQIA+-inclusive health education curriculum. Consistent with best practices, this skills-based framework addresses several health education topics including: healthy relationships and consent, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation and identity, harassment, teasing and bullying, anatomy and physiology, sexual health, and sexually explicit media.

Additional Resources:

- [MSDE Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [GLSEN Inclusive Curriculum Resources](#)
- [GLSEN Inclusive Curriculum Standards](#)
- [GLSEN Inclusive Curriculum Guide](#)
- [Learning for Justice - Southern Poverty Law Center](#)
- [Three Rs - Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Sexuality Education Curriculum](#)
- [SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change](#)

Tiered Supports for Inclusive School Environments for LGBTQIA+ Youth

Inclusive school environments support LGBTQIA+ Youth. The following section examines the development of an inclusive environment through a tiered model (Cannava & Lorig, 2023; GLSEN, 2023).

Tier	School Climate and Culture	Equitable Access	Curriculum	Counseling
Tier One: Universal Supports	School staff advocate for, encourage, model and scaffold inclusivity. Prioritize an inclusive and welcoming school climate and culture. Examine mission and vision statement to ensure physical and psychological safety for LGBTQIA+ youth. Use data (i.e., surveys, walk-throughs, student focus groups) to assess school climate.	Research by Greenspan and colleagues (2019) found that LGBTQIA+ athletes are often forcibly excluded and unwelcome in sports, in part because of the gender segregation of sports teams, locker rooms, and athletics classes. Best practices suggest that schools work to establish resources to support health and physical education teachers and coaches to create affirming environments (Cannava & Lorig, 2023).	When students feel reflected in the books they read and lessons they learn, it creates a connection to the material, validates the student's diversity and individuality, and encourages learning. LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum benefits all students by promoting acceptance and respect and teaching them more about the diverse people and families in the world (GLSEN, 2023).	School counseling instruction may cover topics such as healthy relationships, personal body safety and consent, different types of families, and empathy. School staff can help to create psychoeducational lessons that promote diversity awareness and appreciation. School staff can model the use of inclusive language as part of any school's social and emotional learning programming.

Tier	School Climate and Culture	Equitable Access	Curriculum	Counseling
Tier Two: Small Group Supports	School leadership should be vigilant in recognizing if LGBTQIA+ students are being referred for interventions at a higher rate than their peers. School-based mental health providers and school leadership can consult with teachers and staff to ensure that LGBTQIA+ youth are not unfairly targeted, excluded, or victimized through macro- or microaggressions (Cannava & Lorig, 2023).	Genders and Sexualities Alliances or Gay–Straight Alliances (GSAs) are found in schools that tend to foster a more positive school climate and promote mental health and student empowerment (Poteat et al., 2019), regardless of students' participation in them (Truong et al., 2020).	Teaching LGBTQIA+ history and culture can offer a rich lens into the concepts and processes of authority, power and influence, the diversity and commonality of the human experience.	LGBTQIA+ youth may present with heterogeneous difficulties that may benefit from psychoeducational or counseling groups. However, LGBTQIA+ youth may be reluctant to self-disclose or participate in discussions if they do not feel comfortable. Students should be allowed to self-select groups to increase comfortability.

Tier	School Climate and Culture	Equitable Access	Curriculum	Counseling
Tier Three: Individual Supports	One of the most impactful Tier 3 interventions is a supportive adult who validates, affirms, hears, and values the individual student. School staff should establish safe spaces; trust and transparency; peer support; collaboration; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural relevance and gender responsiveness.	LGBTQIA+ should have equal access to extra-curricular activities and student leadership positions.	Follow these steps when you witness anti-LGBTQ name-calling, bullying or harassment. 1. Address Name-Calling, Bullying or Harassment Immediately. Concentrate on stopping the behavior in that moment. 2. Name the Behavior. Describe what you saw and label the behavior. 3. Use the Teachable Moment. Make sure to educate after stopping the behavior. 4. Support the Targeted Student. Support the student who has been the target of the name-calling, bullying or harassment. 5. Hold Students Accountable. Check school policy and impose appropriate consequences. https://www.glsen.org/	Levenson and colleagues (2021) recommend practices that (a) recognize an LGBTQIA+ person's "problems, strengths, and coping strategies through the lens of trauma and resilience" (p. 3), and (b) allow for trauma-informed responses that are affirmative and support psychological safety.

Non-Discrimination For All

A safe and supportive school environment minimizes stigmatization, protects all students from harassment and bullying, and does not single out students by gender. The goal is to provide equal educational opportunity and healthy development of students.

These non-discrimination guidelines are not intended to address every situation that might occur with respect to LGBTQIA+ students. These guidelines are provided as a policies and practices that the local education agency may want to consider.

DRESS CODE

When developing policies or procedure, school systems and administrators may want to consider the following:

- Review dress codes to describe what the school considers appropriate clothing without referencing gender.

- Consider gender neutral dress codes for class or yearbook photos, honor society ceremonies, graduation ceremonies, or dances.

- 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. This includes school extracurricular activities, as well as events, such as school dances, choral concerts, the wearing of uniforms, or graduation.

- If a school has two separate gender-specific dress codes, any student should be permitted to dress consistently with the dress code for either gender. So long as the student is compliant with one of the dress codes, the student should not be subject to discipline or a requirement to change clothing on the grounds that the student is wearing the "wrong" dress code for the student's gender or gender identity.

SCHOOL POLICIES, FORMS AND COMMUNICATION

- Post anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies around the school and share them with the school community.

- Include the categories of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in all non-discrimination materials.

- Modify forms that allow families and students the ability to self-identify their gender and preferred names and pronouns. Multiple federal and state agencies have adopted a two- part question that asks separately about current gender identity and sex assigned at birth.

- Include questions specific to LGBT students in school climate surveys.

STAFF TRAINING

- Provide staff training that addresses student diversity and builds the capacity of all staff to understand and appreciate student sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender non-conforming as part of regular training and/or continuing education.

- Design classroom lessons that expand understandings of gender diversity and look for entry points in the curriculum to address gender diversity.

RESTROOMS

Perhaps the most difficult and sensitive issue school administrations will face is the use of bathrooms and locker rooms. Respect for the privacy and comfort-level of each student can guide the decision-making process.

- Designate any available single stall restroom with a locking door as a unisex/gender neutral restroom and as available to all students. If a single stall student restroom is not generally available, designate a private restroom such as one in the health suites for any student who requests increased privacy and safety, for any reason. This accommodation may be offered to all students.

- Provide access to the restroom that corresponds to the student's gender identity.

- Permit transgender and gender non-conforming students whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female to use facilities they believe are the most consistent with their safety and gender identity.

NAME AND GENDER

Equal education in a non-discriminatory environment may be supported by the following guidelines (COMAR 13A.01.07 Nondiscrimination in Education):

- Address every student by a name and pronoun that corresponds to the student's gender identity.

- Privately ask students how they want to be addressed in class and whether this will be different when in correspondence to the home or at conferences with the student's parents or guardians.

- Train all teachers, staff, and school administrators to use the student's preferred name, pronouns and gender.

- 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.

- Create a process so a student or parent/legal guardian may request a change of name and/or gender so that a student may be registered in school under a name and gender that corresponds with the student's gender identity.

- Provide a means to protect the student's previous identity once a legal name change has occurred and current records are amended to show the change.

- Store historical records where they are safe from inadvertent disclosure.

- Implement practices that safeguard confidential information from inadvertent disclosure when school staff or administrators are required by law to use or to report a student's legal name or gender as it appears in the official record.

- Upon request, amend and re-issue a diploma in a former student's name once the former student secures a legal name change, being sure that the fact that the student's name was changed is not indicated in any way on the diploma.

DISCLOSING INFORMATION

All persons, including students, have a right to privacy. This includes the right to keep private one's transgender status or gender non-conforming presentation at school. In considering the creation or development of a local transgender policy, school system administrators may want to review and consider these guidelines:

- Note that while a balance between students' rights to privacy and parents' rights to information in the educational environment is vital, no provision of state or federal law requires schools to affirmatively disclose this sensitive information to parents. Federal courts have concluded that schools should not disclose sensitive student information such as sexual orientation to parents without a legitimate stated interest to do so.

- Treat all student information, medical, or other sensitive personal information, including information relating to transgender students, as confidential in accordance with applicable state, local and federal privacy laws.

- Permit transgender and gender non-conforming students to discuss and express their gender identity openly and to decide when, with whom, and how much private information may be shared.

- Implement training and practices that assist school staff and prevent accidental disclosure of information that may reveal a student's transgender status to others, including parents and other school staff unless the student and/or the student's parent has authorized school staff to make such disclosure or staff is legally required to do so.

- Consider that while information in official student records must be disclosed upon the request of parents, sensitive information related to gender identity generally need not be disclosed without the student's consent.

LOCKER ROOMS

Respectful and careful review of all relevant factors and concerns is essential when considering the locker room issue.

- Designate any available single stall restroom with a locking door as a unisex/gender neutral restroom and as available to all students. If a single stall student restroom is not generally available, designate a private restroom such as one in the health suites for any student who requests increased privacy and safety, for any reason. This accommodation may be offered to all students.

- Provide access to the locker room that corresponds to the student's gender identity.

- Provide the option to use a safe and non-stigmatizing private alternative space for any student who is uncomfortable using shared facilities.

- Provide reasonable alternative arrangements for any student who expresses a need or desire for increased privacy. Alternative arrangements should be provided in a way that protects the transgender student's ability to keep his or her transgender status confidential.

- Based on availability and appropriateness to address privacy concerns, such arrangements could include, but are not limited to:

- Assignment of a student locker in near proximity to the coaches' office or a supportive peer group.

- Use of a private area within the public area of the locker room facility (e.g. nearby restroom stall with a door or an area separated by a curtain).

- Use of a nearby private area (e.g. nearby restroom or a health office restroom).

- A separate changing schedule (either utilizing the locker room before or after the other students)

ATHLETICS

- Follow Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association Guidelines/COMAR for participation in Interscholastic Athletics.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND ATHLETICS

Suggested guidelines for consideration are:

- Allow athletic participation without medical or legal documentation regarding gender.

- Protect the student's privacy rights. Personal information regarding transgender status, medical history, or sex assigned at birth should not be disclosed to staff or students of other schools without the student's consent.

- Follow Maryland Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association Guidelines/COMAR for participation in Interscholastic Athletics.

- Regulations: Each school system should develop and apply criteria for students to participate on interscholastic athletic teams consistent with their bona fide gender identity. All students who participate in interscholastic athletics must meet eligibility standards in COMAR 13A.06.03.

SINGLE-SEX CLASSES AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Non-discrimination and equity consideration in this area may address the following issues:

- Any single-sex classes or extracurricular activities must be consistent with Title IX and applicable regulations, including that the decision to offer a single-sex class or activity generally must be substantially related to an important educational objective (https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/PE/Title_IX_Single_Sex_Courses.pdf).

- The United States Department of Education interprets Title IX to mean that schools generally must treat students consistent with their gender identity in all aspects of the single-sex classes and extracurricular activities.

OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIPS

Student comfort is paramount in the decisions around overnight field trips. Maximizing the student's social integration may be achieved by the integration of these guidelines:

- Make arrangements in consultation with the student. If the transgender student's parents or guardians are involved and supportive they may also be consulted.

- Be sensitive to the need to maintain the student's privacy and not disclose or require disclosure of the student's transgender status to the other students or their parents without the consent of the transgender student and/or the student's parent.

- Allow students the opportunity to room with others according to their gender identity.

- Make efforts to accommodate any student who desires greater privacy; however, transgender or gender non-conforming students should not be isolated.

Best Practices for Inclusive School Environments for LGBTQIA+ Youth

Research supports that there are four critical areas that schools can use to cultivate a safe and supportive environment for all students (GLSEN, 2023). When these four areas are in place, LGBTQIA+ students experience less harassment and discrimination, do better in school, and experience a better school climate.

COMPREHENSIVE POLICIES

Passing and implementing comprehensive policies around key issues for LGBTQIA+ students is crucial to ensuring that LGBTQIA+ students can learn and grow in a supportive environment. These can include harassment, bullying, and nondiscrimination policies, policies for facilities accessibility for transgender, gender non-conforming, and nonbinary students, and policies affirming transgender and gender nonconforming students' participation in athletics.

SUPPORTIVE EDUCATORS

Supportive educators save students' lives. Just one visibly supportive educator in a school can help LGBTQIA+ students feel safer and more seen. Educators can advocate on LGBTQIA+ students' behalf to school administration and can also directly implement LGBTQIA+ content in class curriculum, address anti-LGBTQIA+ bullying or harassment, and serve as advisors for students to formally organize supportive groups at school. For many students, having adult allies in school to whom they can turn for support — or even simply knowing that LGBTQIA+ allies exist at their school — creates a more welcoming and safer environment for students to learn.

STUDENT-LED CLUBS

Research indicates that GSAs (Gender and Sexuality Alliances) improve school climate, individual well-being and educational outcomes for LGBTQIA+ youth. Participation in GSAs is related to stronger school connectedness and improved academic achievement for LGBTQIA+ youth, and regardless of whether LGBTQIA+ students themselves participate in their school's GSA, just having a GSA in their school can create a more positive school climate for LGBTQIA+ students.

INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

GLSEN research shows that LGBTQIA+ students who attend schools with curriculum that is inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people, history, and events experience a better school climate and improved academic outcomes. Curriculum serves as a mirror when it reflects individuals and their experiences back to themselves. At the same time, curriculum serves as a window when it introduces and provides the opportunity to understand the experiences and perspectives of those who possess different identities. An inclusive curriculum should be balanced and include diverse windows and mirrors for every student. Having LGBTQIA+-inclusive mirrors and windows in school curriculum can help create a more positive environment and healthy self-awareness for LGBTQIA+ students, while raising the awareness of everyone.

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