

# Promoting School Safety

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students often experience negative school climates, where they are subjected to bias-based bullying and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These negative school climates can threaten the health and well-being of LGBTQ students. At the same time, a large and consistent body of research shows that four strategies help to keep LGBTQ and all students safe and supported at school:

- 1 Inclusive, enumerated policies
- 2 Professional development on LGBTQ issues
- 3 LGBTQ-related resources
- 4 Student-led clubs (Genders and Sexualities Alliances – or GSAs)

This research review summarizes the scientific evidence on each of these safe-school strategies. First, the presence of enumerated policies is associated with more positive school experiences and health for LGBTQ and all youth. Second, pre-service and in-service training can help equip teachers with practical tools to support and protect all students effectively. Third, students report safer school climates when their school curricula includes attention to sexual orientation and gender identity. Fourth, the presence of a GSA, as well as participation in one, can improve students' school experiences and well-being.



There has been significant public attention in recent years to transgender youth in schools. Most research has studied LGBTQ students as one group. In this brief we include specific attention to new studies that focus on the distinct experiences of transgender students.

Studies have used several ways to define sexual orientation and gender identity for students. Some studies have focused on only LGB students; others combine LGBTQ students into one group; some distinguish between LGB and transgender and queer or questioning youth; and some (but very few) focus on the unique experiences of transgender youth. In this report we refer to “LGBTQ students”, but when referring to original research we use the language from specific studies. For example, we refer to “LGB” when a study specifically included LGB but not transgender, questioning or queer youth.

Much of the available research related to school policy change focuses on teachers. We refer to “school personnel” in order to include not only teachers but the range of adult authorities involved in schooling: teachers, school administrators, and all school staff (e.g., classroom aides, cafeteria workers, or bus drivers).

**Drawing from the research findings, each section includes recommendations for multiple audiences, including policy-makers, professional associations in the field of education, schools of education, school personnel, parents, and students.**

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