

# GLSEN'S FOUR SUPPORTS

Founded in 1990, GLSEN is the leading national organization working to create safe and inclusive schools for all. We envision a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. Each year, GLSEN programs and resources reach millions of students and educators in K-12 schools, via action at the national, state, and local level. GLSEN has improved conditions for LGBTQ students across the United States and launched an international movement to address LGBTQ issues in education and promote respect for all in K-12 schools.

GLSEN research has identified four major supports that schools can use to cultivate a safe and supportive environment for all of their students. When these Four Supports are in place, LGBTQ students experience less harassment and discrimination, do better in school, and experience a better school climate. These Four Supports are the focus of GLSEN's programs, advocacy, research, and policy work.



## COMPREHENSIVE POLICIES

Passing and implementing comprehensive policies around key issues for LGBTQ students is crucial to ensuring that LGBTQ students can learn and grow in a supportive environment. These can include:

- Harassment, bullying, and non-discrimination policies
- Policies for facilities accessibility for trans, gender non-conforming, and nonbinary students
- Policies affirming trans and gender non-conforming students' participation in athletics

There are a number of ways educators and schools can support inclusive, comprehensive policies, as well as fight against discriminatory state legislation, like "no promo homo" laws. Check out our resources to learn about the importance of enumeration in anti-bullying policies and our model policies to help guide your own advocacy efforts in your states, districts, and schools.



## SUPPORTIVE EDUCATORS

Supportive educators save students' lives. Just one visibly supportive educator in a school can help LGBTQ students feel safer and more seen. Educators can advocate on LGBTQ students' behalf to school administration, and can also directly implement LGBTQ content in class curriculum, address anti-LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ allies exist at their school — creates a more welcoming and safe 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 LGBTQ youth. Participation in GSAs is related to stronger school connectedness and improved academic achievement for LGBTQ youth, and regardless of whether LGBTQ students themselves participate in their school's GSA, just having a GSA in their school can create a more positive school climate for LGBTQ students.



**INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM**

GLSEN research shows that LGBTQ students who attend schools with curriculum that is inclusive of LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ-inclusive mirrors and windows in school curriculum can help create a more positive environment and healthy self-awareness for LGBTQ students, while raising the awareness of everyone.

**Implementing these four supports in K-12 schools can help to address and prevent bullying and harassment and work towards cultivating a school environment where all students feel welcome and ready to learn. The four supports benefit non-LGBTQ students too, reducing bullying and harassment of all kinds, and making everyone more college- and career-ready by being respectful of LGBTQ diversity.**