

# CURRICULAR STANDARDS THAT INCLUDE LGBTQ+ REPRESENTATION PROMOTE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND WELLBEING

GLSEN supports state legislation that amends curricular standards to include representation of LGBTQ+ people, persons with disabilities, people of color, and all marginalized communities in alignment with its core mission. GLSEN advances policies that make schools safer for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sex, race, color, national origin, ability, and religion. Inclusive curricular standards that support creation of inclusive curriculum at the local level can help strengthen educational attainment and health outcomes for LGBTQ+ students who see their full identities reflected in the classroom.<sup>1</sup>

**Curricular Standards:** Curricular standards are the instruction goals for what students learn in school. Standards are not a curriculum. Local communities and educators choose their own curriculum, which is a detailed plan for lessons on a particular topic.<sup>2</sup>

**Curriculum:** A detailed plan for a series of unified lessons on a particular topic that is created by educators and local communities.<sup>3</sup>

Advocates in a growing number of states are building support for the adoption and implementation of inclusive curricular standards. Currently, five states have passed legislation to amend state curricular standards to include representation of LGBTQ+ communities: Illinois, California, New Jersey, Colorado, and Oregon. Several of these states have also amended the curricular standards to center the experiences of persons with disabilities and people of color.<sup>4</sup>

## Inclusive Curriculum Promotes Student Achievement and Wellbeing

### *LGBTQ+ Students*

GLSEN's research indicates that teaching LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum has profound positive impacts for LGBTQ+ students. The 2017 National School Climate Survey found that compared to students in school without LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum, LGBTQ+ students in schools with LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum were less likely to hear "gay" used in a negative way, were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression, performed better academically in school, and were more likely to plan on pursuing post-secondary education.<sup>5</sup> The majority of LGBTQ+ students (67.6%) with LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum reported that their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBTQ+ people, as compared to 36.0% of LGBTQ+ students in schools without curriculum.<sup>6</sup>

### *LGBTQ+ Students With Disabilities*

LGBTQ+ students with disabilities are often impacted by ableism, a system of oppression, like racism or sexism, that benefits able-bodied people at the expense of people with disabilities. GLSEN’s research indicates that LGBTQ+ students with disabilities were more likely to be disciplined in school and to drop out of school than LGBTQ+ students without disabilities.<sup>7</sup> Students reported they were more likely to feel unsafe at school because of an actual or perceived disability (22.0% vs. 8.2%) and because of their academic ability (30.0% vs. 20.5%).<sup>8</sup> Emerging research continues to demonstrate the need to expand inclusive curricular standards to encompass the experiences and address the needs of persons with disabilities.<sup>9</sup>

### *LGBTQ+ Students of Color*

Survey responses from LGBTQ+ students of color continue to highlight differences in lived experiences compared to their LGBTQ+ peers who are white. Approximately two-fifths of Native and Indigenous LGBTQ+ students in a recent study (41.2%) experienced harassment or assault at school due to both their sexual orientation and their race/ethnicity.<sup>10</sup> Over half of AAPI LGBTQ+ students (51.8%) felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, 41.1% because of their gender expression, and 26.4% because of their race or ethnicity.<sup>11</sup> Approximately two-fifths of Black LGBTQ+ students in our study (40.0%) experienced harassment or assault at school based on both their sexual orientation and their race/ethnicity.<sup>12</sup> Latinx LGBTQ+ students were most likely to say that they felt unsafe due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation (54.9%), followed by the way they express their gender, or how traditionally “masculine” or “feminine” they were in appearance or behavior (44.2%). Nearly a quarter of students (22.3%) felt unsafe due to their race or ethnicity. Latinx LGBTQ+ students born outside the U.S. were especially likely to feel unsafe regarding their race/ethnicity (29.1% vs. 21.8% of those born in the U.S.).<sup>13</sup>

These and many other findings in existing research suggest the need for curricular standards that are inclusive of communities of color and can help better reflect the experiences of LGBTQ+ students of color.<sup>14</sup> The benefits of inclusive curriculum are increasingly of interest to educators, particularly those who work to counteract racial oppression and advance racial equity in order to strengthen outcomes in K-12 education.<sup>15</sup> A recent study conducted by Stanford University suggests inclusive curriculum might help improve attendance and GPA.<sup>16</sup> Additional studies suggest inclusive curriculum can help boost educational attainment.<sup>17</sup>

## **GLSEN Resources on LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum Implementation**

GLSEN’s Education and Youth Program Department (EYP) provides resources on implementation of LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum. One way that educators can promote safer school environments is by teaching and developing lessons that avoid bias and that include positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, history, and events. Curriculum can serve as a mirror when it reflects individuals and their experiences back to themselves.<sup>18</sup> 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 are different.

GLSEN’s inclusive curriculum guide provides educators with resources on how to incorporate LGBTQ+ history, themes, and leaders into lesson plans. For example, GLSEN has developed history cards that feature icons and events that have greatly impacted the LGBTQ+ community in contemporary history, which feature queer and trans people of color who have been and continue to be integral to LGBTQ+ advocacy. The guide provides educators with lesson ideas linked to common core standards, suggestions for adding LGBTQ+ content that is coherent with existing curricula, and tips for interrupting anti-LGBTQ+ comments in the classroom.

To access resources from EYP on LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, please visit the following address:

<https://www.glsen.org/curriculum>

**Oregon H.B. 2023 AN ACT Relating to inclusive education; creating new provisions amended the state curricular standards to include representation of LGBTQ+ communities**

*Section 1. (B) Ensure that the academic content standards for history, geography, economics and civics include sufficient instruction on the histories, contributions and perspectives of individuals who: (i) Are Native American; (ii) Are of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino or Middle Eastern descent; (iii) Are women; (iv) Have disabilities; (v) Are immigrants or refugees; or (vi) Are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.*

*Section 3. ... Textbooks and other instructional materials shall adequately address the roles in and contributions to the economic, political and social development of Oregon and the United States by men and women who: (1) Are Native American; (2) Are of European, African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino or Middle Eastern descent; (3) Have disabilities; (4) Are immigrants or refugees; or (5) Are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.*

[The full bill text is available online.](#)

The Oregon Department of Education provides resources that advance implementation of curricular standards. As required by S.B. 13 Tribal History/Shared History, the Department provides professional development training, sample lesson plans, and organizes “train the trainer” events throughout the state.

[S.B. 13 Tribal History/Shared History implementation resources are available online.](#)

**California SB 48 - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

*The bill added language to Education Code Section 51204.5, which prescribes the inclusion of the contributions of various groups in the history of California and the United States. This section already included men and women and numerous ethnic groups; the expanded language now includes (additions bolded): “...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.”*

[The entire FAQ is available on the California Department of Education website.](#)

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<sup>1</sup> GLSEN (2017). “Inclusive Curriculum Helps LGBTQ Youth.” (New York). Available at <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Inclusive-Curriculum-Helps-LGBTQ-Youth-GLSEN-Infographic-Poster.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Adopted from *Common Core State Standards Initiative*: “What are educational standards?” Available at <http://www.corestandards.org/faq/what-are-educational-standards/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Kosciw, Joseph G. et al. (2018). “2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation’s Schools” (New York: GLSEN). Available at <https://www.glsen.org/research/school-climate-survey>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> GLSEN (2016). “Educational Exclusion: Drop Out, Push Out, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline among LGBTQ Youth.” (New York: GLSEN).

<sup>8</sup> Kosciw, Joseph G. et al. (2018). “2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation’s Schools” (New York: GLSEN). Available at <https://www.glsen.org/research/school-climate-survey>

<sup>9</sup> See H. Samy Alim, Susan Baglieri, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Django Paris, David H. Rose and Joseph Michael Valente. (2017). “Responding to “Cross-Pollinating Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning: Toward an Inclusive Pedagogy That Accounts for Dis/Ability.” *Harvard Educational Review* 87:1, 4-25. Online publication date: 15-Mar-2017; Kathleen A. King Thorius and Federico R. Waitoller. (2017). “Strategic Coalitions Against Exclusion at the Intersection of Race and Disability—A Rejoinder.” *Harvard Educational Review* 87:2, 251-257.

<sup>10</sup> Zongrone, A. D., Truong, N. L., and Kosciw, J. G. (2020). “Erasure and resilience: The experiences of LGBTQ students of color, Native American, American Indian, and Alaska Native LGBTQ youth in U.S. schools.” (New York: GLSEN).

<sup>11</sup> Zongrone, A. D., Truong, N. L., and Kosciw, J. G. (2020). “Erasure and resilience: The experiences of LGBTQ students of color, Asian American and Pacific Islander LGBTQ youth in U.S. schools.” (New York: GLSEN).

<sup>12</sup> Zongrone, A. D., Truong, N. L., and Kosciw, J. G. (2020). “Erasure and resilience: The experiences of LGBTQ students of color, Black LGBTQ youth in U.S. schools.” (New York: GLSEN).

<sup>13</sup> Zongrone, A. D., Truong, N. L., and Kosciw, J. G. (2020). “Erasure and resilience: The experiences of LGBTQ students of color, Latinx LGBTQ youth in U.S. schools.” (New York: GLSEN).

<sup>14</sup> See Gay, Geneva (2018). “Third Edition: Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice.” (New York: Teacher’s College, Columbia University).

<sup>15</sup> Johnston, E., D’Andrea, Montalbano, P., & Kirkland, D.E. (2017). “Culturally Responsive Education: A Primer for Policy And Practice.” (New York: New York University). Available at [https://research.steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/atn293/pdf/CRE\\_Brief\\_2017\\_PrintBooklet\\_170817.pdf](https://research.steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/media/users/atn293/pdf/CRE_Brief_2017_PrintBooklet_170817.pdf); Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University. “Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) Stories.” Available at <https://crestories.org/>

<sup>16</sup> *Stanford News* (January 12, 2016). “Stanford study suggests academic benefits to ethnic studies courses.” Available at <https://news.stanford.edu/2016/01/12/ethnic-studies-benefits-011216/>

<sup>17</sup> *Educators Writers Association* (January 2, 2015). “Report: Mexican-American Studies Breed Better Academic Performance.” Available at <https://www.ewa.org/blog-latino-ed-beat/report-mexican-american-studies-breed-better-academic-performance>

<sup>18</sup> Bishop, Rudine Sims (1990). “Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors.” *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, 6(3).