



SOLIDARITY WEEK

GLSEN

November 1-5, 2021

Elementary Educator Guide

Elementary Supports: As an intentionally K-12 organization, we understand the importance of beginning conversations about LGBTQ+ people and families in elementary school. While many LGBTQ+-inclusive school supports begin in middle or high school, it is critical for elementary schools to establish a foundation of respect and understanding for all people. You can find more resources for LGBTQ+ Elementary Advocacy [on our website](#).

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about GLSEN's Solidarity Week, formerly Ally Week, and how you as an educator can participate.

Launched by GLSEN student organizers in 2005, this program helps educators and students across the country start the school year with positive and affirming messages and actions needed to combat harassment and marginalization of LGBTQ+ people in schools. While we've updated the name, the focus of this week-long event remains the same: to center LGBTQ+ members in the school community — whether students, educators, administrators, or families — and to share what it means to be in solidarity with them.

In this guide, you will find:

- Update for Participation in Online Schools
- FAQ about Solidarity Week and GLSEN
- Letter to Administrators for Participation
- Newsletter or Email Announcements to Families
- How do I Prepare for Solidarity Week?
- Ways to Participate as an Educator

Celebrating Solidarity Week at your school is a great way to start the year by showing positive messages.

Update for Online Schools

Even if you are not meeting with your students in person, you can help them organize a Solidarity Week for your school, and you can bring Solidarity Week activities into your teaching. You can even use this as an opportunity to collaborate with other GSAs outside of your school or to invite students from multiple schools to work together to organize solidarity events that any student can attend. Use this resource for [Hosting a Virtual Event](#) and find more virtual resources [on our website](#).

Solidarity Week Frequently Asked Questions

What is solidarity?

Solidarity is a voluntary collective action by different people based on finding common objectives and solutions. Solidarity work happens when you show up to help and support others experiencing some form of harm by centering their leadership, decisions, needs, requests, and ideas.

Solidarity means that an injustice to one is an injustice to all.

Solidarity work happens in many forms and on many different issues. The important part of understanding solidarity work is that collective action is powerful in enacting change. In fact, solidarity can either be the biggest threat to oppression, or one of the biggest allies in upholding and reinforcing it. How you show up, or don't, makes all the difference.

How do I tell my students about solidarity?

Even the youngest elementary students can begin conversations about solidarity and discuss the concept that injustice or unfair treatment to one is injustice to all. Elementary students are often already thinking about fairness and right and wrong, and are interested in learning about the world and how it runs. Talking about equity vs. equality, and how not everyone has the same needs can help young students to better work together in diverse groups.

When having conversations about solidarity, it's helpful to point to a school's mission or respectful classroom rules. For example, "Our school mission is [or in this classroom, we want] to affirm and accept the full identities of all people. Part of our identity is who we love and who we are. We act in solidarity with all kinds of families, especially those not treated fairly because of who they love. We act in solidarity with all people, no matter what their gender is, how they look, or how they dress."

What is LGBTQ+ solidarity?

GLSEN's Solidarity Week focuses on advocacy for LGBTQ+ students, educators, and families. All educators can show up in solidarity with LGBTQ+ members of a school community, and LGBTQ+ people can be allies to one another, as well as to members of groups whose identities they do not share. For example, cisgender LGB people can always learn more ways to advocate for the needs of transgender or nonbinary people, and white LGBTQ+ people can always learn about being allies to LGBTQ+ people of color.

What is Solidarity Week?

Solidarity Week is a student-powered campaign dedicated to building collective support for LGBTQ+ students and educators. This week-long program helps people learn about and practice solidarity with different identities.

Solidarity Week is for everyone. Straight and cisgender allies, as well as LGBTQ+ people, are encouraged to learn about what actions they can take to support their school's LGBTQ+ families, students, and educators. Educators can use Solidarity Week as an opportunity to teach LGBTQ+ lessons about empathy and equity, and to have conversations about LGBTQ+ issues and identities. All students can learn how to support one another's overlapping, intersecting identities while centering LGBTQ+ peers.

What happens during Solidarity Week?

During Solidarity Week, students and educators organize activities at school that focus on encouraging and enhancing solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community, in their school and beyond. GLSEN recommends holding an Allyship In Action workshop, which outlines ways to show up in solidarity with LGBTQ+ students. Elementary educators are encouraged to read picture books with LGBTQ+-headed families and trans and gender diverse people, and to begin discussions of allyship with the LGBTQ+ community with their students.

Solidarity Week Letter to Administrators

The following letter can be adapted to send to administrators or other school leaders to let them know about Solidarity week and your interest in participating. If you are supporting students or families who want to bring this week to the school, be sure to connect with them first. If you have colleagues who would also like to celebrate Solidarity Week, ask if they are willing to have this letter be sent from you all.

Dear [Administrator],

I am writing on behalf of my (students, GSA, LGBTQ+ families) who would like to participate in GLSEN's Solidarity Week this fall. **GLSEN** is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students in K-12 schools.

Solidarity Week is a national school-centered GLSEN program about the meaning of solidarity. It encourages schools to show solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community and their own LGBTQ+ students, educators, and families. Solidarity Week is for everyone. Launched by GLSEN student organizers in 2005, this program helps educators and students across the country start the school year with positive, affirming messages and actions needed to combat harassment and marginalization of LGBTQ+ people in schools. Solidarity Week supports our students' ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, skills that are of increasing importance in our multicultural, global society. Our Solidarity Week activities will enable students to see their potential to affect change and will better equip them with the tools to take risks to achieve their goals.

This year, Solidarity Week occurs on (dates for the week). As an educator, I'd like to [teach LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, let my families know about this week, host a free screening of a related and appropriate film, and/or invite other students to our GSA meeting] to celebrate this week.

Solidarity Week is most effective as a school-wide initiative to begin the year with LGBTQ+ visibility and affirmation. I am happy to help organize a whole-school assembly for Solidarity Week so that all of our students have a chance to participate in this national program. I have a sample letter for a family announcement that I could share with you to ensure that everyone in our school community feels included in this week of action.

Please let me know if you would like to set up a meeting to discuss these plans more, or if there is any other information you need.

Thank you!

[Name]

Solidarity Week Letter for Families

Dear Families,

This year, we will be participating in Solidarity Week, an annual school-centered GLSEN program about the meaning of solidarity. This program encourages schools to show solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community and to highlight our own LGBTQ+ students, educators, and families. It is also an opportunity for all students to reflect on their identities and to practice listening to groups of people who are facing discrimination in our country in age and developmentally-appropriate ways taking actions to better support them. This program supports our students' ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, skills that are of increasing importance in our multicultural, global society.

Our Solidarity Week activities will enable students to see their potential to affect change and will better equip them with the tools to take risks to achieve their goals. We are thrilled to join students across the country who want to start the school year with positive, affirming messages and actions for LGBTQ+ people in schools.

This year, Solidarity Week occurs on [dates for the year].

During Solidarity Week, we will organize activities at school that focus on encouraging and enhancing solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community. We will [join GLSEN's Solidarity Story Time, teach about all types of families, including LGBTQ+-headed families, host a screening free film, and/or discuss gender and breaking gender stereotypes].

If you have any questions or suggestions for the week, please feel free to reach out to me [or an administrator or Equity officer].

Thank you!

How do I Prepare for Solidarity Week?

Do the internal work!

As you engage in solidarity work, it is important to understand and acknowledge your own privileges. When you are aware of the privileges you bring into different spaces (it might shift depending on the folks in the room or environment you are in), you will engage with more mindfulness around making space and taking space appropriately. Knowing your privileges also helps you offer ways you can be useful to a demonstration or ask. For example, if you have access to money or food and know others who can help, you can offer to support resources for mutual aid at your school or in your community. As adult allies to students, you can be mindful of adultism and ensure you are centering your students in solidarity efforts, even when you share identities.

Show solidarity by centering the folks who are most impacted by oppression.

Oftentimes the people we are advocating for do not actually get to advocate for themselves because they are silenced. Practice listening to what others need instead of telling them what they need. For example, it would be inappropriate

for a cisgender ally to tell transgender people what they need and deciding their priorities, or for white LGBTQ+ students to say what their Black LGBTQ+ peers need. Making assumptions about what is best for people and making decisions for them is another form of oppression, even with good intentions. The first step of showing solidarity is to listen and follow the lead of those who are most system-impacted or oppressed.

Learn about collective work and leadership.

Solidarity work is not possible as an individualistic practice. It is a collective action involving more than one person. You can demonstrate this in the ways you facilitate discussions with your students and how collective decision making is expected in group work. Discussions about equity issues or identity should start with respectful space agreements, so everyone understands the boundaries and expectations of the group. Share our [Guidelines for Respectful GSA Spaces](#) with your students to see which guidelines work for them and if they have their own ideas to add.

Centering the folks who are most impacted by oppression or discrimination is very different than creating oppressive hierarchies within your event or movement. Collective work means coming together to make decisions and contributing to conversations where all points are valued. In collective work, financial contributions, labor, and time one gives does not give one member the most power. People should be able to opt into tasks and committees and should not be assigned. Reflecting on collective work and organizing, and discussing this with your students can better prepare for solidarity week.

Identify identities you and your students are in solidarity with.

Allyship and collaboration is not a one-way street. There are so many ways we can all show up for each other. GLSEN's Solidarity Week highlights different marginalized groups within the LGBTQ+ community each day to support educators and students in their solidarity efforts. For example, our first day of Solidarity Week will focus on our solidarity with LGBT2SQ+ Native American and Indigenous people.

Here is a day by day list of different identities we will focus on our social media outlets this year:

Monday, Nov. 1: LGBT2SQ+ Native American and Indigenous focus day

- GLSEN Bulletin with the National Student Council
- **Erasure and Resilience: The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color, Native and Indigenous LGBTQ Youth in U.S. Schools**
- **Beyond the Gender Binary**
- **LGBTQ Youth Explain Why Schools Should Teach About These 17 Native Icons**
- **LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:** Ty Defoe, Candi Brings Plenty, Hinalaimoana Wong-Kalu

Tuesday, Nov. 2: LGBTQ+ Disability Justice focus day

- **Challenging Ableist Language**
- **I'm a Trans, Disabled Young Person, Not One or the Other**
- **LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:** Frida Kahlo, Chella Man

Wednesday, Nov. 3: Intersex and Trans Youth focus day

- **5 Steps to Being An Intersex Ally**
- **8 Ways You Can Be An Ally to Intersex**
- **GLSEN Changing the Game**
- **Gender Affirming Athletic Participation**
- **Trans Action Kit**
- **LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:** Caster Semenya, Chris Mosier, Patricio Manuel

Thursday, Nov. 4: Black LGBTQ+ focus day

- **Dear My Black Bisexual Freshman Self: You Are Enough**
- **Here's What I Need a Black Queer Student**
- **I'm a Black Queer Student, and My School Needs to Recognize My Entire Self**
- **Erasure and Resilience: The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color, Black LGBTQ Youth in U.S. Schools**
- **Webinar: Erasure and Resilience: The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color, Black LGBTQ Youth in U.S. Schools**
- **Condemning Police Brutality, Calling for Greater Support for Black Lives**
- **4 Ways You Can Support Black, Queer, Trans & GNC Educators Today**
- **LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:** Audre Lorde, Blair Imani, #BlackLivesMatter, James Baldwin, Patricio "Pat" Manuel, Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

Friday, Nov. 5: LGBTQ+ Immigrant Youth focus day

- **Together, Our Differences Make a Strong and Beautiful Community in School**
- **LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:** Urooj Arshad, The UndocuQueer Movement, Bamby Salcedo

What are some other identities you could highlight during Solidarity Week?

You can follow @GLSEN for these resources and host conversations about solidarity along with us. You can also choose an order that works better for your school or choose to highlight and focus on other identity groups that are present in your school community. Talk with your students and reflect on your school community and current events to determine the identities you could highlight during this year's Solidarity Week.

Share Solidarity Week with colleagues and administrators.

Solidarity Week is most effective as a school-wide initiative to begin the year with LGBTQ+ visibility and affirmation. It's also a good idea to let your administrators know about your intentions to participate in this week so they are prepared to address any family questions or concerns that may come up. Share about Solidarity Week with your colleagues to see a collective of faculty members or even families can participate.

As an educator, you have the unique opportunity to engage other school staff and administrators, and Solidarity Week is an opportunity for you to encourage your school to address LGBTQ+ people and issues. Use the “Engage School Staff” section of the [Safe Space Kit](#) for more details on staff presentations. Having knowledge of your school’s policies and procedures, you can offer suggestions on how your school as a whole can develop effective activities that bring LGBTQ+ visibility into your school in a positive way.

Engage the family community.

Solidarity Week is a great time to demonstrate your school’s commitment to LGBTQ+ visibility and support for the entire school community. It can be helpful to let families know about Solidarity Week and any other LGBTQ+-inclusion, equity or current event topics that you plan to address at Back to School or curriculum night. This gives families the opportunity to ask questions before any lessons or discussions have taken place, and invites them into a conversation about why these are important topics to cover at school.

Consider hosting a panel of “out” LGBTQ+-identified members of the school community in an evening event for families, or hosting an evening screening of one of the free and available films we offer for registrants. Administrators can also send a letter to families to explain why the school is celebrating Solidarity Week and advocating for inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community throughout the year. Administrators or Equity Officers could host a Coffee and Questions session for families who would like to learn more about the week, how LGBTQ+ identities will be discussed, how LGBTQ+ visibility supports their students’ growth in respect, understanding, critical thinking, and how it aligns with the mission or vision of the school. Ensuring that families feel included and heard — with the understanding that the school’s mission and responsibility is to teach students to respect and accept all people — can help create culture of communication in the school community.

Connect with GLSEN and other educators like you.

If you are LGBTQ+ or are the only supportive advocate in your school, it can feel daunting to bring days of action like Solidarity Week. Remember that you are not alone! There are thousands of educators across the country who are celebrating Solidarity Week and having these conversations with their administrators. To help plan your week, connect with other educators to ask questions, share ideas, and get support if needed.

Join our Educator Forum on Facebook as well as GLSEN’s Educator Network to discover more resources and ideas from like-minded educators. Connect with GLSEN as well on Facebook and Twitter and follow #SolidarityWeek. If you are able to be openly LGBTQ+-identified, join the conversation and share what you need from your allies by using #InSolidarityWith.

Solidarity Week Actions for Educators

As an educator, you have the opportunity to bring actions of solidarity into your classroom to focus on the LGBTQ+ students, educators, and families in your school community. Here are some actions you can take throughout the week, and beyond:

Make your support visible.

Whether you are LGBTQ+-identified or not, you can advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion and support at your school. One simple way you can show support is to display LGBTQ+ inclusive signs or posters in your classroom or office. This symbol means that you are open to learning about student identities, can affirm any identity shared with you, and that

you can direct the student to someone in the school who can further support them. To learn about more ways to show support as an educator, read GLSEN's [Safe Space Kit](#), our Elementary Tool Kit, [Ready, Set, Respect!](#) and download our Safe Space Stickers or Posters.

Talk about identity.

Teaching young people about identity helps them to learn about their own unique identities, as well as the many identities they will interact with in the classroom. Try our lessons: [I am Me: Talking About Identity](#) (K-2) and [Identity Flowers](#) (3-5), where students explore their own identities and personal experiences with race, culture, ability, family structure, religion or spirituality, and gender identity and expression. These lessons support each student's ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers — skills that are increasingly important in our multicultural, global society. Consider creating an Identity Museum, where each student brings in objects, pictures, or writes about aspects of their identities and their family's identities that are important to them. Families can help students create their Identity Exhibits, and even be invited to the museum! This can be a helpful way for educators to also share their identities with students and families in a supportive way.

Read an LGBTQ+-inclusive picture book.

Outside of GLSEN's Solidarity Story Time, you can have your students explore picture books and conduct your own read-alouds. If you are in a classroom setting, create a section in your library or work with the school librarian to display LGBTQ+ -inclusive books. We recommend *The Boy with the Rainbow Heart* (K-3), a simple story with a powerful message, and can be a good introduction to LGBTQ+ identity for younger grades. Find accompanying lessons on [GLSEN's website](#). We also suggest *My Princess Boy* (K-3) by Cheryl Kilodavis, *I Am Jazz* (1-5) by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings, *You Be You* (3-6) by Jonathan Branfman, or *Red: A Crayon's Story* (K-3) by Michael Hall. Ask students how they could be allies or advocates for the characters in the books: How can you find out what these characters need to feel safe, respected, and included? What could you do or say to support them? You can find more recommended book lists [on our website](#).

Teach LGBTQ+-inclusive lessons.

Bringing positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, issues, and history into your practice is a valuable support for any educator. You can find recommended Book Lists and an Inclusive Curriculum Reflection Guide on our [Inclusive Curriculum](#) page, and more lessons in our [Elementary Resources](#). Solidarity Week is a great time to start teaching about gender and to ensure that your family studies are LGBTQ+-inclusive.

Facilitate LGBTQ+ Solidarity Week discussions.

Dedicate some time during Solidarity Week to discuss LGBTQ+ people and identities, and the concept of showing solidarity with and advocating for others. Engage your students in discussion using the following prompts:

- Show the students LGBTQ+ images of pride flags or rainbows. Ask them if they've seen these before. Discuss the LGBTQ+ community, out members in your school who are a part of it (with permission), and how to be a better ally or friend. If your school celebrated Pride in June, continue the conversations or activities that were started then.
- Ask students about people they may know in the LGBTQ+ community. Do you know of anyone in the LGBTQ+ community at our school? Do you know anyone in the LGBTQ+ people on tv or in movies? What about in books?

- Read books with LGBTQ+-headed families or discuss people in the LGBTQ+ community you have read about earlier in the year. “During Solidarity Week, we listen to them and learn how to be better allies and friends to people in this community.”
- Solidarity means that an injustice to one, is an injustice to all. Can you think of a time that something was unfair to a friend of yours, and you helped them? Is there a time when you had a problem and needed support? How did you ask for help?

Invite in guest speakers.

Solidarity Week is a great time for students to practice learning by listening. Inviting out LGBTQ+ administrators, faculty, staff, families or students (with family permission) to speak to your class can be a valuable way to celebrate. Have them share what they need to feel safe, affirmed, and respected at school. Have your students write thank you notes to any guest speakers including actions they will take to show solidarity with them.

Solidarity Selfie #SolidarityWeek

Do you identify as LGBTQ+ or have students or families who do? Join the conversation about what solidarity look like using our **Solidarity Selfie Sign** and sharing with **#SolidarityWeek**.

- Take a selfie or photo and add this comment to your post: “Solidarity for my identity means _____ and I practice and engage in solidarity by _____. How are you showing up? #SolidarityWeek @GLSEN.”
- We encourage you to add an image description to make sure your post is accessible. For more information about why this is important, check out this list of **“Places to Start” from the Disability and Intersectionality Summit**.
- Here is a sample image description to post in your caption:
 - Image description is of a person with short pastel orange hair in a light blue t-shirt and jeans standing on a stage and passing a microphone to another person with long black hair wearing overalls with flower prints on them. Sign in the image reads “Solidarity for my identity means _____ and I practice and engage in solidarity by _____”.

Continue the conversation.

Solidarity Week should not be the only time we discuss LGBTQ+ individuals in the classroom, and solidarity work does not stop when Solidarity Week is over. Incorporate LGBTQ+ history, themes, and events into lesson plans you are already teaching. Get started with **GLSEN’s LGBTQ+-Inclusive Curriculum Guide** and know that LGBTQ+ History month also begins in October.

Remember, there are many ways to organize and be in solidarity! Be mindful of your capacity and be open to different ways to show up. If there is a march happening and you are unable to join in person, there are other ways to participate that do not require your in person participation. You can make signs and leave them out front for folks to pick up and use. Or, you can offer to help promote the event, fundraise, or create flyers. Disabled folks have been organizing remotely and have built the foundation for accessible actions.

Email us at educators@glsen.org for questions or to share some ideas for Solidarity Week!

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glsen.org/SolidarityWeek