



# SOLIDARITY WEEK

**GLSEN**

**November 1-5, 2021**

*Middle and High School Educator Guide*

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

Originally known as Ally Week, this program was created by students from GLSEN's Jumpstart program and launched in 2005 during the week leading up to National Coming Out Day. GLSEN changed this program to Solidarity Week in 2020.

**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.**

## 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 that promote inclusion, affirmation, and respect. The resources and messaging we provide can help any school celebrate visibility, affirmation, and support for their LGBTQ+- families, students, and educators.

# 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 bring Solidarity Week activities into your teaching. Use this resource for **Hosting a Virtual Event** and find more virtual resources **on our website**. 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 organize solidarity events that any student can attend.

# 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 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?

You can share this **Student Guide** with your students, which speaks directly to them and shares ways to participate. Here is some sample language for telling them about ways they may have already participated in solidarity as a tool for liberation: "You have probably already practiced solidarity in some form, whether using a peer's correct pronouns or signing a petition. In the days after the school shooting in 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, students organized the largest single day of protest against gun violence in history. In June 2020, protests broke out across the country demanding justice for George Floyd, a Black man who was killed by police in Minneapolis, MN. As more murders of Black people, including Black transgender women, increased, young people started organizing their own protests addressing anti-Blackness and racism in their schools. Many of you participated in GLSEN's Day of Silence, the largest LGBTQ+ student led action to raise awareness around the bullying, harassment and erasure of LGBTQ+ students in schools."

## What is LGBTQ+ solidarity?

GLSEN's Solidarity Week focuses on advocacy actions for LGBTQ+ youth, who face disproportionate bullying, harassment, and discrimination in K-12 schools. All educators can show up in solidarity with LGBTQ+ youth, and these students can be allies to one another, as well as to members of groups whose identities they do not share. For example, cisgender LGB students can always learn more ways to advocate for the needs of trans or nonbinary students, and white LGBTQ+ students can always learn about being allies to LGBTQ+ Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

## 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. If you are supporting a GSA or students who want to bring this week to the school, be sure to connect with them first. If you have families or 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 school-centered national GLSEN program about the meaning of solidarity that 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). Our GSA would like to [do a presentation at the faculty meeting, host a screening of a free film offered by GLSEN for students or families, share about solidarity tips and actions at the morning meeting announcements, facilitate a discussion about what LGBTQ+ students need at our school]. As an educator, I'd like to [teach LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, let my families know about this week, host a screening free film, and/or invite other students to our GSA meeting].

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.

Please let me know if you would like to set up a meeting with me [and my students] 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 National 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 and 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 week).

During Solidarity Week, we will organize activities at school that focus on encouraging and enhancing solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community. We will [share programming ideas and events planned.]

If you have any questions or suggestions for the week, please feel free to reach out to me.

# 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 engage with more mindfulness around making space and taking space appropriately. Knowing your privileges also helps you offer ways you can be useful for 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 advocate 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 just 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.

## Support students' organizing efforts.

If your school has a GSA, attend a meeting to support Solidarity Week organizing. Offer to take on tasks and help students with their efforts, especially regarding advocacy with administration, organizing faculty presentations, or whole school assemblies. Work with other educators to secure space and time for students to share Solidarity Week information. During Solidarity Week, support students in discussing LGBTQ+ solidarity with their classmates. In some instances, students' peers might respond with disrespect, name-calling, or harassment. Use these as teachable moments to model support for LGBTQ+ people by intervening and insisting that your school be a safe space for all. For more support with intervention techniques, see our [Safe Space Kit](#).

## Identify identities you and your students are in solidarity with.

Allyship and collaboration are not one-way streets. 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 in order to support educators and students in their Solidarity efforts. For example, our first day of Solidarity Week will focus on solidarity with LGBT2SQ+ Native and Indigenous people.

**Here is a day-by-day list of different identities we will focus on 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, Hinaleimoana 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 and your students can follow @GLSEN for these resources and host conversations about solidarity along with us. You can also change the order of focus days in a way 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. As an educator, you have the unique opportunity to engage other school staff and administrators. If possible, invite a student leader or GSA to make a presentation on the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion and support. Provide your colleagues with this Educators' Guide, information about GLSEN's Safe Space Kit and discuss with them the need for LGBTQ+ supports in your school. Use the "Engage School Staff" section of the [Safe Space Kit](#) for more details on staff presentations. Arrange for a screening of one of our free-streaming films and a discussion to begin the year with LGBTQ+ students, families and educators in mind. 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.

### 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 in 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.

### 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. 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.

# 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 family members in your school community. Here are some actions you can take to celebrate Solidarity this 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](#) and download our Safe Space Stickers or Posters.

## Teach LGBTQ+-inclusive lessons.

Bringing positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, issues, and history into your practice is a valuable support for any educator. Reading books with LGBTQ+ and gender diverse characters can encourage students to engage in discussions around respect and advocacy. You can find recommended Book Lists and an Inclusive Curriculum Reflection Guide on our [Inclusive Curriculum](#) page. Ask students how they could show up in solidarity for the characters in the book: what would you do or say to support these characters? October is also LGBTQ+ History Month. Find lessons and activities to teach during Solidarity Week and beyond at [www.glsen.org/lgbtqhistory](http://www.glsen.org/lgbtqhistory).

## 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:

- What do the letters LGBTQ+ stand for?
- Where do you see LGBTQ+ people in the media? Can you share a time you felt represented in the media and how this impacted you?
- How affirming do you think your school is for LGBTQ+ students? How do you know?
- For those who are LGBTQ+ what other identities do you claim? If you are comfortable with sharing, what do you wish people knew about how you navigate all of your identities?
- When you are navigating a situation and need support, what do you wish more people did to support you?
- What are some issues at your school that can bring people together to create change?

## 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!](#)



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 many ways to participate that do not require your in-person participation. Make signs and leaving them out front for folks to pick up and use, or 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](mailto:educators@glSEN.org) for questions or to share some ideas for Solidarity Week!

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[glsen.org/SolidarityWeek](https://glsen.org/SolidarityWeek)