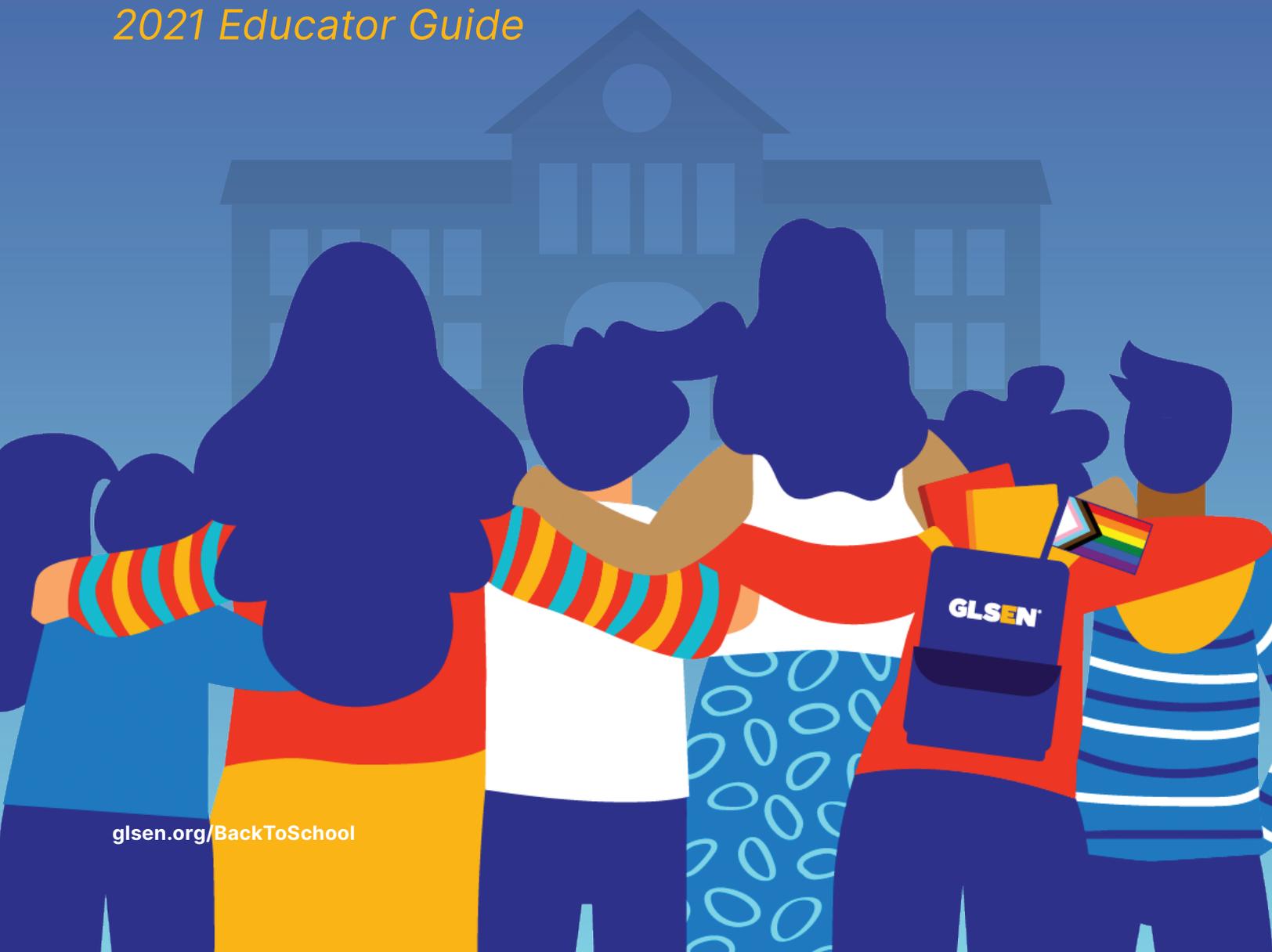


**GLSEN**<sup>®</sup>

# BACK TO SCHOOL

*2021 Educator Guide*



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

# Welcome Back, Educators!

We hope that you and your loved ones were able to decompress and recharge this summer. As you prepare to welcome back students, we encourage you to tap into GLSEN resources to make your classroom and school as safe and welcoming a place as possible for all students, including LGBTQ+ learners.

GLSEN is excited to introduce the 2021-2022 **GLSEN Back To School Campaign!** The GLSEN Educator Guide provides support, tips, and resources to help you prepare for the new school year — whether you are in person, virtual, or hybrid. In this guide, you will find best practices, programming, inclusive classroom resources, policy information, and connection to other supportive educators through the GLSEN educator network.

The pandemic has certainly raised concerns regarding the health and safety of all students, families, and educators. With the continued pandemic impacting communities and the health risks educators are navigating, we at GLSEN are committed to continue our support in advocating to elected officials and working with our partner organizations to share the concerns of educators and work towards keeping educators safe.

**Thank you for working to make your school community safer and more welcoming for everyone, including LGBTQ+ students.**

## BEST PRACTICES

**As you start the school year, here are some strategies for making your classroom inclusive and accessible:**

- **Refresh Your Skills** Being in the know about LGBTQ+ related issues is essential to building trust with LGBTQ+ students. Take advantage of these resources to refresh and expand your knowledge in key areas:
  - **GLSEN Webinars and Workshops**
  - **GLSEN National School Climate Survey**
  - **GLSEN Educator Webpage**
  - **GLSEN Educator Virtual Resources**
  - **GLSEN Blogs**
  - **LGBTQ+ Terminology via The Transgender Language Primer**
  - **Set The Tone** Set expectations that cultivate respect, such as classroom agreements. Be explicit about naming what is and is not appropriate in the classroom. If your school or state does not have enumerated policies protecting LGBTQ+ students, you can take action and ensure that your classroom is welcoming for all and create at least one safe space at school. Some classroom agreements can be adapted from the GLSEN **Guidelines for Respectful GSAs**.
- **Support GSAs** If there is a GSA or LGBTQ+ student club at your school join as a staff supporter or become a co-advisor. If there is not a GSA at your school, offer to be the advisor and provide a space for the students to meet before school, during lunch, or after school. Students may want to start a club but are unsure of whom to ask. Hanging something like a **Safe Space sticker** or a pride flag in your classroom can indicate that you are someone LGBTQ+ students can trust. Safe Space stickers and kit are free to print or you can purchase them in our store at this link. To help you get started, check out **GLSEN 10 Actions for GSA Advisors**.

## PLAN AHEAD

There are opportunities throughout the year to be inclusive and advocate for LGBTQ+ identities. This section will connect you to the **GLSEN School Year Calendar** and **GLSEN Programming**.

- **GLSEN School Year Calendar** This calendar has different days of actions, awareness days, and heritage months to help you plan your year in advance. We encourage you to hang this calendar in your classroom to inspire students to take action.
- **Changing the Game Launch August 30, 2021** GLSEN's LGBTQ+ inclusive sports project is relaunching on its tenth anniversary with updated resources and new opportunities for student athletes to connect and get involved. Changing the Game's purpose is to help schools provide safe and inclusive opportunities for LGBTQ+ students in sport as well as physical education. This program offers resources for administrators, physical education teachers, coaches, families, and students.
- **GLSEN Rainbow Library** This program sends LGBTQ+ affirming K-12 texts and resources to schools across the country — for free! Schools in nearly 20 states are eligible to request a set, and we plan to continue expanding over the course of this school year. Over 60% of the books on our list center the voices of BIPOC LGBTQ+ authors and over 40% center the voices of trans or nonbinary authors.
- **Solidarity Week November 1-5, 2021** Solidarity Week is a student-powered campaign dedicated to building collective support for LGBTQ+ students and educators. The purpose of this campaign is for young people to experience and learn about the importance of collective work to enact change.
- **Freedom Week January 17-21, 2022** This is a new program which will replace GLSEN's No Name Calling Week. After much feedback and conversation about ensuring our programs are relevant, clear, and accessible for participants, the decision was collectively made to replace No Name Calling Week with Freedom Week. The purpose of Freedom Week is to orient young people to envision what liberation means, create understanding and deepening analysis of resistance and survival of BIPOC LGBTQ+ people, generate inclusive curriculum for the classroom that uplift BIPOC LGBTQ+ history, and initiate activism and advocacy in young people by developing critical thinking of current systems centered in social justice.
- **Day of Silence April 22, 2022** The largest LGBTQ+ student led day of action! Every year, students, educators, and community members take a vow of silence to protest the harmful effects of harassment and discrimination of LGBTQ people in schools. At the end of the day, participants Break the Silence in celebration of their identities, existence, and action.

## RESOURCES

GLSEN provides students and educators with free resources that cover a wide range of topics. In this section, you will find links to resources for educators and resources to share with your students. Even resources intended for students can help educators learn more about what students are navigating and how to support or respond to situations:

- **Creating Community for Students** Some students do not have access to local LGBTQ+ affirming organizations or a supportive home environment. Connecting students to others expands their support system and builds peer-to-peer learning. Here are links to some spaces where students can connect with other students or programs.
  - **GLSEN Youth Membership** This program connects students interested in advocacy through monthly meetings for different programs. These include GSA organizing, athlete networking through Changing the Game, and webinars, workshops, and social media live engagement opportunities.

- **Changing the Game Ambassador Program** Game Changer Ambassadors have potential opportunities for media engagement and will be able to use GLSEN’s platform to talk about their experience as an athlete. Ambassadors will receive potential swag giveaways, resources to bring to their team, activity ideas for Pride game days, updates on policies that could affect schools in their state, encouraging shout-outs from pro athletes, and peers from across the country to let them know that they are not alone!
- **Q-Chat** A CenterLink program, Q Chat Space provides online discussion groups for LGBTQ+ teens ages 13 to 19. It is not a forum. It is live and chat based; there is no video or audio. Everyone chats during the same pre-scheduled time. Conversations are facilitated by experienced staff who work at LGBTQ+ centers around the country. *\*Note: Q Chat Space facilitators are NOT mental health professionals.*
- **Student Focused Resources**
  - **10 Back to School Tips for LGBTQ+ Students**
  - **Coming Out Resource**
- **Supporting Trans and Nonbinary Students**
  - **Pronoun Guide**
  - **Reggie’s Guide to Name Changing Your Name**
  - **Trans Action Kit**
- **Safe Space Kit** Available in Spanish and English. This kit is designed to help you create a safe space for LGBTQ+ youth in schools; the Safe Space Kit is GLSEN’s Guide to Being an Ally to LGBTQ+ Students. The guide provides concrete strategies that will help you support LGBTQ+ students, educate about anti-LGBTQ+ bias, and advocate for changes in your school. The kit not only guides you through making an assessment of your school’s climate, policies and practices but it also outlines strategies that you may use to advocate for change, including posting a Safe Space Sticker or Safe Space Poster in your classroom or office.
- **Inclusive Curriculum** According to the 2019 GLSEN National School Climate Survey, LGBTQ+ students at schools with an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum have better grades, are less likely to hear anti-LGBTQ remarks at school, and are less likely to report missing school due to feeling unsafe.<sup>1</sup> Some states even require schools to teach an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum. Regardless of where you live, we encourage you to use resources to incorporate LGBTQ+ affirming content into your instruction this year:
  - **Reading The Rainbow: LGBTQ-Inclusive Literacy in the Elementary Classroom**
  - **GLSEN Inclusive Curriculum Guide**
  - **National Student Council Book Recommendations** GLSEN’s National Student Council put together a list of books that focus on diverse stories and LGBTQ+ characters for elementary, middle, and high school students. While this booklist highlights many LGBTQ+ authors, not all of them may be part of the community. Instead, they show solidarity through highlighting LGBTQ+ stories and characters. The resource lists what identities are represented in each book, as well as any content that may be sensitive for certain readers.

## POLICY

Recent federal court decisions, as well as directives from the U.S. Department of Education have expanded and affirmed anti-discrimination protections of LGBTQ+ students and educators. We encourage you to read these resources to become more familiar with these protections, and to see what other inclusive policy changes you can advocate for in your school and community.

- **LGBTQ+ Educator Rights**
- **LGBTQ+ Student Rights**
- **Policy Maps**
  - **Gender Affirming and Inclusive Athletics Participation**
  - **Inclusive Curricular Standards Guide**
- **Model Local Education Agency Policy on Transgender and Nonbinary Students** According to the 2019 GLSEN National School Climate Survey, 22% of LGBTQ+ students reported they were prevented from using their chosen name or pronouns in school.<sup>2</sup> This is especially an issue for transgender and nonbinary students, who face increased rates of marginalization at school. This model policy, developed by GLSEN and the National Center for Transgender Equality, can guide your school or district to ensure all transgender and nonbinary students benefit from a safe and welcoming educational environment.
- **The Equality Act** amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other civil rights laws to establish explicit federal nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+ people in housing, employment, public education, credit, public spaces, federally funded programs, and jury service. It also prohibits discrimination against women for the first time in public spaces and federal programs, and prohibits racial and religious discrimination in public spaces not covered by current law. **Take Action Here!**
- **The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA)** protects every student from bullying and harassment in K-12 learning communities. SSIA requires states that receive federal funds under Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) ensure that local education agencies (LEAs) adopt evidence-based best practices to prevent and effectively respond to bullying and harassment. SSIA has earned bipartisan support from members of Congress since it was first introduced over a decade ago. **Take Action Here!**
- **The Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act** would prohibit the use of federal funding for the hiring, recruitment, and placement of law enforcement officers in K-12 school campuses and divert resources that were previously being used for school-based law enforcement toward evidence-based and trauma-informed practices, professional development, and hiring more counselors, social workers, and school nurses. **Take Action Here!**

## GET CONNECTED

Remember, you have support through GLSEN and the thousands of educators working hard to ensure schools are inclusive for LGBTQ+ students.

- **Educator Network**
- **Find Your GLSEN Chapter**
- Connect with GLSEN! Email [educators@glSEN.org](mailto:educators@glSEN.org) for questions and comments.

# Endnotes

1. Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.
2. Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

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