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June 2020

# LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan

Lesbian

Gay

Bisexual

Transgender/non-binary

Queer/Questioning

**2 Two-Spirit**

Intersex

Asexual

+ Recognizes that there are myriad ways to describe gender identities & sexual orientations

*A note on the title: The Advisory Group discussed multiple options for a title. None of the options felt like they adequately captured the desire to be fully inclusive while being simple and connected to commonly used research terms. The majority of the workgroup present at the time of discussion supported the decision to use this acronym with the words spelled out to bring awareness to the myriad ways people within this community identify. There was recognition that this acronym specifically leaves out non-binary, which is a term used in education and research. For the purposes of this plan, it is included with Transgender, recognizing that the two terms are different and people who identify as one may not identify as the other. The workgroup's hope with this title is that it expands awareness and adds to the vocabulary of describing the infinite spectrum of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and biology.*



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## Foreword from LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan Advisory Group

Oregonians are committed to the success of all our youth. This Student Success Plan was written to address barriers to educational success for Oregonian students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, non-binary, transgender, gender queer, two-spirit, intersex, asexual (+). This student success plan establishes a framework for creating safe, inclusive and welcoming schools for LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

Members of the LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Act Advisory Group met for several months with SeeChange LLC to form a framework to create safer and more affirming classrooms and schools for our LGBTQ2SIA+ students. Our work was informed by the lived experiences of LGBTQ2SIA+ students and families in Oregon as well as three decades of research on educational barriers for students who are LGBTQ2SIA+.

It is critical for Oregon educators to be informed of both resilience and excellence of these students as well as the challenges and barriers these students experience in our school system. We must not discount the tremendous inherent strength in each of these students. What we know is that despite the statistically inhospitable educational settings they experience, in school and in their communities, LGBTQ2SIA+ students persevere with little educational support and often find ways to connect with one another.

In establishing this plan, we want to highlight the necessity for an intersectional framework that addresses the multiple identities LGBTQ2SIA+ students occupy. Student experiences related to racial identity, tribal sovereignty, religious identity, social class, disability, and immigration status interact with their experiences associated with the LGBTQ2SIA+ identity. Supporting the multiple valuable identities of these youth as assets, embracing their lived experiences, and creating nurturing environments for these youth means we need to think deeply about how our previous work to support student success has set a new foundation for our state.

We set forth this plan mindful of the Oregon Department of Education's request to establish strategies to increase inclusivity, increase student belonging, reduce bullying, address bias-based harassment and campus assaults, and improve attendance. We know from what youth share about their experiences, and what research and data shows, that our state has an opportunity to support the strengths and resilience of LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

The following plan provides strategies and goals to work toward addressing educational and social-emotional needs of these students. The plan addresses 1.) the need for professional development among Oregon educators, 2.) equitable access to appropriate educational curriculum, facilities and activities 3.) necessary data collection through an annual climate survey and student advisory group to inform future decision making regarding this student population.

This plan is offered with the expectation that Oregon educators will lead as advocates for LGBTQ2SIA+ students now and adapt as these needs and challenges change. We offer these recommendations as a path to set us down a new road of creating safer and more welcoming school environments for LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

## Oregon Department of Education Director's Message

On May 20, 2019 Governor Brown signed the Student Success Act into law. This Act recognized that all students deserve a high quality education and marshalled resources for Oregon schools and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to address long-standing disparities in serving students of color, students with disabilities, emerging bilingual students, and students navigating poverty, houselessness, and foster care. Section 25 of the Student Success Act allows ODE to develop and provide statewide equity initiatives for student communities it identifies as underserved by our education system.

ODE has identified an urgency to bolster existing equity initiatives while also recognizing how race and ethnicity intersect for many of Oregon's LGBTQ2SIA+ students. Instances of individual acts of bias are often institutionalized in policies and in systems that create compounded impacts both across race and ethnicity *and* across sexual orientation and gender identity. Oregon's LGBTQ2SIA+ students are at significantly high risk for bullying and harassment, suffering violence while at school, sexual assault, chronic absenteeism, and suicidal ideation. As is detailed in this Plan, LGBTQ2SIA+ students of color and experiencing disabilities are at even higher risk of violence and harassment. LGBTQ2SIA+ students of color, especially Black and Latino/a/x students, are also at even greater risk of being pushed out of school by education and criminal justice institutions. These, collectively, are the crises that Oregon students face and that education leaders must acknowledge and address.

While each Oregon student holds promise and is full of strength, our education system has done little to make this promise and strength visible. The LGBTQ2SIA+ student community is perceived by many as invisible due to data limitations, lack of consistent school climate surveys, and lack of institutionalized ways to integrate student voice into education decision-making. Oregon collects gender information only as male, female, and X for non-binary or gender-fluid. Oregon does not collect information on student sexual orientation. However, 22.2% of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students identified as lesbian or gay, bisexual, not sure, or something else on the [2019 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey](#).

*The experience of this significant student population brings urgency to address long standing inequities for LGBTQ2SIA+ students.*

ODE has been a national leader in protecting the civil rights for LGBTQ2SIA+ youth. It was among the first states to allow students to identify as non-binary or gender-fluid. It has developed and distributed guidance to protect the rights of transgender students. It is now imperative that we seek legislative support and funding to fully engage our LGBTQ2SIA+ youth and provide education equity.

ODE defines education equity as *the equitable implementation of policy, practices, procedures, and legislation that translates into resource allocation, education rigor, and opportunities for historically and currently marginalized youth, students, and families including civil rights protected classes. This means the restructuring and dismantling of systems and institutions that create the dichotomy of beneficiaries and the oppressed and marginalized.*

This plan was created through deep collaboration with LGBTQ2SIA+ affinity partners from across the state. It was informed by LGBTQ2SIA+ student voice. This plan was also developed amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. The COVID-19 crisis and the LGBTQ2SIA+ Advisory Group's

dedication to the work through the challenges serves as a testament of the importance of the effort. Now our state and country are experiencing civil unrest stemming from centuries of police brutality against Black communities and the latest police killings of George Floyd, a transgender man named Tony McDade and countless other Black people. Our work to create safe and inclusive communities, both in and beyond school walls, could not be more imperative. As education is now delivered in multiple settings at school, in communities, and in homes. We must recognize that it is our responsibility to provide a safe, welcoming, and respectful space for LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

As it has across the world, COVID-19 constrained some of our ability to hold in person meetings with the LGBTQ2SIA+ Advisory Group and limited our engagement with youth groups across the state. I offer my deep appreciation to the Advisory Group members and youth who were able to prioritize this effort at this time and work with us to create a vital and inspirational plan for serving Oregon's students.

I fully support the recommendations of the LGBTQ2SIA+ Advisory Group. I am heartened that the Plan offers many opportunities for ODE to work across our agency to support strategies that foster coordinated approaches to student success across race, ethnicity, language, gender identity, and sexual orientation. I also recognize that this Plan can have little impact without the force of law and without resources to make the words contained in this Plan a reality. I am committed to working with Governor Brown to seek support for policy and funding from the 2021 Oregon Legislature to bring these recommendations to reality. ODE will continue to collaborate with affinity partners and students in the community, and with other state agencies to ensure success for LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

LGBTQ2SIA+ students have a right to a safe, supportive, and inclusive education free from violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Sincerely,



Colt Gill  
Director of the Oregon Department of Education and  
Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction

## LGBTQ2SIA+ Advisory Group Members

Name	Pronouns	Organization or Role
Daniel A. Adams	He/Him	Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition
Christopher Almasie	He/Him	HIV Alliance
Robert J. Bizjak, Ed.D.	He/Him	Educator
Kieran Chase	They/Them	Basic Rights Oregon
K.T. Emerson	She/Her	Oregon School Activities Association
Heidi Esbensen	She/Her	Bridging Voices, parent of LGBTQ2SIA+ student, and advocate
Olive Guajardo	She/Her	Parent of LGBTQ2SIA+ Student
Dr. Tina Gutierrez-Schmich	She/Her	Bethel School District/UOTeach University of Oregon
Jennifer Harris	She/Her	Eugene School District 4J, School Counselor
Dr. Julie Heffernan	She/Her	UOTeach, University of Oregon
Sara Hepler	She/Her	Parent of a LGBTQ2SIA+ student, Clackamas County PFLAG
Leah Hinkle	She/Her	Clackamas Education Service District
Seth Johnstone	He/Him	LGBTQ Engagement and Education Specialist at SMYRC, The sexual and gender minority youth resource center
Alyssa Linares	They/Them	Program Coordinator at SMYRC, The sexual and gender minority youth resource center
Rachel Lakey	She/Her	Advocate
Gretchen Mollers	She/Her	Beaverton School District, Oregon Education Association
Lindsay Ray	She/Her	Teacher and QSA Advisor at Westview HS/OSSCC Board Member
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Rebecca Swindle	She/Her	PFLAG, Parent of a LGBTQ2SIA+ Student
Matthew Town	He/Him	Pacific University
Aryn Zanca	They/Them	The Living Room

Staff from state agencies also participated in the work group, including:

Name	Pronouns	Organization or Role
Helen Dunford	She/Her	Higher Education Coordinating Commission
Jarrod Shaw	He/Him	Youth Development Division
Kia Sorensen, Ph.D.	She/Her	Higher Education Coordinating Commission

## Defining Key Terms

The terms used in this Plan are intended to be inclusive and provide visibility to some of the ways in which LGBTQ2SIA+ students identify and describe their gender and sexuality. These terms evolve over time. Unless otherwise specified, the definitions of terms that are included below are borrowed and adapted from three sources:

1. GLSEN's [Model District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students](#)
2. [GLSEN's Safe Space Kit](#)
3. [Indigenizing Love: A Toolkit for Native Youth to Build Inclusion](#)

### LGBTQ2SIA+:

A term that encompasses multiple gender identities and sexual orientations including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit, Intersex, and Asexual. The plus sign (“+”) recognizes that there are myriad ways to describe gender identities and sexual orientations. It is also important to recognize that the challenges and barriers for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer can be different from the challenges and barriers faced by students with diverse and/or expansive gender identities and expressions.

Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction, but could still experience other forms of attraction (e.g. emotional, intellectual).

Agender: A person who does not identify with a specific gender or feels neutral when it comes to their gender identity.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to more than one gender.

Cisgender: A person who feels their gender identity and expression align with the sex they were assigned at birth or by society.

Gay: A person who is attracted to a person of the same gender.

Gender Expression: The way a person expresses their gender in ways that make them feel more comfortable and aligned to who they are. Some forms of expression could be clothing, voice, cosmetics, or mannerisms.

Gender Identity: A person's deeply held knowledge of their own gender, which can include being female, male, another gender, or no gender. Gender identity is an innate and largely inflexible part of a person's identity. One's gender identity can be the same or different than the gender assigned at birth. The responsibility for determining an individual's gender identity rests with the individual.

Gender Nonconforming: A person who does not identify with a specific set of traits (behavioral, cultural, community roles) on the male to female spectrum

Intersex: Intersex is an umbrella term for unique variations in reproductive or sex anatomy. Variations may appear in a person's chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs like testes or ovaries. Some intersex traits are identified at birth, while others may not be discovered until puberty or later in life.<sup>1</sup>

Lesbian: A female-identified person who is attracted to women.

Non-binary/Genderqueer: These terms are often used to describe people whose gender is not exclusively male or female, including those who identify with a gender other than male or female, as more than one gender, or as no gender.

Pronouns: The pronoun or set of pronouns that a person identifies with and would like to be called when their proper name is not being used. Examples include "she/her/hers," "he/him/his," "ze/hir/hirs," and "they/them/theirs." Some people prefer no pronouns at all, or some combination such as "she/they."

Queer: A person who does not subscribe to dominant social norms to define their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. While it is used as a neutral, or even a positive term among many LGBTQ people today, historically "queer" has been used as a derogatory slur. It is sometimes still used as a slur by those who do not identify as part of the community.

Sexual Orientation: A person's romantic and/or physical attraction to people of the same and/or another gender, such as being straight, gay, bisexual, or asexual. Transgender and gender nonconforming people may have any sexual orientation.

Transgender: A person who feels their gender identity and expression do not align with the sex they were assigned at birth or by society.

Two-Spirit: A term used within some Indigenous communities, encompassing cultural, spiritual, sexual and gender identity. The term reflects complex Indigenous understandings of gender roles, spirituality, and the long history of sexual and gender diversity in Indigenous cultures. Individual terms and roles for Two-Spirit people are specific to each nation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Intersex Definitions - interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth. (n.d.). Retrieved June 3, 2020, from <https://interactadvocates.org/intersex-definitions/>

<sup>2</sup> Two-Spirit. (n.d.). Retrieved June 3, 2020, from <http://www.phsa.ca/transcarebc/trans-basics/two-spirit>



## LGBTQ2SIA+ Youth Experiences

The process of developing recommendations for this Student Success Plan was grounded first and foremost in hearing from LGBTQ2SIA+ youth. Organized in partnership with education service districts, community-based organizations, and school districts, this youth engagement consisted of four sessions (including current K12 students and those who are no longer in school) between February and May 2020 in the South Coast, the Dalles, Southern Oregon, and Portland metropolitan area. Another focus group was done by one school district in Lane County to inform Student Success Act priorities; this group included students of color and LGBTQ2SIA+ students so some of that data is reflected here as well.

While the intention of this youth engagement was to ensure that youth experiences inform the understanding of the problems and barriers that students face, the solutions they proposed, and the recommendations that the advisory group developed, it was not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of all LGBTQ2SIA+ issues. There are at least two major limitations to this youth engagement that are important to name. First, the engagement did not include elementary students or families and children in early learning programs, so these voices are missing and could be included as outreach in further iterations and implementation of this Plan. Second, additional engagement through student clubs that include affinity-based representation (such as Gender Sexuality Alliances and culturally-specific school-based clubs) was planned and in progress when COVID-19 forced school closures and limited the efficacy of outreach efforts.

Despite these limitations, the youth we were able to engage graciously shared their experiences and wisdom and were eager to be heard. This insight, thematically summarized here, echoes what advisory group members, researchers, and other experts hear from LGTBQ2IA+ youth regularly. These insights provide the foundation for opportunities discussed in the Recommendations section for individuals, institutions, and systems to do better to normalize and make visible the many intersecting identities, strengths, and inherent excellence in LGBTQ2IA+ youth.

### **The key takeaways from this youth engagement are:**

- Youth Insight #1: Supportive educators are crucial for students to feel safe and included.
- Youth Insight #2: Curriculum, coursework, and afterschool activities are engaging when they are relevant to students' interests and lived experiences.
- Youth Insight #3: Access to gender-neutral restrooms (also known as all-user restrooms) is important for students to feel physically safe and included.
- Youth Insight #4: Students generally know how to report instances of bullying or harassment, but few trust that adults will respond with action if reports are made.
- Youth Insight #5: More mental health supports are needed.

## Youth Insight #1: Supportive educators are crucial for students to feel safe and included.

“When the teachers seem like they want to get to know me, that made me feel valued.”

-Oregon Student

**a) Youth feel supported by teachers who go out of their way to ask them about their day.** This in turn makes students feel more comfortable and connected to school.

One student who is currently at a charter school that uses project-based learning said, “I wasn’t happy at my old school. No one cared. I felt I was being left behind.” That student went on to share that the teachers at their current school showed they cared by checking in with them regularly about school and non-school related matters. Students described that these types of teacher actions make them feel more connected to the school.

**b) When educators fail to interrupt discriminatory or bias-based bullying remarks, or make discriminatory or biased remarks themselves, youth feel unsafe, isolated, and/or disengaged with their education.** According to a national survey conducted by GLSEN,

nearly 99% of LGBTQ youth around the country have heard homophobic words at school, and nearly 92% felt distressed by this language.<sup>3</sup> The youth engagement conducted for this Student Success Plan affirmed that Oregon students’ experiences align with national trends. Students in Oregon schools reported that they have routinely heard teachers, other school staff, and students expressing anti-

LGBTQ, anti-immigrant, racist, sexist, and/or ableist comments without repercussion. Students feel unsafe when these comments are not interrupted by other students or teachers. One student described the connection between biased bullying, safety, and academic success in the following way: “Feeling unsafe causes anxiety, which triggers Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and makes it harder to concentrate in class.” This was a common theme throughout many youth stories and is contextualized in Figure A. Several students stated that they either switched to home schooling or transferred to other schools in part or entirely as a result their safety concerns. Students also reported that they were absent from school at least once because they felt alone or isolated as a result of biased comments from other students or teachers.

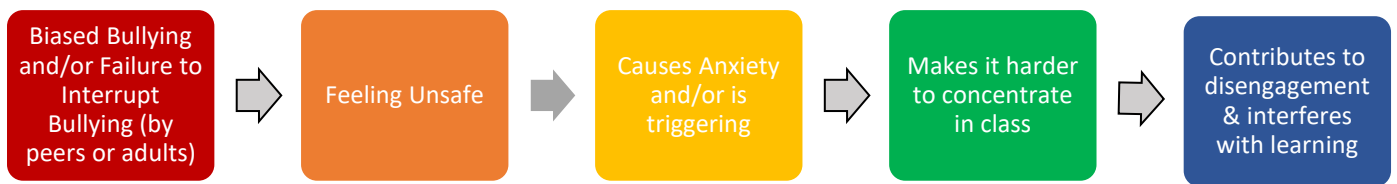
“When my health teacher said a homophobic joke, I tuned out.”

-Oregon Student

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<sup>3</sup> Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation’s schools*. New York: GLSEN.

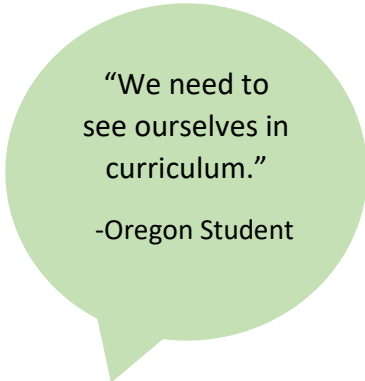
**Figure A: Students' description of how bullying impacts their learning**



**c) Use of inclusive language and pronouns builds trust and fosters connection with school.** Students appreciate when teachers at their school ask students what pronouns and names they want to use in parent conferences. One student noted that even if a teacher “messes up my pronouns, I can tell they’re trying because they acknowledge it and apologize.” When they were asked what their best day or best moment at school was, one student said, “The first day of school because I could give my chosen name and come out [as transgender].” These types of practices affirm students’ inherent strength in knowing what’s best for themselves and builds mutual respect between teachers and youth.

**Youth Insight #2: Curriculum, coursework, and afterschool activities are engaging when they are relevant to students’ interests and lived experiences.**


**a) A majority of students we heard from believe that their curriculum is not sufficiently inclusive of LGBTQ2SIA+ people or issues.** They are concerned about the lack of health and safe sex information that is inclusive of their identities as LGBTQ2SIA+ students. They further noted a general lack of teaching about issues impacting LGBTQ+ communities and other historically marginalized communities, including American Indians/Alaska Natives and other people of color. Finally, students noted that the strengths and contributions of LGBTQ+ people in their curriculum (writers, scientists, engineers, etc.) are not present in their curriculum. Students said that some of their textbooks are decades old – “Are we stuck in the 50s? We need more exposure to different cultures, genders, etc.”



**b) After school activities & clubs can be safe spaces where youth find connection and engagement.** When asked what their best moment at school was, many students’ responses included the times they have been in afterschool programs that include theater, dance, debate, etc. These activities were seen as valuable opportunities primarily because they were “fun” and participation was voluntary. In other words, they were able to self-determine their activities and that in and of itself created excitement and engagement for them.

Another aspect of safe, affirming spaces that is important to students includes “GSA” (Gender-Sexuality Alliance or Gay- Straight Alliance), “QSA” (Queer-Straight Alliance), and other clubs based on students’ cultural, racial, or ethnic identity (affinity groups such as Latino Club, Black Student Union, etc.). Student comments indicate that these spaces are safe and affirming because of the shared aspects of identities within the group. When considered within the context of the preceding youth comments related to the prevalence of biased bullying, the implication of youth comments related to safe spaces (GSAs, QSAs, and other affinity groups based on identity) is because the overall school environment is not safe or affirming. For example, “Our QSA is so cool and it really betters my high school experience because there

is a stigma around these things [in the school].” Another student said, “Spaces set aside for diverse students (Latino club, LGBTQ+ clubs) are the safest spaces, but feeling safe should not be limited to a meeting or room.”



“Spaces set aside for diverse students (Latino club, LGBTQ+ clubs) are the safest spaces, but feeling safe should not be limited to a meeting or room.”

-Oregon Student

**c) Project-based learning opportunities help many students see their classes as relevant.**

For example, one student shared that “[t]hey’re giving us academic work that’s preparing us for life. My class gets to make food for a catering event. They give us experiences.”

Another student shared that projects that are based in the community provide them with exposure to people of different backgrounds, such as people experiencing homelessness. These experiences are seen as important in part because of their perceived relevance to students’ lives and in part because of students’ exposure to new ideas, possible career paths, and diverse life experiences.

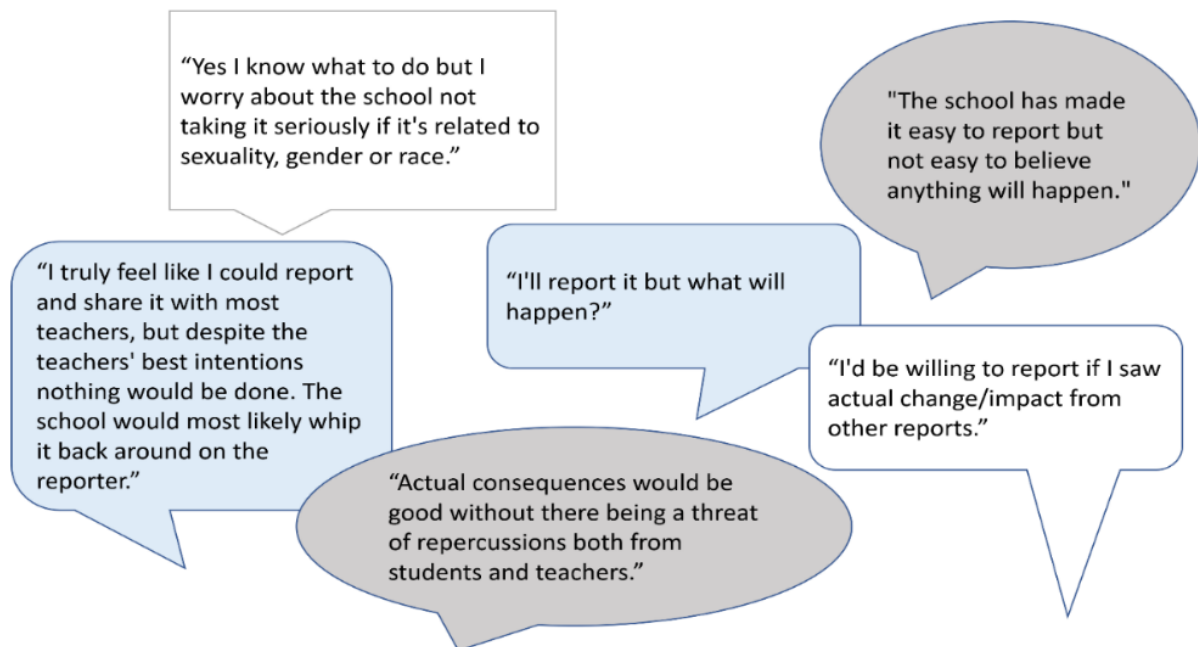
**Youth Insight #3: Access to gender-neutral restrooms (also known as all-user restrooms) is important for students to feel physically safe and included.**

Access to restrooms was seen as a broader issue than whether there is one restroom students can use in a school, college, or university. Middle school, high school, and college students spoke about barriers to feeling safe when there is *just* one restroom in their school or on their college campus. While we did not speak with elementary students as part of this engagement, advisory group members did affirm that access to gender-neutral restrooms is an anxiety- and fear-inducing challenge and barrier that elementary students experience as well. For example, one student said that when the only gender-neutral restroom is in use, they feel unsafe because of the time they have to stand outside of the restroom to wait. This waiting time may expose the students to bullying or harassment. Another student noted a disparity in how different restrooms are maintained and encouraged all restrooms to be equally well maintained. Yet another student spoke about restroom access being limited when the key to the only gender-neutral restroom in the school is kept in the office a far distance from their classrooms. This

type of practice does little to normalize the availability and accessibility of gender-neutral restrooms; can reinforce a negative stigma associated with restrooms that are intended for all users; and can create anxiety, discomfort, or trauma for students. Over 40% of LGBTQ students surveyed nationwide in 2017 reported avoiding male-only and female-only spaces in schools (such as restrooms or locker rooms) due to fear or discomfort, suggesting that these students need and want gender-inclusive spaces such as gender-neutral restrooms to be available and accessible in their schools, colleges, and universities.

**Youth Insight #4: Students generally know how to report instances of bullying or harassment, but few trust that adults will respond with action if reports are made.**

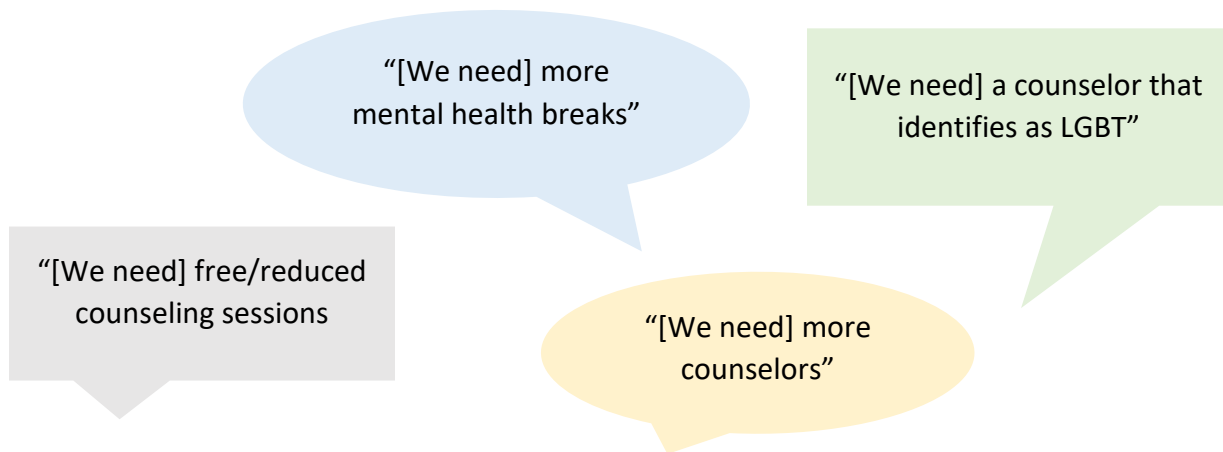
In a national school climate survey done by GLSEN in 2017, over half of LGBTQ students reported being harassed or assaulted in school, but did not report the incident to school staff. The two most common reasons students did not report were because they doubted the reporting would be effective or they feared it could make their situation worse. Of the students who *did* report harassment or assault to school staff, nearly 6 out of 10 said that staff took no action or they were told to ignore it. Comments below from Oregon youth echo this national research:



**Youth Insight #5: More mental health supports are needed.**

The unique challenges and barriers that LGBTQ2SIA+ students experience in schools demonstrated by all of the preceding comments related to safety and well-being connect closely with the students' additional requests for mental health supports- including counselors that are LGBTQ2SIA+. Several students shared their school did not have a counselor to address mental health and social support needs and those types

of support are needed. One youth stated that “flyers about suicide prevention do nothing. Talk to me instead.” Students stated they find it helpful when teachers tell students it’s okay to take a “mental health day” at home if needed and/or when school policies allow for getting extra time to submit homework assignments if a student misses a day of school for any reason.



## Research Review

As noted in the previous section, LGBTQ2SIA+ students are attuned to their own needs to elevate their own strengths and resilience. This resilience and strength manifests in myriad ways – from showing up to school even when facing threatening or inhospitable school climates to staying engaged in class even when their experiences and identities are consistently excluded from curriculum.

When education, health, mental health, and criminal justice systems fail to recognize students’ strengths and address their needs, these students must navigate a multitude of barriers. This is especially acute for students whose LGBTQ2SIA+ identity intersects with other historically marginalized identities, who must navigate racism *in addition to* homophobia and transphobia. While the previous section of this report used qualitative data (i.e. stories and anecdotes from students) to illustrate the day-to-day individual-level experiences of students, this section synthesizes data and research from national and Oregon-specific studies about how students’ inherent strengths are impeded by systemic and institutional barriers including but not limited to racism.

It is important to note that Oregon currently does not have a statewide school climate survey to assess youth experiences and well-being at school, which can help systematically understand disparities and identify opportunities for improvement from students’ own lens. Instead, much of the Oregon-specific data described here is based on a national nonprofit’s 2017 national survey that contains Oregon-specific data, and an Oregon Health Authority survey that provides some insight on in-school experiences. Using these and other data sources, the Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition has published seven

annual reports on the State of Safe Schools that provides a much more far-reaching research and data analysis regarding the issues pertaining to LGBTQ youth than what is intended to be presented here.<sup>4</sup>

While this discussion does not intend to be a comprehensive picture of all of the issues facing LGBTQ2SIA+ youth in our schools and our communities, it does describe how individual actions rooted in bias translates into isolation, fear, and disconnection that systematically prevents students from thriving in areas of health, mental health, and education. These findings helped to inform the recommendations.

**The key takeaways from this research synthesis are:**

- Research Finding #1: Individual acts of bias, assault, and harassment in school are a regular threat throughout LGBTQ student experiences in school and impact student mental health, well-being, and student success.
- Research Finding #2: Individual biases shape the institutional policies and practices that underlie LGBTQ students' adverse experiences.

**Research Finding #1: Individual acts of bias, assault, and harassment in school is a regular threat throughout LGBTQ student experiences in school and impact student mental health, well-being, and student success.**

A 2019 survey conducted among 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in Oregon schools found that 6 out of 10 lesbian, gay, or bisexual 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported being bullied within the last month due to race, gender, sexual orientation, or body shaming.<sup>5</sup> In comparison, 2 out of 10 straight students reported this form of bullying. In addition, 22% of gender diverse<sup>6</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported being threatened with a weapon on school property compared to 17% of sexual orientation minorities, and 10% among 8<sup>th</sup> graders overall. Despite being one of just 21 states that requires all school districts to have anti-bullying policies that explicitly prohibit bullying due to race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and many other protected classes<sup>7</sup>, Oregon's rates of reported bullying are on par with the national rates.

**What I Wish My Teacher Knew:**

"I don't like it when you pull me out of class to ask me if I'm being bullied. I want to be seen as more than a minority. Ask me if I want to be a part of the conversation before you pull me out of class in front of everyone."

-Oregon Student

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<sup>4</sup> Heffernan, J. & Guitierrez-Schmich, T. (2020). *State of Safe Schools*. Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Terminology varies throughout this report because each study examined uses different terminology depending on the demographic choices they provide in their studies. In this instance, gender diverse refers to the set of gender category options that students could choose in this study that were not "male" or "female." These students instead selected options such as "transgender," "genderqueer," "gender nonconforming," etc.

<sup>7</sup> Enumerated Anti-Bullying Laws By State. *GLSEN Policy Map* available at: <https://www.glsen.org/policy-maps>. The Safe Schools Act of 2009 requires school districts to implement comprehensive anti-bullying policies to enumerate protected

Rates of physical harm are high as well - nearly 3 out of 10 LGBTQ students were physically harassed due to their sexual orientation and nearly 1 out of 4 were physically harassed due to their gender expression.<sup>8</sup> This harm translates to nearly 6 out of 10 LGBTQ students feeling unsafe because of their sexual orientation and nearly half because of their gender expression.<sup>9</sup>

It is critical to note that students of color who are LGBTQ are at greater risk of experiencing in-school victimization than their LGBTQ peers who are white. Figure B is a chart from GLSEN's National School Climate survey (2017) that shows how in-school victimization clusters to create compounded impact against students because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, *and* gender expression. For example, nearly half of LGBTQ students who identified as Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native reported the victimization based on their racial/ethnic identity and about three-quarters experienced victimization based on their gender expression and sexual orientation.

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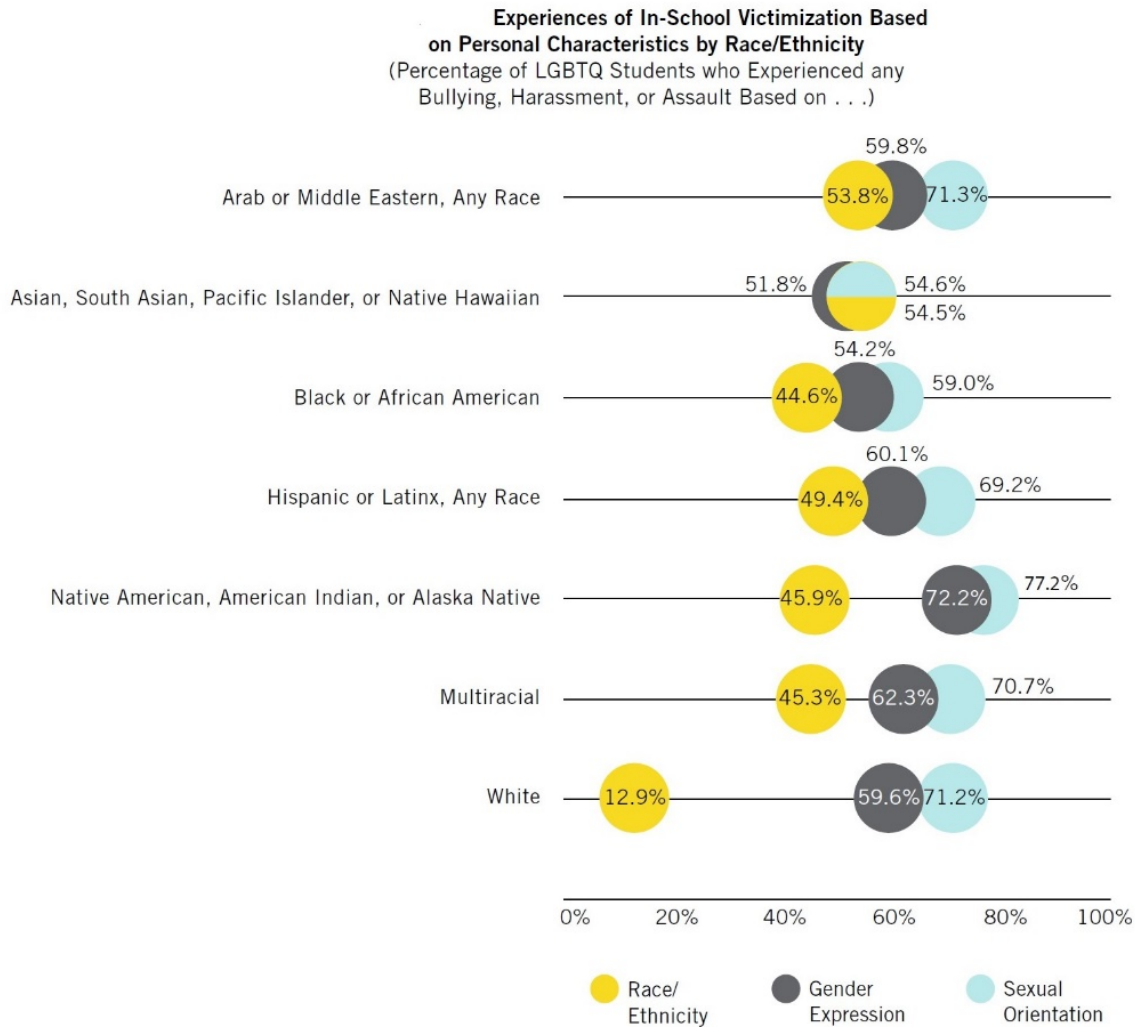
classes that include sexual orientation and gender identity. A list of Oregon protected classes can be found here at the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries: [https://www.oregon.gov/boli/TA/docs/Protected\\_Classes.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/boli/TA/docs/Protected_Classes.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



**Figure B**

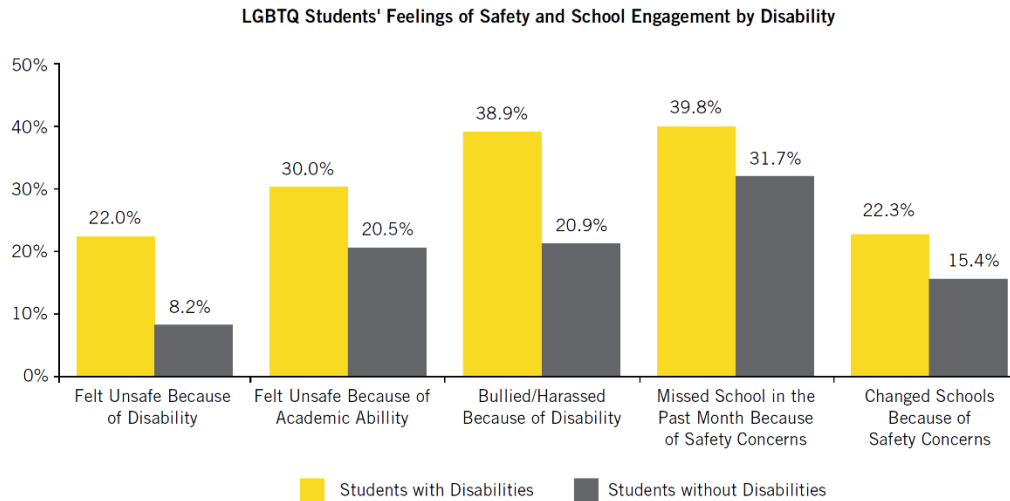


Source: Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN, p. 104.

Just as LGBTQ students of color face compounded impacts due to their intersectional marginalized identities, so too do LGBTQ students with disabilities. LGBTQ students with disabilities are more likely to feel unsafe, and more likely to miss school due to safety concerns compared to LGBTQ students without disabilities. For example, as shown in Figure C, nearly 40% of LGBTQ students with disabilities missed school in the past month because of safety concerns compared to 32% of LGBTQ students without disabilities according to national data. While data to compare this to Oregon students was not available at the time of writing, we do know that overall in Oregon 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade LGBTQ+ youth (regardless of whether they experience disability) were twice as likely as non-LGBTQ youth to have missed school at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe; rates among gender diverse students were even higher.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Heffernan, J. & Guitierrez-Schmich, T. (2020). *State of Safe Schools*. Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition.

**Figure C**



Source: Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN, p. 90.

Further, when curriculum makes invisible the intersectional identities of these students, when restrooms or locker rooms fail to recognize their gender, when teachers and other adults fail to act on the reports of racism, implicit bias, harassment, or assault, we see the impacts in adverse mental health outcomes. The 2019 Oregon Health Authority Survey found LGBTQ students to be at greater risk of adverse mental health conditions, particularly related to suicide and suicide ideation. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Oregonians aged 10 to 24<sup>11</sup>, and the Oregon Health Authority survey found that about half of gender diverse or LGB 8<sup>th</sup> grade students *considered* suicide (compared to 20% of all 8<sup>th</sup> graders). Nearly 1 in 3 of them had actually *attempted* suicide.<sup>12</sup>

“I wish teachers would stop bullying or handle it.”

-Oregon Student

“When the kids in my class did a Hitler salute to me, I told the substitute and they said “if I didn’t see it, it didn’t happen.”

-Oregon Student

<sup>11</sup> Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division, Injury and Violence Prevention, <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/PreventionWellness/SafeLiving/SuicidePrevention/Pages/sdata.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> Heffernan, J. & Gutierrez-Schmich, T. (2020). *State of Safe Schools*. Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition.

## **Research Finding #2: Individual biases shape the institutional policies and practices that underlie LGBTQ2IA+ students' adverse experiences.**

Policy and practice are at the mercy of the people tasked with leading them. Because all people are acculturated with beliefs through television, other media, education, religion, cultural values, and much more, individuals maintain a schema, or worldview, that often normalizes heterosexual, binary (male/female), and white dominant values. This becomes problematic when leaders with institutional authority over policies and procedures hold biases, whether implicit or explicit, that result in discriminatory attitudes and behaviors towards a protected class of people. These policies and practices are wide-ranging -- from school discipline to lack of access to gender-inclusive restrooms or locker room facilities to daily occurrences that marginalize LGBTQ2SIA+ identities, minimize their strengths, and create institutional barriers to their success.

### **a) Disproportionate “push out” of LGBTQ2SIA+ youth of color**

One example of how individual perceptions can influence the policies of education institutions is disproportionate “push out” of school of LGBTQ youth. One of the only national studies that examines disproportionality in school discipline over time among LGBTQ youth found that LGBTQ youth were consistently pushed out of school, stopped by police, arrested, and convicted of crime in juvenile court at higher rates than non-LGBTQ youth.<sup>13</sup> While this data was published nearly a decade ago, more recent qualitative data collection efforts by the Gay-Straight Alliance Network upholds the trend. An individual interviewed for that study named the problem as follows, “When you’re talking about the [School to Prison Pipeline] you do need to consider every piece of someone’s identity. So if you’re a youth of color and you’re also LGBT you are a higher risk of being pushed out of school because...of racism within our school system and because of homophobia in our school system.”<sup>14</sup> This observation is clearly reflected in the data: while LGBTQ youth are estimated to comprise 5% to 7% of the youth population overall, they represent over 15% of those in the juvenile justice system.<sup>15</sup> And nationally, while Black and Latino students comprise less than 40% of the school population across the country, nearly half of the students who are arrested for school-based incidences are Black and Latino.<sup>16</sup> It’s clear that when racial identities intersect with sexual orientation and gender identities, the likelihood of push out is greater.

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<sup>13</sup> Kathryn E.W. Himmelstein and Hannah Brückner, *Criminal-Justice and School Sanctions Against Nonheterosexual Youth: A National Longitudinal Study*, Pediatrics (2011), available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2010/12/06/peds.2009-2306.full.pdf+html>.

<sup>14</sup> *LGBTQ Youth of Color: Discipline Disparities, School Push-Out, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline*, Gay-Straight Alliance Network (August, 2018), p. 15, [https://gsanetwork.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/08/LGBTQ\\_brief\\_FINAL.pdf](https://gsanetwork.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/08/LGBTQ_brief_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> *Power in Partnerships: Building Connections at the Intersections of Racial Justice and LGBTQ Movements to End the School-to-Prison Pipeline*, available at [https://b3cdn.net/advancement/85066c4a18d249e72b\\_r23m68j37.pdf](https://b3cdn.net/advancement/85066c4a18d249e72b_r23m68j37.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Justice, & U.S. Dep’t of Educ., *Joint “Dear Colleague” Letter* (2014) available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.html>. Comparison to U.S. data for Black and Latino student population figures uses the same year data as the *Dear Colleague* letter (2011-12) using Civil Rights Data at the U.S. Dep’t of Educ: [https://ocrdata.ed.gov/StateNationalEstimations/Estimations\\_2011\\_12](https://ocrdata.ed.gov/StateNationalEstimations/Estimations_2011_12)

**“MY FRESHMEN YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL I WAS FACING SUSPENSION AND POSSIBLE EXPULSION** after I was accused of having sex—with the only other openly gay boy at my school—in my school’s restroom. The accusation was completely false, but before my school administrators even investigated, my parents were called, I was outed to an individual in my household, I was pulled out of class for an entire day during state testing, and I was punished with three weeks of Saturday school. After the investigation was completed, administrators found that it was all made up by a homophobic student, who was not even present for the day he claimed to have witnessed the incident. I did not receive an apology from my school’s administration; it was all dropped, and the student who made the false accusations was not held accountable. Yet I had already been wrongfully punished, I no longer felt safe at school, and I did not trust my school administrators. Additionally, I had a difficult time making up the work and tests that I missed because of the time I spent in the school’s office.”

-Mario Vasquez as quoted in [Power in Partnerships: Building Connections at the Intersections of Racial Justice and LGBTQ Movements to End the School-to-Prison Pipeline](#), p.91.

“Jokes about mental illness or disability such as ‘you’re so OCD’ or ‘you’re so autistic’ [make me feel unsafe].”  
-Oregon Student

“Kids with learning disabilities shouldn’t be labeled a problem child.”  
-Oregon Student

## **b) School policies can marginalize experiences of and limit opportunities for youth who do not fit dominant gender or sexual orientation cultural norms**

Cultural norms that stigmatize people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations shape the policies that education institutions create and maintain. These policies conflict with the identities that many students hold for themselves. In a 2017 survey done by GLSEN among Oregon LGBTQ students, nearly 3 out of 5 students reported that their educational institution subjected them to at least one form of discriminatory policy or practice related to their sexual orientation or gender expression.<sup>17</sup> Nearly 1 out of 4 Oregon LGBTQ students “were disciplined for public displays of affection that did not result in similar action for non-LGBTQ students.”<sup>18</sup> This suggests that the adults who disciplined the students had underlying individual beliefs that are biased toward their own definition of “normal” (referred to as heteronormative, or beliefs that only “straight” couples are normal, acceptable, or preferred).

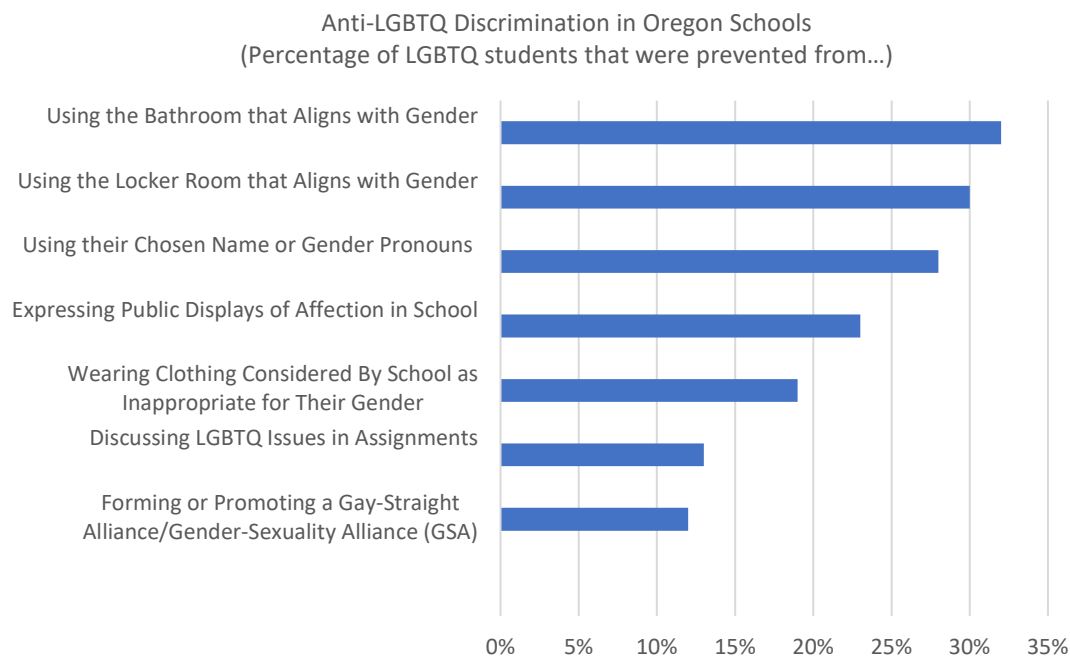
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<sup>17</sup> GLSEN. (2019). *School Climate in Oregon (State Snapshot)*. New York: GLSEN.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Figure D details the percentages of Oregon LGBTQ2SIA+ students that were discriminated against in a number of day-to-day experiences. Overall, 1 in 3 LGBTQ2SIA+ students reported being able to use a restroom aligned with their gender identity and nearly as many were prevented from using their chosen name or pronouns in school.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure D**



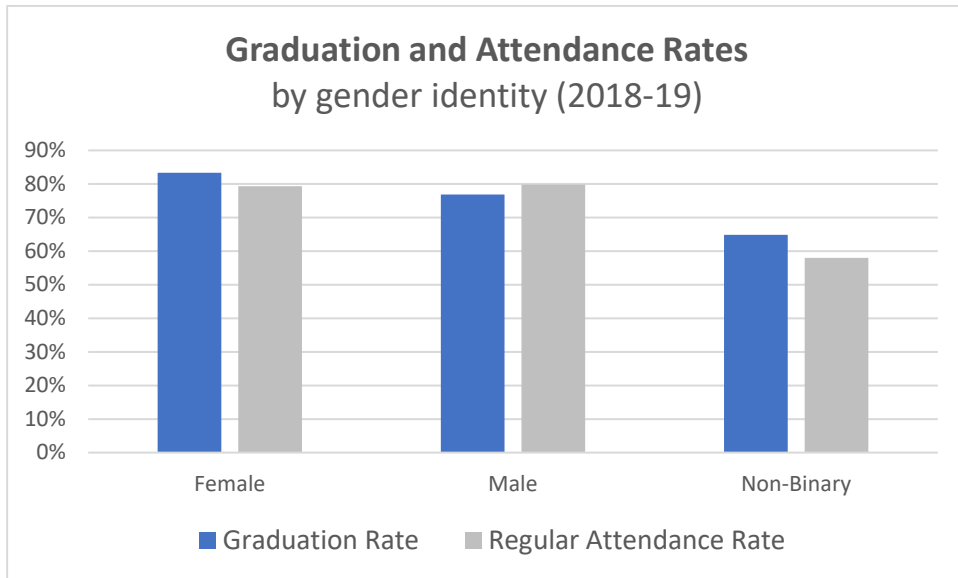
Source: GLSEN. (2019). *School Climate in Oregon (State Snapshot)*. New York: GLSEN.

The day-to-day experiences of discrimination, bias, and erasure that many LGBTQ2SIA+ students face creates conditions that challenges their wellbeing and academic success. Comparing student achievement of LGBTQ2SIA+ students to non-LGBTQ2SIA+ students is challenging because the demographic data collected at the student level limits the ability to correlate sexual orientation to individual school achievement. However, the Oregon Department of Education is one of just two state agencies that has recently developed data collection protocols to allow students with gender expansive identities to select a non-binary option among gender categories. Using this data, when compared across gender identity, students who are non-binary have lower rates of graduation and regular school attendance compared to male and female students. As shown in Figure E, in the 2018-19 cohort of high school graduates, 65% of non-binary students graduated within 4 years compared to 83% of female students and 77% of male students.<sup>20</sup> Similar trends exist regarding attendance patterns, illustrating that non-binary students are less likely to attend school regularly. Taken in the context of the research and youth engagement, these data demonstrate the outcome of many day-to-day acts of bias and exclusion that occur in schools.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Oregon Department of Education Data for 2018-19 4-year cohort graduation rates, provided on 5/14/20. Attendance data is also for the 2018-19 school year.

**Figure E**



Source: Oregon Department of Education Data for 2018-19 4 year cohort, provided on 5/14/20.

It is important to note that these data do *not* suggest an inherent deficit in non-binary students ability to achieve, but rather a deficit of the system that is charged with ensuring all student success. In order to adequately address the issues LGBTQ2SIA+ that students face in school, the research indicates the importance of confronting the role of individual and institutional bias in developing and implementing policy. This is particularly true for supporting students whose LGBTQ2SIA+ identity intersects with other historically marginalized identities.

## State Policy Challenges

Oregon has taken several significant policy actions to support the strengths and needs of LGBTQ2SIA+ youth inside and outside of schools over the past decade. The Oregon Equality Act, passed in 2007, is a key foundational policy that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression in public school education, other public services, housing, and employment (race, ethnicity, and many other factors were previously prohibited). In 2016, the Oregon Department of Education issued guidance to school districts regarding safe and supportive school environments for transgender students (discussed in greater detail later).<sup>21</sup> In 2019, the state created Adi's Act (SB 52), requiring all school districts to have clear suicide prevention policies and procedures. This legislation was passed in honor of Adi Staub, a transgender student who died by suicide in 2017.<sup>22</sup>

Oregon has several other education policies that are intended to create safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ2SIA+ students and students of color. As the previous sections documenting Oregon youth experiences and research showed, many of these students demonstrate resilience as they continue to show up to a school system that is not designed to honor or even make visible their lived experience. In reality, the implementation of many of these well-intended education policies has not realized their full intent. This brief examination highlights key policy opportunities that the workgroup reviewed and discussed in order to leverage existing efforts that support the needs of LGBTQ2SIA+ youth, particularly those of color. It is not intended to be a comprehensive inventory of all the current policies that impact LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

### The key takeaways from this policy review are:

- **Policy Challenges #1:** Implementation of current anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies on their own do not create safe and affirming school spaces for LGBTQ2SIA+ students.
- **Policy Challenges #2:** Oregon has set some of the foundation for inclusive curriculum and has opportunities to both expand existing efforts and integrate them into many statewide policy initiatives intended to close opportunity gaps.
- **Policy Challenges #3:** Prior state guidance to districts about making school facilities safe for transgender, non-binary, gender diverse, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming students may not be well known among educators.

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<sup>21</sup> Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment for Transgender Students, 5/5/16, Oregon Department of Education, available at: <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/civilrights/Documents/TransgenderStudentGuidance.pdf>. Also see Appendix B.

<sup>22</sup> Working for Adi's Act, Basic Rights Oregon, <http://www.basicrights.org/featured/working-for-adis-act/>.

## **Policy Challenge #1: Implementation of current anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies on their own do not create safe school spaces for LGBTQ2SIA+ students.**

### **a) Anti-Discrimination Laws**

As referenced earlier, discrimination in education is prohibited for any protected class, which includes race, disability, sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity.<sup>23</sup> This is true regardless of whether the discrimination was intended or unintended. Current law also states that a public school, public community college, or public university can have its funds withheld by the State of Oregon if the school is in violation of the anti-discrimination laws.<sup>24</sup> This means that according to the law, schools can be sanctioned if they are discriminating in a way that impacts access to educational programs and activities. This might manifest as: disproportionate discipline with students of a protected class, disproportionate class enrollment (e.g. career technical education, talented and gifted, advanced coursework), failure to provide comparable access to clubs and facilities (e.g. GSAs, restrooms, locker rooms), restricted ability to participate in sports because of gender identity or expression, etc. There are several implementation challenges with this policy:

- 1. Students often do not know they can report discrimination, and if so, how they can report.** Even if they do know these things, they may not feel comfortable reporting this to the same school or district that they feel may have harmed them.
- 2. Since many students and families may not even know if/how they can report alleged discrimination to the state, it is likely that the state does not have an accurate and up-to-date understanding of whether districts are in compliance with anti-discrimination laws.** The number of complaints regarding discrimination is reported by districts to the federal government, and only accessible by the Oregon Department of Education two years later. The only other way that the Oregon Department of Education would ever learn about the discrimination complaints is if a student or family reached out to the Department directly.
- 3. School or district staff may not recognize certain behavior, intended or unintended, is a violation of anti-discrimination law.** According to Oregon Department of Education staff, in most reports from students or families received by the agency, the student/family says they reported the alleged discrimination to the school and allege that the school did not respond. The school/district often did not recognize the complaint, or else failed to recognize it as a complaint of discrimination. Failure to recognize discriminatory harassment often leads to inappropriate responses that fail to remedy violations of civil rights for LGBTQ2SIA+ students. This in turn contributes to day-to-day harm that interferes with student success.
- 4. School/district personnel and students/families may not know what type of response to complaints of discrimination is required.** When school and district personnel learn of potential discrimination, they must report it to designated personnel so that it can be addressed. The school will then need to act to support the person who experienced the discrimination. If an investigation reveals that discrimination or discriminatory harassment occurred, the school must take steps to eliminate the harassment and prevent it from recurring. However, many school and

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<sup>23</sup> [Oregon Revised Statute 659.850](#). The Oregon Equality Act of 2007 defines sexual orientation in a way that includes gender identity and gender expression, available at <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2007R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB2>.

<sup>24</sup> [Oregon Revised Statute 649.855](#).



district personnel may not realize they have these obligations, and students and families may not realize what rights they have and what they should expect the school to do.

5. **Students and families who have a complaint must either exhaust all of the district complaint procedures, or else wait 90 days from the point in which the discrimination first occurred before the Oregon Department of Education can take any formal action.** The intent with this policy is that the local district is provided with a chance to directly work with the family of the impacted student to address the situation. However, it can often mean that the negative impact the student faces is prolonged for over three months before the State can begin an investigation.
6. **When there is a State finding that discrimination may have occurred, a consistent follow-up is for the district to have additional training for staff and students.** This raises questions about who provides, who funds the training, how frequent the trainings are, and for whom (e.g. teachers, administrators, substitutes, other school staff, students).
7. **Districts and families are often confused by overlapping legal processes required for discriminatory harassment.** Student misconduct under anti-bullying policy may also trigger responsibilities under anti-discrimination laws. Schools and districts often fail to recognize both responsibilities, and that these responsibilities exist even if the student or family do not specifically identify the harassment as discrimination. The school/district personnel must be trained to recognize and respond appropriately to all legal requirements, and may be simultaneously limited by the capacity to respond to all these needs with limited resources.
8. **Oregon law prohibits retaliation against individuals who file a complaint regarding discrimination, but students, families, and school staff may still not feel adequately protected.** Retaliatory acts may be hard to identify and the perceived risk of retaliation may limit the willingness for individuals to report alleged illegal conduct. According to ODE staff, some students and families report sensing hostility or being isolated following a complaint that becomes public, and subtle conduct may be hard to address.

## **b) Anti-Bullying and Harassment Laws**

Oregon is one of just 21 states that requires all school districts to have anti-bullying policies that explicitly prohibit bullying due to race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and many other protected classes.<sup>25</sup> This requirement is a result of the Oregon Safe Schools Act, passed in 2009 (ORS 339.356). The law also requires districts to incorporate anti-bullying training (this includes online bullying known as “cyberbullying”) for students and school employees and encourages them to create task forces to implement anti-bullying initiatives.<sup>26</sup> If policy alone were a tool to mitigate bullying, then we might expect student self-reports of bullying (on a national survey) to be lower than national average rates of student self-reports. Instead, as shown in Figure E, the rates are about the same according to student

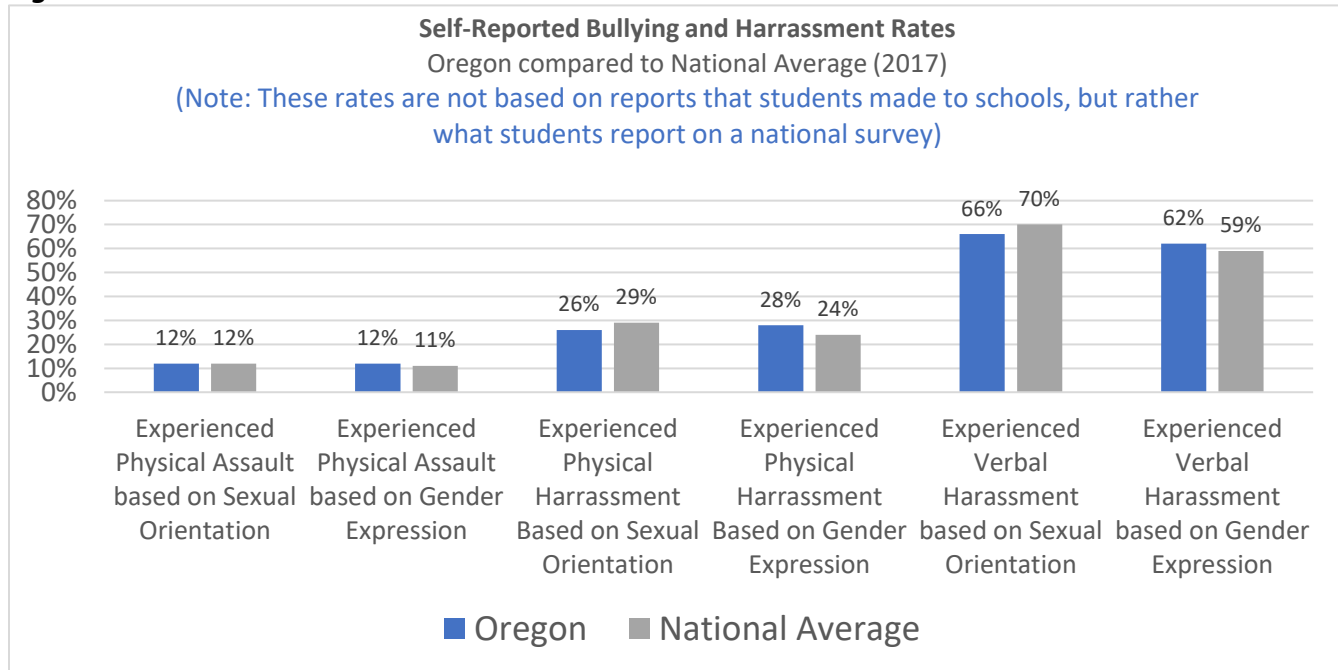
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<sup>25</sup> Enumerated Anti-Bullying Laws By State. *GLSEN Policy Map* available at: <https://www.glsen.org/policy-maps>. The Safe Schools Act of 2009 requires school districts to implement comprehensive anti-bullying policies to enumerate protected classes that include sexual orientation and gender identity. A list of Oregon protected classes can be found here at the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries: [https://www.oregon.gov/boli/TA/docs/Protected\\_Classes.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/boli/TA/docs/Protected_Classes.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> [Oregon Revised Statute 339.359](#).

survey data collected nearly a decade after the anti-bullying law was created. In some cases, Oregon students self-report bullying at higher rates compared to the national average. For example, rates of physical harassment (pushed or shoved) and verbal harassment (threatened or subjected to name calling) based on gender expression are higher in Oregon compared to the national average.

**Figure E**



Sources:

National data: Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

Oregon data: GLSEN. (2019). *School Climate in Oregon (State Snapshot)*. New York: GLSEN.

The law also requires districts to create process through which students can report harassment (including anonymously) and requires districts to specify in their policies how they will investigate these reports.<sup>27</sup> The laws also require that students are not told about the consequences other students receive. This often leads to students feeling that nothing was done. Indeed, student comments in our engagement efforts revealed that students do not trust that these reports will be acted upon. In summary, despite this decade-old anti-bullying policy, the everyday experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in Oregon clearly reveal that this behavior is still a prominent part of their day-to-day school life. It is unclear where the implementation challenges lie. To date, no known Oregon studies have been done to comprehensively assess the following:

- a) Whether the anti-bullying policies each district has adopted actually meet the requirements of the law
- b) Whether districts have communicated their policies to their staff and students
- c) Whether school staff and students actually understand the communication from the district

<sup>27</sup> [Oregon Revised Statute 339.356.](#)

- d) Whether trainings have been made available to school staff and students in accessible forms (e.g. language, location access)

Without the answers to these and other questions pertaining to implementation, the root causes of why discrimination, bullying, and harassment are still such a prominent part of the LGBTQ2IA+ student experience remain unclear. The Advisory Group's recommendations focus on implementation fidelity, including awareness raising, clarity and communication, while recognizing that more information is needed to understand the impact of anti-bullying policies on student experiences.

**Policy Challenge #2: Oregon has set some of the foundation for inclusive curriculum, and has opportunities to expand existing efforts and integrate them into many statewide policy initiatives intended to close opportunity gaps.**

As referenced in the youth engagement section of this plan, school curriculum that makes visible the intergenerational strengths and resilience of diverse individuals and communities is foundational to making students feel seen and connected to their education. Inclusive core curriculum is an important driver that values students as whole people with multiple intersecting identities, and sets all students up for success.

To provide context for this discussion, it is helpful first to make the distinction between standards and curriculum. Subject- and grade-specific standards are a set of expectations that provide guidance on the question "what do students need to know and be able to do by the end of a school year?" They are adopted by the State of Oregon's State Board of Education. Local school districts (through their school boards) are charged with providing students with curriculum that incorporates the State standards. Curriculum includes lessons, activities, and assessments that teachers then use in their classes. For example, current Health Education Standards suggest that by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, students should be able to define the term "sexual orientation." It is up to local school districts to create or procure the curriculum to be able to meet that and other standards.<sup>28</sup> Teachers then utilize that curriculum into their day-to-day lesson plans.

**a) Intersections in core curriculum across race and sexual orientation and gender identity**

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is in the process of developing inclusive social science standards. The statute creates statewide social science standards inclusive of "ethnic minorities" (this is a term used in statute) as follows: "Native American or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, people of Middle Eastern descent." The statute also includes standards that include "social minorities" (also a term used in statute) as "women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender."<sup>29</sup> A more recent law will require districts to adopt textbooks and instructional materials that are inclusive of these and other

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<sup>28</sup> Oregon Health Education Standard HE.1.3.10, available at <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/health/Documents/2016ORHEStandardstable.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> Ethnic Studies bill (HB 2845) was passed by the Oregon legislature in 2017, available at <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2845/Enrolled>. The Ethnic Studies ORS is available <https://www.oregonlaws.org/ors/326.111>

communities.<sup>30</sup> Ethnic Studies was created in law in 2017, requiring ODE create an advisory group to develop statewide social science standards for kindergarten through grade 12. These standards are expected to be ready to share with districts in the 2021-22 school year. In the meantime, local school boards can choose to adopt their own inclusive curriculum. However, there are no or limited staff resources at ODE to support districts in developing local standards and adopting the associated instructional materials. Even when the ethnic studies standards are in place and instructional materials are adopted in 2026-27, it is likely that districts may be challenged to find or create appropriate curriculum to meet the standards.

There are other statewide education initiatives that aim to support school districts with identifying and implementing curriculum and pedagogy relevant to historically marginalized communities. These separate initiatives include the American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Plan, the Black/African American Student Success Plan, the English Language Learner Strategic Plan, and the Latinx Student Success Plan. These plans have existed in the range of thirty years (American Indian/Alaska Native State Education Plan) to recently developed (Interim Latino/a/x Student Success Plan).

“[We need more] classes that teach more than just slavery, such as the Harlem renaissance.”

-Oregon Student

Tribal History/Shared History, created by law in 2017, is a unique state education policy in that the legislation required the Department of Education to create Native American curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12. This is unique because, in most other circumstances, curriculum is developed or obtained by districts. One of the many strengths of Tribal History/Shared History is that it does not rely on the capacity of each individual school district to create inclusive curriculum. In addition, the law requires ODE to fund educator professional development so that educators know how to use the curriculum as intended.<sup>31</sup>

Each of these communities of color also have students who identify as LGBTQ2SIA+. Without systemic commitments and funding to create and implement inclusive and intersectional standards, and the curriculum and professional development for educators to go with the standards, students may continue to see parts of their identity absent from their schooling. There are opportunities for the Oregon to learn from each of the examples above and develop coordinated efforts to ensure that students see their racial/ethnic identities *and* their sexual orientation and gender identities represented in core curriculum.

“[We need a] class for students that talks about mental health”

-Oregon Student

“We need to learn about LGBT people in history”

-Oregon Student

“[We need to have] more training for White teachers to understand what African American students go through.”

-Oregon Student

<sup>30</sup> Inclusive Materials bill (HB 2023) passed by the Oregon legislature in 2019, available at <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB2023/Enrolled>.

<sup>31</sup> Tribal History/Shared History webpage, Oregon Department of Education, <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/NativeAmericanEducation/Pages/Senate-Bill-13-Tribal-HistoryShared-History.aspx>.

### **Case study of implementation challenges of inclusive Health Education standards**

The multi-stage process of creating inclusive standards at the state level and asking districts to source and adopt curriculum at the local level can cause several challenges that can limit how soon LGBTQ2SIA+ students can see themselves reflected in their curriculum. For example, Health Education Standards, adopted by the Oregon State Board of Education in 2016,<sup>32</sup> requires districts to adopt a “curriculum-based process of teaching the emotional, physical, and social aspects of human sexuality and human relationships” in ways that is “complete, medically accurate, and age-appropriate.”<sup>33</sup> The standards further require that gender identity and sexual orientation be addressed in sexual education in grades kindergarten through grade 12. These standards, while adopted at the state level, need to be translated into curriculum adopted by local school districts along with instructional materials. There are 35 pages of standards for Health Education for kindergarten through grade 12, and there is 0.5 full-time equivalent Oregon Department of Education employee charged with providing technical assistance and support to 197 districts throughout the state (plus charter schools and education service districts) that all need to find or create curriculum. In addition to the limited state-level capacity to support districts, the following is a sampling of some of the implementation challenges that prevent the intention of inclusive health standards from being fully realized:<sup>34</sup>

- **Lack of existing curricula that addresses the new inclusive health standards.** Oregon is a leader among the country in how health and sexuality education are taught, so there are not currently national standards or curriculum from which to borrow. Schools therefore have to find their own way to meet the standards, which is especially hard for rural communities that have limited staff capacity to develop or find curriculum.
- **Lack of teacher training to implement inclusive standards or curriculum.** Given that education has not typically included the experiences of historically marginalized groups, many teachers around the state do not have the awareness, comfort, or ability to be able to teach to new standards that address LGBTQ2SIA+ students and students of color.

As a result of these and other issues, a majority of school districts do not in practice currently meet the 2016 Health Standards. Districts that do not meet these standards must submit a written plan of action for how they will work towards meeting the standards. But for districts who cannot meet the standards, most do not have the capacity to even create a plan of action. Thus the cycle remains locked in which Oregon has health education standards that require districts to recognize LGBTQ2SIA+ identities and the identities of diverse racial/ethnic groups, and yet there is little support for the State or for districts to actually ensure these are implemented, even with the best of intentions.

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<sup>32</sup> Oregon Department of Education; 2016; Oregon Health Education Standards, <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/educatorresources/standards/health/Documents/2016ORHEStandardstable.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Oregon Department of Education, Sexuality Education Frequently Asked Questions, available at <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/sexedfaq.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> This information is based on an information gathered from Oregon Department of Education staff in February 2020.

### **Policy Challenge #3: Prior state guidance to districts about making school facilities safe and affirming for gender diverse, transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming students may not be well known among educators.**

In 2016, the Oregon Department of Education issued guidance to school districts regarding how they can create safe school environments for transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, or gender nonconforming students. The guidance encouraged or re-affirmed (note that these were not requirements) the following, among others:<sup>35</sup>

- **Re-affirmed** the Oregon law that **districts must provide free education to all students**, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression
- **Re-affirmed** the federal law related to the **privacy of student records**
- **Re-affirmed** prior state policy that requires districts to provide age-appropriate **sexuality education that recognizes LGBTQ+ identities in curriculum and materials**
- **Encouraged districts to engage students around their name or pronouns**, noting that “transgender students often choose to change the name assigned to them at birth to a name that affirms their gender identity.”
- **Encouraged districts to deviate from prior state policy to allow transgender students’ chosen name to be reflected in district records**, with detailed guidance on how to do so without unintentionally “outing” the student
- **Re-affirmed** prior federal guidance **that districts provide restroom accommodations to gender diverse** students such as “unisex” (referenced earlier in this plan as “gender neutral”) restrooms and locker room facilities.
- **Re-affirmed** that **students should be permitted to participate in the physical education, intramural sports, and interschool activities** in accordance with the student’s gender identity.

Given the myriad comments from Oregon youth earlier in this plan and from student surveys collected after this guidance is issued, it is clear that guidance alone is not sufficient to support educators in supporting LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

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<sup>35</sup> Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment for Transgender Students, 5/5/16, Oregon Department of Education, available at: <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/civilrights/Documents/TransgenderStudentGuidance.pdf>

## Recommendations | Trust, Connection and Inclusion

The recommendations outlined in this section are based on the preceding documented experiences of LGBTQ2SIA+ students and their own requests for support; research from Oregon and national sources; Oregon's prior policy work to support safe and inclusive spaces for all students; and the wisdom and experiences of the advisory group. Embedded in the recommendations is a recognition that LGBTQ2SIA+ students of color face unique and compounded challenges in their schools and communities as their resilience forces them to address bias, acts of erasure (i.e. through curriculum) based on their race/ethnic identity as well as their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Without an intentional focus on the ways in which race and ethnicity intersect with gender and sexuality, we run the risk of increased systematic harm to students.

These recommendations are offered with the understanding that LGBTQ2SIA+ youth are whole, valuable, worthy, resilient people for whom sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression is a portion of a more expansive identity. Our premise is that every student must have the opportunity to succeed with the support of a systematic and intentional re-imagining of education to make visible the strengths, excellence, and promise inherent within each of them. We recognize that our systems to date have fallen short of manifesting this vision particularly for students of color who are LGBTQ2SIA+, and we recognize an opportunity to act with urgency now.

### **The key problems addressed by the recommendations are:**

- Individual bias and acts of discrimination
- Institutions that create barriers to learning and physical and emotional safety
- State systems that lack the resources to support learning and hold accountable harm to students and educators

Across all recommendations, the intention is the same -- to create environments where LGBTQ2SIA+ students have trusting relationships, feel connected to individuals and the community, and can be their full, authentic selves. Trust, connection and inclusion are necessary ingredients for students to succeed in reaching their full potential academically, as well as socially and emotionally.

These recommendations are also offered with the recognition that:

- a) Changing systems to be more inclusive of identities that have been marginalized in U.S. history and culture is ongoing work and requires ongoing, long-term commitment and resources. As a result, the successful implementation of these recommendations requires a standing statewide advisory group to support the Oregon Department of Education by providing regular feedback on strategies, reviewing implementation data, and revising the plan as we learn more about promising practices.
- b) The lived experiences of LGBTQ2SIA+ students must inform implementation of this plan at each juncture. While even the most well-intended adults have valuable insight and experience, the school environment that exists today is one that current students know best.

As with any policy initiative, it is possible for good intentions to cause harm. Trust, connection and inclusion are not just nice words, but they are the north star which must guide implementation of each and every recommendation in order to add up to success for LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

### What does being SAFE at school mean to Oregon students?

"Someone, a boy in my class, asked about a pride sticker on my water bottle and was actually interested in my response and asked questions. It felt good to share and not be doubted and ignored."

"Gender neutral restrooms"

"Teachers asking pronouns."

"Not being afraid to use the restroom."

"Being able to talk about my experiences without judgement."

"Being supported by parents and teachers when I come out."

"Not assuming my partner is male"

### What types of things happen at school that makes Oregon students feel UNSAFE?

"When teachers fail to act or are downright unsupportive (like not saying anything when a student uses a slur or makes an offensive/hurtful joke)."

"When the only gender-neutral restroom is in use."

"Teachers misgendering me and not correcting themselves"

"Hearing jokes being made about being gay in 2020."

"It makes learning hard when someone is being bullied or harassed which is what school is for!"

"Queer students being ignored in situations of their assault."

"Being called slurs."



## Summary of Recommendations | Three Interdependent Levels of Impact

### Recommendation Domain #1: Individual Intentions and Impact

These recommendations are intended to directly address the ways in which individual educators, peers and families impact a student's experience of school.

- **Objective #1: Supportive Educators**
  - Educators (including teachers, administrators, and classified staff) have the training, coaching, and ongoing support to build trusting, connected, and inclusive environments.
- **Objective #2: Supportive Peers**
  - Youth are supported to develop understanding of and respect for individual, family, and cultural differences including sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.
- **Objective #3: Supportive Families**
  - Districts recognize that LGBTQ2SIA+ student success is impacted beyond the walls of the school and engage community-based organizations and families as full partners in supporting students.

### Recommendation Domain #2: Institutional Policies and Facilities

These recommendations are focused on the spaces that serve students and address the institutional policies and decisions that can help make a space feel safe and inclusive.

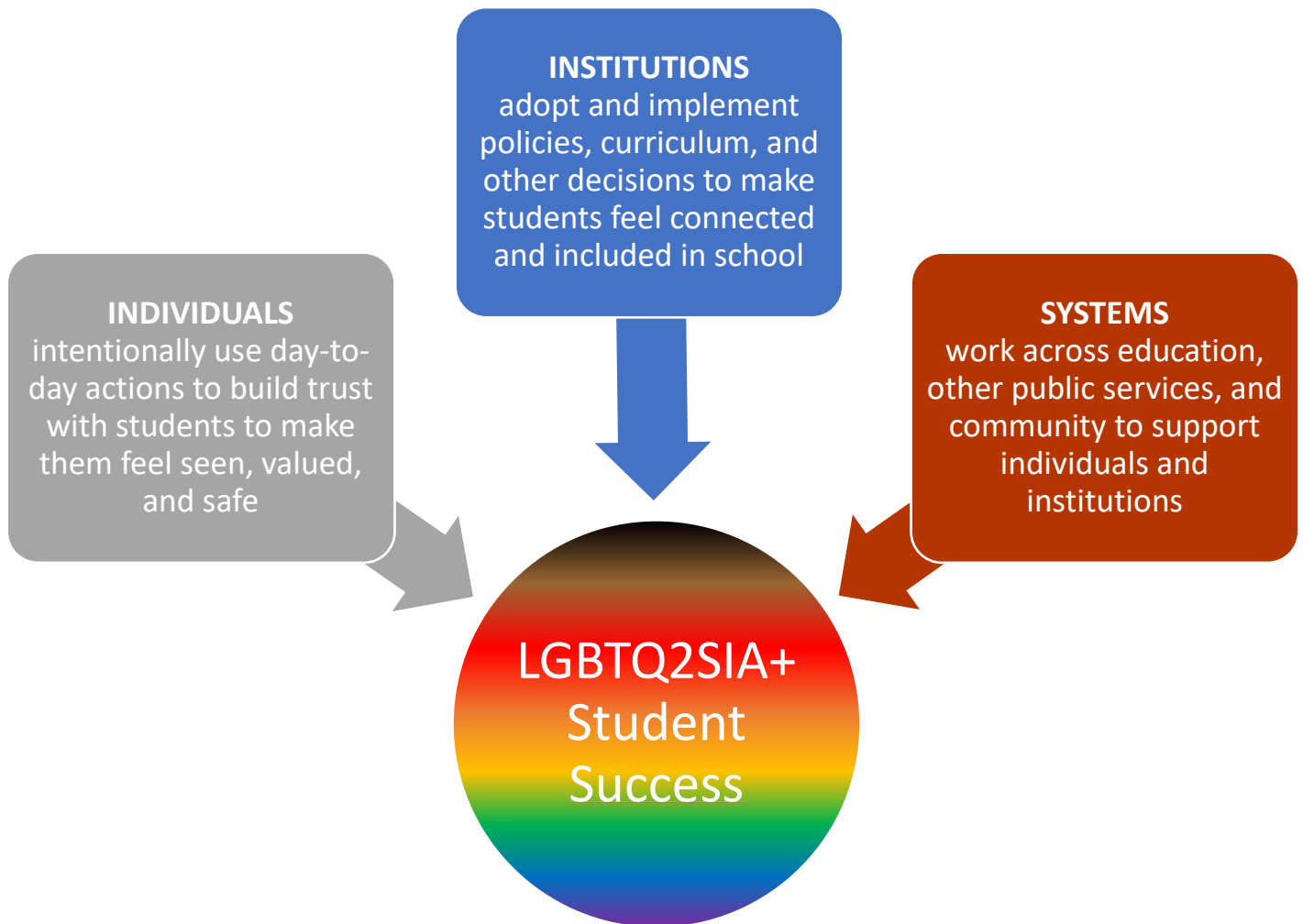
- **Objective #1: Safer Affirming Spaces** (e.g. gender-neutral restrooms, affinity spaces, safe space posters, implementing Anti-Bullying Policies)
  - Youth feel safe, seen, and supported in school spaces.
- **Objective #2: Inclusive Curriculum**
  - Students receive LGBTQ2SIA+ inclusive, culturally sustaining, curriculum and pedagogy across grades and subjects.

### Recommendation Domain #3: State Accountability and Support Systems

These recommendations address the ways in which state systems can play a role in both holding institutions accountable to serving all students and provide support and guidance to proactively reduce ignorance and increase student-centered capacity across the state.

- **Objective #1: Opportunities for Students and Educators to Systematically Assess and Improve School Climate and Culture and Inform State and Local policy** (e.g. School Climate Surveys, tracking reports of bullying, highlighting promising practices)
  - The current experiences of LGBTQ2SIA+ youth and educators are made more visible in order to inform policy and implementation of supports.
- **Objective #2: ODE Capacity to Support Districts and Families** (e.g. greater implementation support for the existing policies and new recommended ones)
  - ODE demonstrates leadership to districts, schools, and families by collecting and disseminating resources, providing guidance and coaching, addressing violations of policy in a timely manner, and proactively building districts' capacity to create trusting, connected and inclusive environments.
- **Objective #3: Cross-agency Collaboration**
  - State education and health agencies work together to address issues that impact the experiences of LGBTQ2SIA+ youth.

## Summary of Recommendations | Three Interdependent Levels of Impact



**Domain 1 | Individual Intention and Impact**

**Objective #1: Supportive Educators**

Educators (including teachers, administrators, and classified staff) have the training and ongoing support to build trusting, connected and inclusive environments.

**Why this is important, according to LGBT2SIA+ Students:**

*"[Even if a teacher] messes up my pronouns, I can tell they're trying because they acknowledge it and apologize." -Oregon Student*

*"...flyers about suicide prevention do nothing. Talk to me instead." -Oregon Student*

**Proposed Metrics:**

1. Student and school staff perceptions regarding the frequency and adequacy of anti-discrimination and anti-bullying/harassment trainings may be measured via a School Climate and Culture survey proposed in this Plan.
2. Discipline rates by gender identity (which includes the recently developed non-binary "X" category) are annually assessed at district and state levels.

**Strategy #1:** School staff\* receive the training, coaching, and professional support needed to understand Oregon laws regarding bias and discrimination on all protected classes and in using trauma-informed practices to support LGBTQ2SIA+ students and students of color.

\* Administrators, teachers, substitute teachers, coaches, counselors, instructional assistants, and classified staff

**Actions #1a:** School districts provide trainings at least annually and at the beginning of each school year regarding laws relating to anti-discrimination and anti-bullying and best practices for supporting students through the use of inclusive language, chosen names, and pronouns.

**Action #1b:** As part of Division 22 Standards, districts monitor staff training to ensure that new and returning staff (including substitute teachers) receive required annual trainings regarding anti-discrimination and anti-bullying laws and best practices for supportive students through the use of inclusive language.

**Actions #1c:** ODE is funded to develop and administer a statewide grant program that supports partnerships between students, schools, and community-based organizations to co-develop culturally-responsive trainings for school boards and staff to address anti-bias and inclusive educational practices across race/ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and gender identity.

<b>Objective #1: Supportive Educators</b>	
	<p><b>Action #1d:</b> Support districts to adopt hiring policies and practices that look for core competencies aligned with anti-discrimination and anti-bias laws, and create professional support plans for newly-hired staff to quickly meet these competencies if hired without them.</p>
<p><b>Strategy #2:</b> LGBTQ2SIA+ educators receive social and emotional support for themselves in order to provide their students’ with social and emotional support.</p>	<p><b>Action #2a:</b> Engage educators in defining and co-creating professional supports that honor their race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.</p> <p><i>(Implementation Note: Could include exploring partnerships with the Educator Advancement Council and Regional Educator Networks. Examples could include whether Know Your Rights handbooks, affinity groups, counselors, or other types of support is needed to address feelings of isolation and enhance peer support for educators).</i></p>
<p><b>Strategy #3:</b> Teacher preparation programs prepare all teachers to create inclusive classroom environments that support LGBTQ2SIA+ student social/emotional needs.</p>	<p><b>Action #3a:</b> Teacher preparation programs integrate the experiences of LGBTQ2SIA+ youth of color into pedagogy and model what intersectional inclusion is, what trauma-informed care looks like in all classrooms, and reinforces how social/emotional wellness for students is rooted in inclusive instructional practices.</p>
	<p><b>Action #3b:</b> ODE works with community partners and teacher preparation programs to develop, fund, and pilot comprehensive teacher preparation curricula that support culturally-sustaining teaching pedagogy throughout all core coursework.</p>
<p><b>Strategy #4:</b> Teachers create intentional teaching practices that foster inclusive classroom environments.</p>	<p><b>Action #4a:</b> Create and distribute an annual School Climate and Culture survey with a teacher component to understand their strengths and needs in supporting their LGBTQ2SIA+ students, students of color, and students experiencing disabilities.</p> <p><i>(Implementation Note: Statewide survey may offer opportunities for local questions to be added; survey should be required by districts and opt-out options provided for student and teacher participation in the surveys)</i></p>
	<p><b>Action #4b:</b> ODE and the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) to ensure administrator licensure requires understanding of culturally sustaining approaches to supporting students’ social/emotional and academic needs.</p>

## Objective #2: Supportive Peers

Youth are supported to develop understanding of and respect for individual, family, and cultural differences including sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

### Why this is important, according to research regarding LGBTQ2SIA+ student experiences:

*A 2019 survey conducted among 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students in Oregon schools found that 6 out of 10 lesbian, gay, or bisexual 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported being bullied within the last month due to race, gender, sexual orientation, or body shaming. In comparison, 2 out of 10 straight students reported this form of bullying. -2020 State of Safe Schools, Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition*

### Proposed Metrics:

1. Students are provided with tools for interrupting bullying behaviors with their peers. (Students' perceptions about this may be measured via a School Climate and Culture survey proposed in this Plan).
2. Bullying is addressed by all educators and students are given tools to either address bullying when they see it or alert an adult to take action. (Students' and educators' perceptions about this may be measured via a School Climate and Culture survey proposed in this Plan).

**Strategy #1:** LGBTQ2SIA+ students, students of color, and students with disabilities self-determine ways in which their education can be strengthened with safer, more welcoming, and inclusive environments

**Action #1a:** Create a Statewide School Climate and Culture survey co-developed\* by students and accessible by and available to all students.

*\*This Survey is imagined as multiple components – one for students, one for educators, and one for administrators. The student component is intended to be developed by and for students while the educator and administrator components are intended to be co-developed with those groups.*

*Implementation Note: a) Questions must be informed by student voice to ensure questions are student-centered, accessible, and age-appropriate, b) Should also be distributed among recent out of school youth in partnership with Youth Development Division and community partners, c) Should allow for an intersectional analysis of student experiences across different parts of their identity, d) Should be part of a Climate survey that could assess educator needs and strengths as well. See Domain 3, objective 1 recommendations for comprehensive overview of this.*

## Objective #2: Supportive Peers

**Actions #1b:** Develop and fund regional Student Voice Networks composed of current students and opportunity youth to a) regularly assess student School Climate and Culture survey data; and b) develop recommendations to survey findings and build safer, more inclusive and welcoming school environments (e.g. ways to inform and address peer-to-peer conflict; relationships with school staff; training and resources regarding bullying, harassment, and discrimination; and connections to family and community to support student success).

*(Implementation Note: a) Intention is to include students in these networks that are majority students of color, students who are LGBTQ2SIA+, students with disabilities, and students who may have been pushed out of the education system or in alternative education settings, b) Can be administered either as a grant program to community-based organizations that are culturally responsive or via education service districts; c) Intention is to have this network advise the Oregon Department of Education and State Board of Education on building safer, more welcoming, and inclusive educational environments).*

### Objective #3: Supportive Families

Districts recognize that LGBTQ2SIA+ student success is impacted beyond the walls of the school and engage community-based organizations and families as full partners in supporting students.

**Why this is important, according to the LGBTQ2SIA+ Advisory Group:**

*“...creating a nexus of support between families and school districts is the way to start a supportive, strong discourse that will allow all voices to be heard, valued, and respected.” - Advisory Group Member*

**Proposed Metrics:**

1. LGBTQ2SIA+ students report having access to culturally sustaining supports for their family and community. (Students’ perceptions about this may be measured via a School Climate and Culture survey proposed in this Plan.)

**Strategy #1:** Districts invest in culturally responsive family engagement that support LGBTQ2SIA+ students, and are provided with the guidance and resources to do this well.

**Actions #1a:** Districts collaborate with and fund culturally specific organizations and local LGBTQ2SIA+ supporting organizations to arrange family peer networks and culturally sustaining opportunities for families of LGBTQ2SIA+ students.

*Implementation Note: Student Success Act resources that support well-rounded education may support districts in achieving this with a focus on closing opportunity gaps for students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ2SIA+ students.*

**Actions #1b:** ODE provides districts with guidance and resources around addressing family behavior that students may perceive as unsupportive.

## Domain 2 | Institutional Policies and Facilities

### Objective #1: Safer Affirming Spaces

Youth feel safer, more supported, and seen in school spaces.

**Why this is important, according to LGBTQ2SIA+ student experiences:**

*“Spaces set aside for diverse students (Latino club, LGBTQ+ clubs) are the safest spaces, but feeling safe should not be limited to a meeting or room.” -Oregon Student*

**Proposed Metrics:**

1. School administrators have knowledge of requirements regarding laws related to equal access to restroom and changing room facilities. (Potential data source: School Climate and Culture Survey for Administrators)
2. Students have knowledge of and access to restroom and changing room facilities (Potential data source: School Climate and Culture Survey for Students)

<p><b>Strategy #1:</b> Provide LGBTQ2SIA+ youth with access to facilities and activities for all genders in K-12 and higher education institutions.</p>	<p><b>Action #1a:</b> Provide students with access to all-gender restrooms and changing facilities without barriers to use such as time-limited access, required keys, or long-distances to travel.</p>
	<p><b>Action #1b:</b> Create best practice guidance for districts regarding how to ensure student clubs related to racial/ethnic, cultural, and LGBTQ2SIA+ issues are supported and included by the broader school environment.</p> <p><i>(Implementation Note: For example, ensure that affinity groups are accessible to emerging bilingual students, not require parent permission to participate, recognize as essential to health and safety.)</i></p>
<p><b>Strategy #2:</b> Collaborate across health, education, and community partners to expand access to mental health supports in and outside of school.</p>	<p><b>Action #2a:</b> Partner with higher education institutions to create and fund incentives to grow the pipeline of future mental health counselors and address counselor shortages with a focus on racial equity and intersections with LGBTQ2SIA+ identities.</p>
	<p><b>Action #2b:</b> Ensure that mental health counselors receive training in culturally responsive, trauma-informed practices to support students with multiple intersecting identities.</p> <p><i>(Implementation Note: Support hiring of LGBTQ2SIA+ mental health professionals of color with experience supporting people with suicidal ideation and religious trauma)</i></p>



Objective #1: Safer Affirming Spaces	
	<p><b>Action #2c:</b> Partner with Oregon Health Authority, higher education, other state agencies, school districts, and community organizations to assess the statewide workforce needs for mental health counselors in schools and develop a plan to meet the need.</p> <p><i>(Implementation Note: Assessment should include the unique needs of posed by compounded trauma faced by LGBTQ2SIA+ youth of color and with disabilities.)</i></p>
	<p><b>Action #2d:</b> Create and fund a regionalized counselor network that is prepared to meet the unique needs of small districts.</p>
<p><b>Strategy #3:</b> ODE compiles guidance over the past 5 years regarding LGBTQ2SIA+ student issues and provides it to school districts, education service districts, and charter schools</p>	<p><b>Action #3a:</b> Provide guidance, at minimum to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These Plan recommendations</li> <li>• An online educator- and school-board friendly directory of prior guidance on issues including understanding intersectional identities; chosen names; pronouns; discussions with LGBTQ2SIA+ students prior to parent/guardian meetings; supporting affinity-based student clubs; virtual interactions; bullying; safe space posters</li> <li>• Clear protocols for quickly adding chosen names and pronouns in school system so that educators can easily and consistently access that information.</li> <li>• State support for district-level IT platform changes, especially around name/pronoun changes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategy #4:</b> Schools encourage educators to increase visible support of LGBTQ2SIA+ students.</p>	<p><b>Action #4a:</b> Schools provide safe space posters and items to educators at the beginning of the each school year with encouragement about how visibility supports student’s health and safety.</p>
	<p><b>Action #4b:</b> In partnership with student representatives that reflect the diversity of local school communities, schools co-develop an articulated LGBTQ2SIA+ student Bill of Rights intended to clearly communicate standards for inclusion based on race, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.</p>

## Objective #1: Safer Affirming Spaces

**Strategy #5:** Anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies are implemented with fidelity and transparency.

**Action #5a:** State early learning and education agencies will be funded to convene a stakeholder work group to assess how the State can enhance its support to young children and students, their families, and educators regarding discrimination claims in Oregon education institutions.

*(Implementation Note: This is in response to challenges regarding discrimination and harassment/bullying reporting detailed in the State Policy Challenges section of this Plan. The work group may consider a Statewide Ombudsperson for education-related complaints directly from students/ families similar to Washington State's office, located in the Governor's Office.<sup>36</sup>)*

**Action #5b:** Schools engage students in the developing school-specific recommendations for addressing bullying and discrimination.

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<sup>36</sup> Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds, available at <https://www.oeo.wa.gov/en>.

## Objective #2: Inclusive Curriculum

Students experience LGBTQ2SIA+ inclusive, culturally sustaining, curriculum and pedagogy across grades and subjects.

### Why this is important, according to research regarding LGBTQ2SIA+ student experiences:

*Only 3 out of 10 Oregon LGBTQ students said they were taught positive representations of LGBTQ figures, history, or events with inclusive curriculum in a 2017 survey, and fewer than 2 out of 10 reported receiving inclusive sex education in school. - 2019 GLSEN School Climate in Oregon (State Snapshot).*

### Proposed Metrics:

1. Increase access to inclusive curriculum.

<p><b>Strategy #1:</b> Support and expand inclusive education standards <u>with additional resources.</u></p>	<p><b>Action #1a:</b> ODE is funded to partner with culturally responsive organizations that bring an intersectional lens across race/ethnicity and sexual orientation/gender identity to develop and implement (including trainings for educators) inclusive ethnic studies curriculum to support districts with limited capacity to create or find their own.</p> <p><i>(Implementation Note: community organizations are also funded to support their work and expertise.)</i></p> <p><b>Action #1b:</b> ODE is funded with additional staff to support districts and Education Service Districts in finding or creating their own health education curriculum to implement current Health Education Standards.</p>
<p><b>Strategy #2:</b> Students experience project-based, hands-on learning experiences through which their identity and lived experience is affirmed and valued.</p>	<p><b>Action #2a:</b> Districts and schools are encouraged to implement project-based, student-led work as one way of honoring and validating student’s lived experiences.</p>
<p><b>Strategy #3:</b> Schools are funded to create the time and space for educators and students to build relationships and trust.</p>	<p><b>Action #3a:</b> Schools implement advisory periods or other strategies that are specifically focused on relationship building and social/emotional learning as part of culturally sustaining pedagogy.</p>

**Domain 3 | State Accountability and Support Systems**

**Objective #1: Opportunities for students and educators to systematically assess and improve school climate and culture and inform state and local policy**

Students, educators, and administrators are empowered to share their perceptions of priority problems and solutions to help inform local and state policy decisions and investments.

**Proposed Metrics:**

1. A Statewide School Climate and Culture survey exists and is used by all districts and the state to inform program and policy decisions.
2. Attendance, school discipline, on-track by 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and graduation rates are all measured and reported across all gender categories (including the non-binary/transgender category) with intersections by race/ethnicity, Free/Reduced Price Lunch status, and disability.  
Note: These metrics are not able to be reported by sexual orientation as there are unintended risks and privacy challenges associated with collecting that information at the student level.

**Strategy #1:** Every school district participates in a School Climate and Culture survey with components for students, educators, and administrators (at minimum).

**Action #1a:** ODE is funded to develop a work group in partnership with students, districts, community partners, and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to design a School Climate and Culture survey and develop an implementation plan regarding survey components for at minimum these distinct audiences: students, educators, and administrators.

*(Implementation Note: Survey to be anonymous, opt-out, and allow for disaggregation and intersectional analysis by race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability at minimum. Any School Climate and Culture Survey Work Group should invite participation of representative stakeholders who were involved with the development of the American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Plan; African American Black Student Success Plan; Latinx Student Success Plan; LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan; and the ELL State Strategic Plan. Work Group should also consider consent, data privacy, and confidentiality issues.)*

**Action #1b:** ODE is funded to implement School Climate and Culture surveys (e.g. dissemination, translation, analysis, reporting/communication).

## Objective #2: ODE Capacity to Support Districts and Families

ODE demonstrates leadership to districts, schools and families by collecting and disseminating resources, providing guidance, addressing violations of policy in a timely manner, and proactively building districts’ capacity to create trusting, connected and inclusive environments.

### **Proposed Metrics:**

1. Educators and school administrators report feeling supported to create safer and more welcoming school environments for LGBT2SIA+ students. (Potential data source: School Climate and Culture Survey for Administrators)
2. Students and families report knowing how to report school-based discrimination and bullying/harassment claims and believe that action will be taken to address their claims. (Potential data source: Climate Survey for Students; does not address need to develop measure for family engagement.)

<p><b>Strategy #1:</b> ODE implements the LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan.</p>	<p><b>Action #1a:</b> ODE is funded for a position to lead to implementation of this plan as a primary responsibility of their position.</p>
	<p><b>Action #1b:</b> ODE develops an advisory group structure to inform the implementation of the plan as they relate to other intersecting racial/ethnic identities and other Student Success Plans, and guide future revisions with a composition that allows for a majority student perspective (i.e. this may include more than 1 advisory group; at least one should be majority-students). <i>(Implementation Note: This advisory structure may also inform the prioritization and long-term metrics for this Plan. School Climate and Culture data should inform the ongoing priorities of Plan implementation.)</i></p>
<p><b>Strategy #2:</b> Students, families, and educators have channels for reporting claims directly to the State of Oregon related to alleged discrimination, including resistance to anti-bias training.</p>	<p><b>Action #2a:</b> State early learning and education agencies will be funded to convene a stakeholder work group to assess how the State can address systematic barriers and enhance its support to young children and students, their families, and educators regarding discrimination/Civil Rights claims in Oregon education institutions.  <i>(Implementation Note: This is in response to challenges regarding discrimination and harassment/bullying reporting detailed in the State Policy Challenges section of this Plan. The work group may consider a Statewide Ombudsman for education-related</i></p>

## Objective #2: ODE Capacity to Support Districts and Families

	<i>complaints directly from students/ families similar to Washington State’s office, located in the Governor’s Office.<sup>37)</sup></i>
<b>Strategy #3:</b> ODE highlights districts that are leading around LGBTQ2SIA+ and intersectional inclusion as examples for statewide learning.	<b>Action #3a:</b> ODE is funded to develop and share case studies and other tools to highlight best practices regarding inclusion in partnership with districts and schools around the state (e.g. examples of student voice in informing district decisions about LGBTQ2SIA+ issues; educator supports for implementing inclusive curriculum; etc.)

## Objective #3: Cross-agency Collaboration

ODE, Oregon Health Authority, Educator Advancement Council, Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, Early Learning Division, Youth Development Division, and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission work together to address issues that impact the experiences of LGBTQ2SIA+ youth and youth of color.

<b>Strategy #1:</b> State of Oregon agencies are aligned in its guidelines for state facilities related to gender-neutral (i.e. all-user) restrooms.	<b>Action #1a:</b> State Education agencies create shared guidelines regarding access to gender-neutral restrooms in public schools, including charter schools, community colleges, and universities.
<b>Strategy #2:</b> ODE and ELD share learnings and best practices from implementing strategies related to inclusion and support of marginalized youth and families.	<b>Action #2a:</b> ODE and ELD identify similar objectives from the Student Success Plans and the Raise Up Oregon Plan focused on inclusion and support of LGBTQ2SIA+ students, students with disabilities, and students of color and their families and coordinate their efforts in support of those objectives.

<sup>37</sup> Washington State Governor’s Office of the Education Ombuds, available at <https://www.oeo.wa.gov/en>.

## Appendix A: Practice Guidance Regarding Trainings

Much of the discussion in the Advisory Group included how to define, schedule, and provide trainings and coaching to those who interact with LGBTQ2SIA+ students. As noted in the State Policy Context section of this Plan, some training is already required in order to prevent bullying, harassment, and discrimination. This suggests that no policy provided in this Plan is on its own enough to actually create safer and more welcoming spaces for students in school. In order to capture the discussion of the Advisory Group regarding trainings, we offer these suggestions as guidance to state and local administrators to inform the day-to-day development and implementation of trainings intended to support LGBTQ2SIA+ youth.

- **Student Voice:** The voices of the most impacted by education decisions, students, is critical to inform the development of trainings. Students engaged as part of the creation of this plan asked that they be included in the development and implementation of trainings for other students and for educators.
- **Differentiated Training:** Different positions, roles, and lived experience require different breadth and depth of training. All staff should get baseline annual training. Administrators and other district staff who have hiring authority should receive specific training in best practices to support equitable hiring (e.g. behavior-based interview questions and anti-bias practices). Districts are encouraged to ask their school staff what their needs are in supporting LGBTQ2SIA+ students, students of color, and students with disabilities and make a plan to co-develop and provide that support. Finally, coaching and mentoring are necessary ingredients to ensure that knowledge learned in trainings is consistently applied to support students each and every day. Implementation of this plan should include assessment of how and for whom ongoing coaching should be provided.

## Appendix B: Resources & Promising Practices for Supporting LGBTQ2SIA+ Students

These resources were shared by Advisory Group members. Note: The content of each of these is not endorsed by the Oregon Department of Education, except for the content created by the agency.

### **FOR STUDENTS**

- [The Trevor Project](#): Has a 24 hour text, chat, and phone line for LGBTQ2SIA+ youth and their allies to receive support. These are staffed by a counselor. Additional online resources are available on Trevor Project's website.

### **FOR EDUCATORS**

- [Welcomingschools.org](#): Created by the Human Rights Campaign, this is a resource for elementary school teachers.
- [University of Oregon Teach Out](#): This program through the University of Oregon Education Studies Department helps prepare future teachers to meet the needs of LGBTQ youth.
- [GLSEN: Ready Set Respect](#): Created by GLSEN, this is a toolkit for elementary school teachers.
- [Safe Zone Project](#): This organization has a several curriculum resources for educators and has its own resource library to other materials, articles, and books.

### **FOR FAMILIES**

- [Fierce Families Network](#): This is a network of families convened by Basic Rights Oregon with a focus on transgender children.
- [Family Acceptance Project](#): This is an initiative that is intended to support ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse families support LGBTQ children.

### **FOR DISTRICTS**

- [Oregon Guidance to Districts for Supporting Transgender Students](#) [includes non-binary and gender nonconforming students]: Created by the Oregon Department of Education in 2016.
- [Oregon Sex Education Standards FAQ](#): Created by the Oregon Department of Education as guidance to districts.
- [Oregon School Activities Association's Gender Identity Participation Policy Regarding Athletics and Programs](#): Created in partnership between the Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA), this excerpt details policies from the 2019-2020 OSAA Handbook.
- [GLSEN Model District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students](#): Created by GLSEN, this is a set of model policies that districts may use to create safer and more welcoming school environments for transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming students.



## **RESEARCH/REPORTS**

In addition to the many reports and resources referenced in the footnotes throughout the Plan, these are additional resources.

- [Supporting Safe and Healthy Schools](#): GLSEN published this 2019 report intended to support mental health professionals in working with LGBTQ students.
- [Survey of the Needs of Transgender Youth in Oregon](#): Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) prepared this report in 2019.