RESEARCH BRIEF

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Office of Research, Assessment, Data, Accountability, and Reporting

Creating Schools where LGBTQ2SIA+ Students can Thrive

Introduction

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is committed to ensuring that LGBTQ2SIA+[1] students have access to a supportive school environment where they can thrive. To meet this goal, ODE's LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan has recommended taking an equity-centered approach to education that focuses on students' strengths and excellence. The current research brief draws on data from the Student Educational Equity Development (SEED) Survey to explore students' experiences of such practices. ODE researchers identified three themes: 1) LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation, 2) Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Discrimination or Bias, and 3) LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment.

Key findings:
- Students have a wide range of experiences with equity-centered practices at school
- Equity-centered practices impact students' mental and physical health, sense of safety and belonging, and school engagement
- Several systems-level factors act as a barrier to schools fully embodying an equity-centered approach to education
- Some equity-centered practices may elicit retaliation that schools should anticipate and prepare for

LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation

LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation refers to policies that value and honor LGBTQ2SIA+ youth and families in school systems and that positively represent system-impacted gender identities and sexual orientations in education. Affirming practices at schools can range from asking about and using students' chosen pronouns and names, to providing access to safe and clean bathrooms for students of all genders, to offering comprehensive sexuality education. Research suggests that LGBTQ2SIA+ students' experience of affirmation at schools in Oregon is mixed. For instance, GLSEN's 2021 Oregon State Snapshot found that virtually all LGBTQ2SIA+ students knew of at least one staff member who was supportive of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community and that slightly more than half felt that their school administrators were supportive of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community. However, the same report and Oregon's 2022 Student Health Survey found that most students

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[1] "LGBTQ2SIA+" 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.

felt they had limited access to LGBTQ2SIA+ inclusive curriculum or sex education.[2] Similarly, the Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBT Youth Mental Health found that less than half of LGBTQ2SIA+ students in Oregon considered school to be an affirming space.[3]

Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination

Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination refers to how schools approach, prevent, and address harm to LGBTQ2SIA+ students. Effectively addressing anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ bias and discrimination is a particularly complex issue with a host of policy challenges. Preventative mechanisms can include, but are not limited to, the existence and enforcement of policies which prohibit any kind of hate symbol, speech, or behavior at school, whether that be from students or staff (e.g., teachers, administrators). If bias or discrimination does occur, promising approaches to address such incidents are those which focus on harm reduction, are trauma-informed, and are healing-centered.[4] Despite schools' ongoing efforts, GLSEN's 2021 Snapshot found that it is an unfortunate reality that most LGBTQ2SIA+ students in Oregon still report experiencing anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ bias or discrimination and many report such experiences in relation to their other marginalized identities as well (e.g., racial identity, disability).

LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment

LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment refers to how schools support students' capacity to give back to their community and to create a more equitable world. Practices that align with this component include helping students develop the skills to understand, critique, and act against injustice. These can range from teaching students about how the government works and what their civil rights are, to providing students with opportunities to participate in affinity clubs with scaffolded advocacy components, student government, or community service projects.[5] Data from students in Oregon on this topic is limited, but promising. For instance, the 2022 Student Health Survey found that the majority of students were involved in community service to at least some degree. Additionally, GLSEN's 2021 Snapshot found that half of LGBTQ2SIA+ students in Oregon had access to an affinity club or safe space.

Method

This research brief builds on GLSEN's 2021 Snapshot, the 2022 Student Health Survey, and the Trevor Project's 2022 Survey to explore students' experiences with equity-centered education. It is designed to provide additional data that can be used to support the objectives and recommendations outlined in ODE's LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan. ODE examined data from the first three pilot years of the SEED Survey (i.e., 2021, 2022, 2023) as well as the first operational year of SEED (i.e., 2024). The SEED Survey was developed by ODE to gather data about students' schooling experiences in Oregon. During pilot years, districts could choose to offer SEED to students. For the 2024, all districts in Oregon were required to provide students in grades 3 to 11 with an opportunity to take the survey. It was available in multiple languages and with a host of accessibility supports. The survey took about 20 minutes and was taken online. Parents/guardians were provided with an opportunity to exempt their student from participating. Students were also given the opportunity to assent to the survey overall and to skip any item they did not feel comfortable responding to.

The SEED Survey is composed largely of closed-ended items. Because ODE does not collect nuanced information about students' gender identity or sexual orientation, we are unable to disaggregate LGBTQ2SIA+ students' responses to the

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[2] GLSEN. (2021). *School climate for LGBTQ+ students in Oregon.* https://maps.glsen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/GLSEN_2021_NSCS_State_Snapshots_OR.pdf

Oregon Health Authority. (2022). *Oregon student health survey (SHS) data portal.* [Data set]. https://www.bach-harrison.com/SHSDataPortal/Variables.aspx

[3] The Trevor Project. (2022). *2022 national survey on LGBTQ youth mental health: Oregon.* https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-Trevor-Project-2022-National-Survey-on-LGBTQ-Youth-Mental-Health-by-State-Oregon.pdf

[4] Oregon Department of Education. (n.d.). *Every student belongs: Updated guidance.* https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/SchoolSafety/Documents/ESB%20Guidance%20v2.pdf

[5] Wray-Lake, L., & Ballard, P.J. (2023). Civic engagement across adolescence and early adulthood. In L.J. Grockett, G. Carlo, & J.E. Schulenberg (Eds.), *APA handbook of adolescent and young adult development* (pp. 477-497). American Psychological Association. DOI:10.1037/0000298-035

closed-ended items.[6] However, in addition to the closed-ended items the 6th to 11th grade survey includes three open-ended items, which are:[7]

- If you do not participate in school or community activities or clubs, please describe why.
- Please list any courses you would like to take that are not available to you at your school.
- Is there anything else about your school you would like to share?

ODE researchers selected these three items to analyze as they provided students with the flexibility to share about their identities and experience with LGBTQ2SIA+ equity at school. We filtered students' answers using keywords that related to LGBTQ2SIA+ equity and then conducted a thematic analysis on the filtered data.[8] While the findings in this brief offer valuable insight into students' experiences, the opinions expressed should not be considered to represent all students who took the survey. Because the open-ended items did not ask about equity-centered practices, students who wrote about this topic likely had strong feelings to share. The presence of other items on the survey may have also impacted what students choose to write about, either by prompting them to think about a topic or by giving the impression that a topic was already addressed elsewhere on the survey. Because of these data limitations, ODE does not quantify the number or percent of students who reported experiencing equity-centered practices.

Student Sample

The analytic sample was composed of 418 unique students across the four administration years. The majority of responses came from 2024 (75%), followed by the 22 (11%), 2023 (9%), and 2021 (5%) pilots. This pattern is reflective of the dramatic increase in overall SEED participation during the 2024 administration. The table on the right describes the demographic composition of the sample in detail and compares it to the demographic composition of all 6th to 11th graders in Oregon. In general, the analytic sample had a higher percentage of middle schoolers and lower percentage of high schoolers, students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and students experiencing poverty when compared to the demographics of all 6th to 11th graders in Oregon. Additionally, the sample had a higher percentage of students with a non-binary (X) gender-sex marker.

	Sample Demographics[9]	Oregon Demographics
Grade		
6th	22%	16%
7th	26%	16%
8th	21%	16%
9th	11%	17%
10th	9%	18%
11th	11%	17%
Gender-Sex Marker		
Female	56%	48%
Male	39%	52%
Non-Binary (X)	5%	1%
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian / Alaska Native	1%	1%
Asian	1%	4%
Black/African American	1%	2%
Hispanic/Latino/a/x	10%	26%
Multiracial	7%	7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	<1%	1%
White	80%	58%
English Learner	3%	12%
Students with Disabilities (IEP)	6%	15%
Experiencing Poverty[10]	16%	31%

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[6] Currently ODE collects a gender-sex marker that includes three options: male, female, and x (non-binary). While useful in some ways, this marker conflates sex and gender and is not inclusive of the full range of gender identities. ODE does not currently collect any information about students' sexual orientation.

[7] To see a full list of SEED items at each grade, refer to the SEED webpage.

[8] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

[9] Percentages that are >99 or <1 are suppressed.

[10] Students Experiencing Poverty includes students that meet any of the following criteria: received Supplemental

Findings

Students' Experience of LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation

The figure below provides a map of **LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation**. It includes four components: 1) Exposure to LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation, 2) Impact of Affirming Practices, 3) Barriers to LGBTB2SIA+ Affirmation, and 4) Retaliation to LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirming Practices.
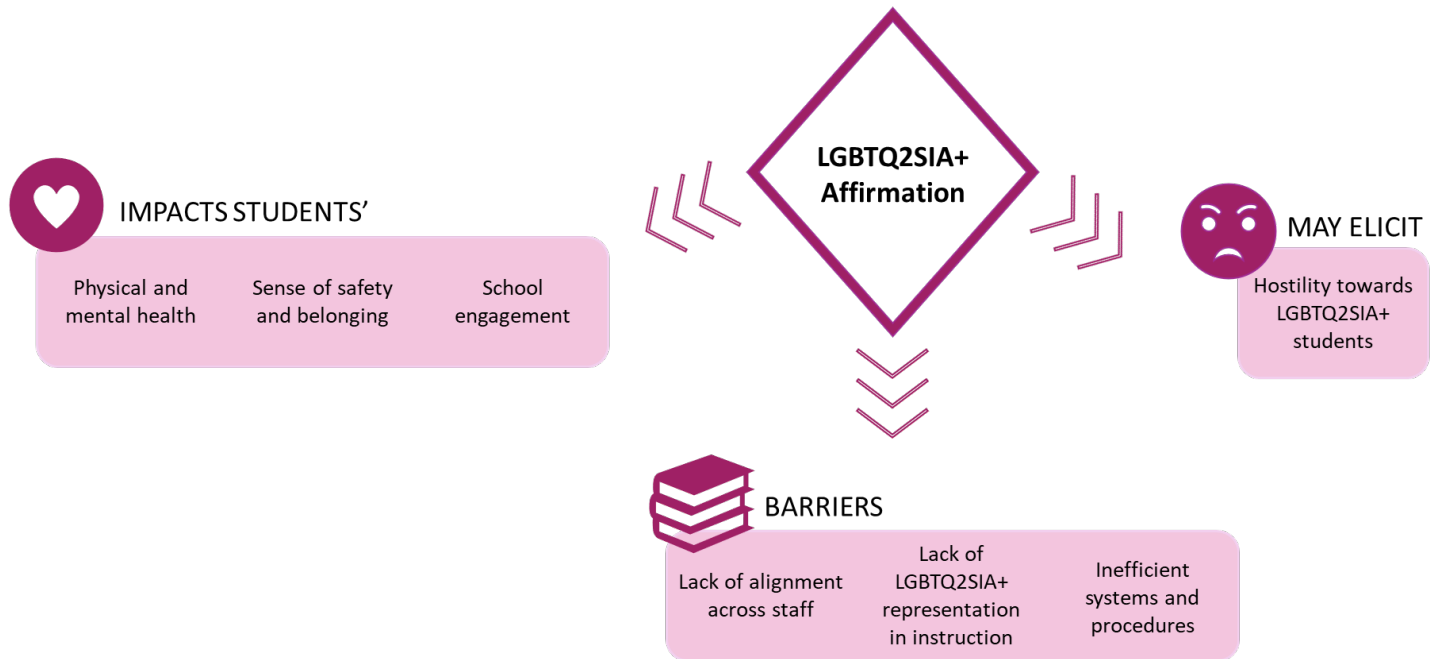
Exposure to LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation

Numerous students shared that they experienced affirming practices at school, though some students indicated that they did not. Students often highlighted the importance of an intersectional approach to affirmation that celebrates and recognizes multiple marginalized groups and identities.

Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Exposure to LGBTQ2SIA+ affirmation	• "[My school] accommodate[s] and advocate[s] for trans students in class, sports, activities, and all areas of school and life." • "[I'm] non-binary and actually came out this year…[every] teacher is very supportive, so I would just like to point out how accepting this school is."
Lack of exposure to LGBTQ2SIA+ affirmation	• "I have never read any school assigned article about LGBTQ+ people. In fact, it has never been mentioned in any of the assignments I have done." • "There is no open access for non-binary restrooms."
LGBTQ2SIA+ affirmation as an intersectional issue	• "The school is pretty accepting of people when it comes to race, gender, and sexuality (LGBTQIA+ people)."

Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) [data delivered to ODE from the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS)]; were in foster care [data delivered to ODE from ODHS]; experienced houselessness [as defined and reported in the McKinney-Vento data collection]; received Migrant Education services [as reported in the Oregon Migrant Student Information System (OMSIS)].

[11] Some quotations fit under multiple components of the same map. For example, a quotation may speak both to a student's exposure to an equity-centered practice and the impact of that practice. The inclusion of a quotation in one section does not suggest that it only fits under that section.

Impact of Affirming Practices

When describing their experience of LGBTQ2SIA+ affirmation, students occasionally linked practices to key outcomes. They identified three main areas of impact: physical and mental health, sense of safety and belonging, and school engagement. These findings highlight how the presence of affirming practices can have a deeply meaningful positive impact on students, and how the lack of such practices can cause harm.

Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Physical and mental health	• "There is a major lack in transgender education which increases the suicide risk of LGBTQ students." • "The only gender-neutral [bathrooms] are unpredictably locked, which leaves me dehydrated due to the fact that I can't count on being allowed to use the restroom."
Sense of safety and belonging	• "The teachers don't talk much about queer people which I think should be talked about more because I feel out of place." • "It would be nice if everyone was asked their pronouns to make people more comfortable with the school experience."
School engagement	• "My school teachers are very inclusive with everyone whether by race or sexuality, last year we even had a teacher that had a rainbow sign outside her door, saying she accepted all. My school has participated in the transgender day, and all other days in which we celebrated one another…this is my favorite school so far."

Barriers to LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation

Students shared three ways that they felt their school's LGBTQ2SIA+ affirmation efforts could be more effective. They explained how existing efforts were hampered due to a lack of alignment across staff, a lack of LGBTQ2SIA+ representation, and inefficient systems and procedures.

| Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Lack of alignment across staff	• "I feel as though my school is an unsafe place for LGBTQ+ students and students of color. The teachers are accepting although the principal is not as much."
Lack of LGBTQ2SIA+ representation	• "This year we got a small lesson on gender identity, but it was one day and really small." • "[My school] does not include LGBTQ+ people in anything except for once in ELA [English Language Arts]."
Inefficient systems and procedures	• "Compared to my old school…it's really good. [My school] promotes diversity and equality. However, gender neutral restrooms are far away from the main ones, making it difficult for any student who needs to use one to go." • "Even though my teachers do respect my chosen name, my name is still on every document in my school…it can be extremely triggering to see your deadname as a trans person…I don't want other students to know my deadname…but by putting it in a place that's accessible to students, it's setting me up for this situation." • "There are not a lot of accommodations for queer students. [There are] some gender-neutral bathrooms, and locker rooms, and the ability to change preferred name, but [it is] not super easy to access." • "[I want my school to] make it easier to change pronouns, and preferred names…I've requested multiple times to talk to someone to just get my name changed, and every time I'm told 'we'll get back to you on that' and they never do."

Retaliation to LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirming Practices

A few students expressed open hostility and anger over their school's efforts at being affirming. In extreme cases, students used homophobic slurs and suggested that their school should implement violent or oppressive practices. These responses bring to light the ways in which some students may retaliate against affirming practices.

Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Hostility and anger	• "[My school should have] less acceptance because it ticks me off." • "There should not be an all-gender bathroom." • "I think we should stop supporting this gay stuff and stop representing this gay stuff."

Students' Experience of Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination

The figure below provides a map of **Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination**. This map includes three key components: 1) Exposure to Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination, 2) Impact of Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination, and 3) Barriers to Addressing Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination.
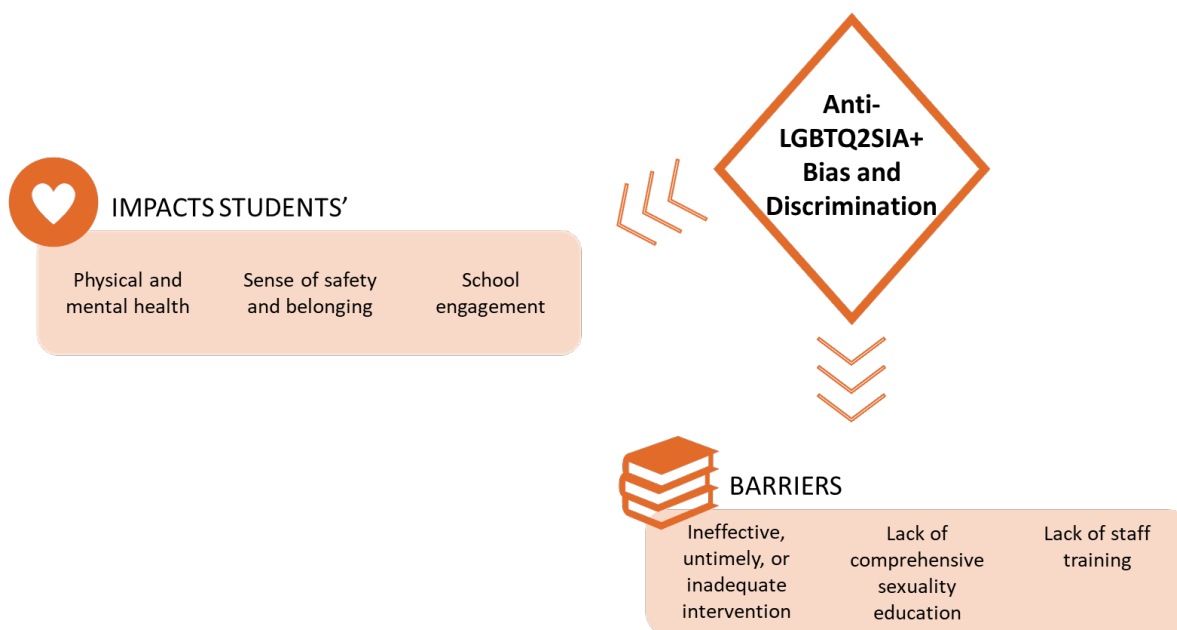
Exposure to Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination

Many students indicated that they experienced anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ bias and discrimination while at school, though a few students mentioned that they did not experience bias and discrimination.[12] When students experienced anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ hostility at school, they usually also cited the co-occurrence of bias across other marginalized identities (e.g., racial identity, disability).

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[12] Students' comments on discrimination and bias may be skewed as students who do not have any concerns about this topic could be less likely to write about it.

Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Exposure to anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ bias and discrimination	• "There are a lot of kids that think it's funny to be homophobic." • "[There are] teachers that target specifically transgender and gay students."
Lack of exposure to anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ bias and discrimination	• "[I go to school] with pride flags in hand, a pride pin, a rainbow shirt that says 'proud', and a pair of rainbow socks that say 'love' and never [get] homophobic comments!" • "I feel that the school is very on point and quick to address harassment. Almost right away, when I started school…[I was] misgendered purposely, deadnamed purposely…called [homophobic slurs]. In the schools I have been to harassment hasn't ever really been dealt with but when teachers were told about the situation here, it was quickly and wholly taken care of."
Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ bias and discrimination as an intersectional issue	• "[I've experienced] backhanded comments about my ethnicity and sexuality [at school]." • "There is a lot of bullying against minorities such as queer kids and disabled kids." • "I personally do not feel that there is equality in our school. Kids that are 'different'…are very discriminated [against]. People of color, people a part of the LGBTQ+ community, and many more people are not treated well in this school."

Impact of Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination

Students often described how they experienced significant harm due anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ bias and discrimination. They identified the same three areas of impact as in LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation. Students wrote about decreases in their mental and physical health as well as their sense of safety and belonging, citing issues such as panic attacks and higher stress levels. Students also explained how bullying and discrimination made them less able to participate in school and less likely to come to school. These insights are particularly salient given that school engagement and attendance are two current high priority areas for the state.

| Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Physical and mental health	• "I am constantly hearing homophobic and transphobic statements…it has caused a drop in my mental health from all of the rude and honestly heartbreaking things I hear." • "[I feel] on edge because of people making homophobic, transphobic, ableist, or even sometimes racist comments."
Sense of safety and belonging	• "Due to my looks and my sexuality, I am bullied a lot. I don't feel very welcomed at my school due to it." • "[My teacher] has been racist, homophobic, sexist, and misogynistic to me and my peers. Most of the time I don't feel safe." • "I get discriminated against very often, such as being called the N-word…I also feel unsafe as an LGBTQ student as the general opinion [about LGBTQ2SIA+ people] isn't great within the student community."
School engagement	• "[I have been] discriminated against because people assume I'm lesbian…I dread going to school." • "I don't participate in any extracurriculars at my school because…[I] receive daily harassment from students just from walking the halls for how I look and what my sexuality is. So why would I join a club or sport if it meant I'd be harassed more?" • "Almost everyone here is racist, misogynistic, and homophobic. It distracts me from learning when I'm being made fun of." • "I used to love school and now I'm scared to go…I've already taken two days off school because I feel sick and nervous at the idea of going to school."

Barriers to Addressing Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination

Students wrote about three ways that they felt their school's efforts at addressing anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ bias and discrimination were being hindered. They shared concerns related to ineffective, untimely, or inadequate intervention. Students also shared that they felt that anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ bias and discrimination could be better prevented via comprehensive sexuality education[13] and more staff training related to the LGBTQ2SIA+ community.

Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Ineffective, untimely, or inadequate intervention	• "I like my school, but sometimes I think they are slow at taking action on some things. Such as kids saying racist and homophobic things…I just think that things could be handled differently." • "When I bring issues [about LGBTQ2SIA+ bullying] to the [school staff] …they claim they are doing something about it. But they don't tell me that until it's too late and it's obviously never effective if they are doing something." • "The only thing the adults do are no contact contracts, but that doesn't work."
Lack of comprehensive sexuality education	• "I do not think that [my school] teaches enough about LGBTQ+ [people] and I think they should because there are so many kids that…hate on it [because] they know little to nothing about it and also bully kids because of it." • "I would like [my school] to teach classes on sexual orientation since there are students who don't know what sexual orientation is or they make fun of it."
Lack of staff training	• "I think schools should do a better job of making sure their staff are safe for minorities…teachers should be put through courses… [about] students who may be LGBTQIA+ or disabled or mentally ill etc."

Students' Experience of LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment

The figure below provides a map of **LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment**. This map includes four key components: 1) Exposure to LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment, 2) Impact LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment, 3) Barriers to LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment, and 4) Retaliation to LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment.

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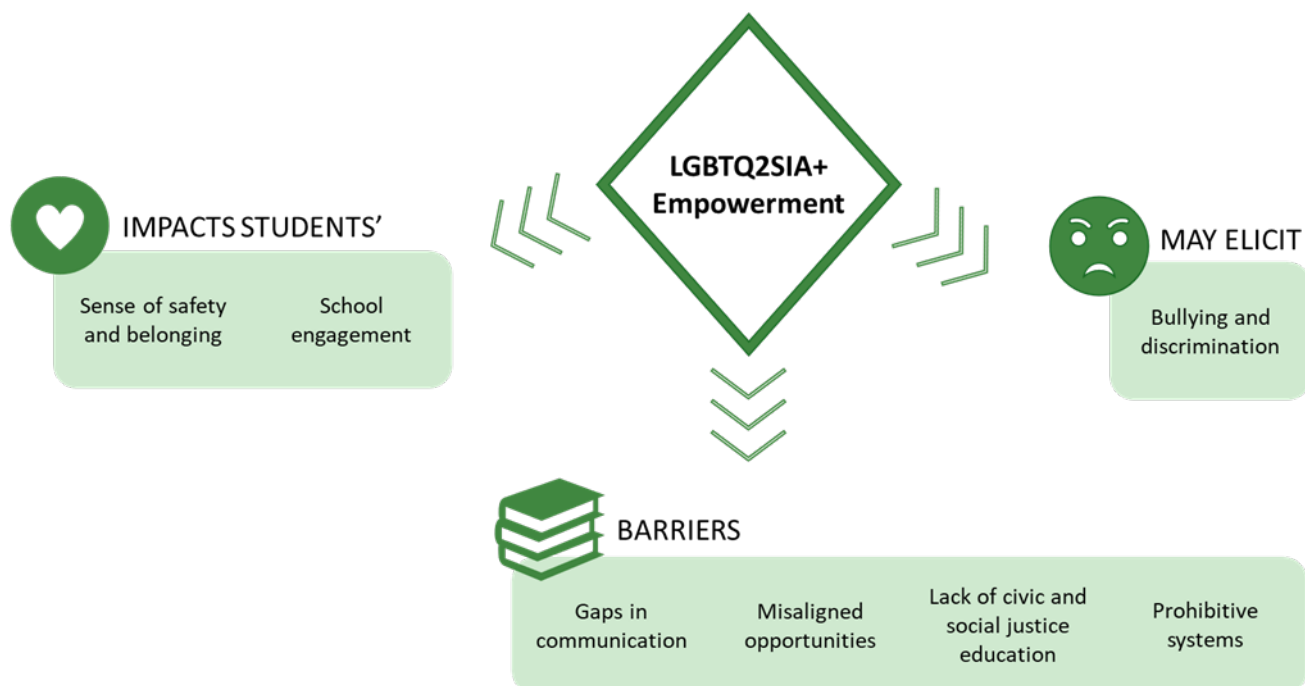
[13] For more information about comprehensive gender and sexuality education, please refer to ODE's Health Standards.

Exposure to LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment

Some students indicated that they experienced LGBTQ2SIA+ empowerment practices at school, while other students indicated that these practices were not present. Students most often wrote about LGBTQ2SIA+ affinity clubs at school, though a handful mentioned other empowerment practices such as community service opportunities, social science classes, or student government. LGBTQ2SIA+ affinity clubs go by many different names, including SAGA, GSA, QSA, and Unity.

Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Exposure to LGBTQ2SIA+ empowerment	• "I love how [my teacher] goes out of his way to help protect the GSA and support them in any events they want to create." • "The student government is really great and works hard for the sake of my school."
Lack of exposure to LGBTQ2SIA+ empowerment	• "We don't have LGBTQ+ groups or clubs." • "Our school doesn't really do community service anymore."

Impact of LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment

Students sometimes linked LGBTQ2SIA+ empowerment practices to two of the key outcome areas noted in LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation and in Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination: sense of safety and belonging, and school engagement. Many students shared specifically about how affinity clubs can be deeply impactful and can buffer against the negative impacts of bias, bullying, and discrimination. These sentiments align with past research which found positive associations between club participation and student outcomes.[14]

Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Sense of safety and belonging	• "I like how there's an LGBTQ+ club, it makes me feel more 'accepted' I guess you could say...I just feel very welcomed here." • "It should be essential for schools to have [LGBTQ2SIA+] clubs...so that everyone feels safe." • "I feel like we need to make an LGBTQ+ club...so we can have a big GAY FAMILY!!!!"
School engagement	• "[My school should have a] 'safe space' for people like me (LGBT). One of the reasons I don't like going to school is because of all the kids who laugh at me and my friends for being different, and I feel like school would be better if there was a place for us somewhere."

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[14] Leung, E., Kassel-Gomez, G., Sullivan, S., Murahara, F., Flanagan, T. (2022). Social support in schools and related outcomes for LGBTQ youth: A scoping review. *Discover Education, 1*(18). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-022-00016-9

Barriers to LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment

Students wrote about four ways that they felt LGBTQ2SIA+ empowerment efforts at their school could be improved. Some students described issues with gaps in communication regarding what opportunities for community involvement and advocacy were currently offered at their school. Students also wrote about how existing opportunities were misaligned with their needs, interests, and desires. Other issues included a lack of civic and social justice education, as well as systems that made it difficult to participate.

Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Gaps in communication	• "I would join the GSA Club, as an individual within the LGBTQ+ community, but I unfortunately didn't hear about the club until over halfway through the school year." • "I don't know how to find any community service [projects] to participate in."
Misaligned opportunities	• "I wish there [were] more engagement opportunities outside of having to be in a student government role." • "I would love to attend unity, but it's after school and I can't have my parents find out. They are homophobic and transphobic." • "[I wish that GSA was held more often] than every other week for 45 minutes."
Lack of civic and social justice education	• "I would like to take [a class that presents students] with real world politics and problems to see if we can solve them." • "I would like some sort of political class, or really any discussion-based class surrounding more advanced topics like politics, international relations, cultures, society, etc." • "I think having more classes that encourage empathy would be good. More social justice classes and stuff." • "[My school] needs to teach why voting and knowing where you get your information is important…I think that's undervalued."
Prohibitive systems	• "[I can't] participate in student government. I wanted to join student council but was not able to because I did not take a leadership class. This is especially infuriating because I had signed up for the class and was not put into it freshman year, and during the following years my schedule was full of classes…so I was unable to."

Retaliation to LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment

Occasionally, students wrote about how their involvement in LGBTQ2SIA+ affinity clubs put them at risk for retaliation because it made their LGBTQ2SIA+ identity more visible. When students were being targeted due to their participation in affinity clubs, they felt that their schools could have better protected them by adopting the equity-centered practices described in the prior two themes (i.e., LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation, Standing Against LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination). These responses underscore the interconnectedness between the three themes and the importance of addressing each theme in order to create a fully supportive school environment.

Sub-Component	Example Quotation/s[11]
Bullying and discrimination	• "Some people are mean to me because I'm in the gay club." • "I'm a president of a club and people discriminate against the club just because it supports LGBTQ." • "Someone called me slurs all because me and my friend are in a unity group."

Discussion

The goal of this research brief was to explore students' experiences with equity-centered education in schools across Oregon. ODE researchers identified three themes of relevance: 1) LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation, 2) Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination, and 3) LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment. Each of these themes inform and are linked to one another. In summary, we found that:

1. **Students have a wide range of experiences with equity-centered practices at school**. Some students explained that equity-centered practices were present at school, while others explained that they were lacking. A number of students likewise wrote that they were exposed to certain equity-centered practices, but not others. Students also emphasized the importance of approaching equity using an intersectional framework.

2. **Equity-centered practices impact student outcomes**. Students identified that equity-centered practices at school positively affected their mental and physical health, sense of safety and belonging, and school engagement (e.g., attendance, ability to focus on class, participation in activities). Similarly, students explained how the lack of such practices negatively impacted their outcomes.

3. **The implementation of equity-centered practices could be improved.** Students wrote about numerous systems-level factors that were hindering their school's ability to fully embody equity. The issues that students identified, by theme, were:

   LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation: lack of alignment across staff, lack of LGBTQ2SIA+ representation, inefficient systems and procedures.

   Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination: inadequate intervention, lack of comprehensive sexuality education, lack of staff training.

   LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment: gaps in communication, misaligned opportunities, lack of civic and social justice education, prohibitive systems.

4. **Some equity-centered practices may elicit retaliation.** Students' responses highlighted how equity-centered practices can result in anger, pushback, retaliation, and bullying from those who disagree with such practices.

This research brief is meant to elevate the voices of LGBTQ2SIA+ students in Oregon. However, it is only a portion of the story, and more data are needed to fully understand the experiences of LGBTQ2SIA+ students as well as track potential positive impacts of policy changes or interventions. Currently, data about LGBTQ2SIA+ students in Oregon are limited. ODE does not collect nuanced information about students' sexual orientation or gender identity. The department also does not directly ask students about their experiences with LGBTQ2SIA+ equity at school. While these kinds of data are important, the prospect of collecting and storing them at the state or local level has elicited safety concerns from community partners. Moving forward, ODE hopes to explore how to increase the variety of LGBTQ2SIA+ data collected in ways that can sufficiently address safety and privacy concerns.

Promising Practices

ODE encourages schools and districts to assess the degree to which they have implemented the equity-centered practices outlined in this brief, celebrate and build upon practice strengths, and develop strategies for addressing any practice gaps. Based on the information shared by students, we provide a set of suggestions below. Details about many of these recommendations and additional recommendations can be found in the LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan or the Supporting Gender Expansive Students Guidance. The suggestions below complement but do not replace those outlined in the linked documents. Suggestions are marked with an asterisk (*) to demonstrate their alignment with the LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan and are marked with a tilde (~) to demonstrate alignment with The Supporting Gender Expansive Students Guidance. Those that are unmarked are expansions.

Overarching	• Provide health, sexuality, social sciences, and transformative social emotional learning education in alignment with Oregon's standards*~ • Embed intersectionality into all LGBTQ2SIA+ equity practices* • Seek input from and work collaboratively with LGBTQ2SIA+ students to better understand local gaps, barriers, and solutions*~
LGBTQ2SIA+ Affirmation	• Ensure that all staff present a unified message that is in support of LGBTQ2SIA+ students* • Show visible support of LGBTQ2SIA+ students (e.g., posters)* • Imbed meaningful and positive LGBTQ2SIA+ representation in instructional materials across all subjects*~ • Develop clear and efficient procedures to ensure LGBTQ2SIA+ students' identities are respected (e.g., procedures for name and pronoun changes)*~ • Develop clear and efficient procedures to ensure LGBTQ2SIA+ students have equitable access to facilities (e.g., bathroom access)*~ • Develop a strategy for reducing the likelihood of retaliation and increasing the likelihood of buy-in from students who may disagree with LGBTQ2SIA+ affirming practices
Anti-LGBTQ2SIA+ Bias and Discrimination	• Ensure that bias, discrimination, and anti-bullying policies and procedures are trauma-informed and healing-centered*~ • Provide annual staff training on laws, policies, and procedures regarding bias and discrimination, including how to effectively intervene*~ • Enforce anti-bullying and discrimination policies in a timely, consistent, and transparent manner*~ • Provide culturally responsive mental health support to LGBTQ2SIA+ students who experience bias, discrimination, or bullying*~
LGBTQ2SIA+ Empowerment	• Provide access to LGBTQ2SIA+ affinity clubs*~ • Ensure that there is clear and effective communication about existing opportunities that students have to give back to their community and create a more equitable world • Ensure that there are a range of opportunities available to students that can meet different needs and interests • Remove non-essential prerequisites or barriers to existing opportunities that students have to be involved in school decision-making and advocacy

Resources for Schools and Districts

LGBTQ2SIA+ Specific Resources
- LGBTQ2SIA+ Resources Landing Page
- Supporting Gender Expansive Students: Guidance for Schools
- LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan
- LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Grant Program

Curriculum Standards
- Standards and Instruction Landing Page
- Health Education
- Sexuality Education
- Social Sciences
- Transformative Social and Emotional Learning

School Safety and Bullying Resources
- School Safety and Prevention Landing Page
- Bullying and Harassment Prevention

Laws and Rules
- Civil Rights Laws Landing Page
- OAR 581-021-0045: Discrimination Prohibited
- OAR 581-002-2312: Every Student Belongs
- Every Student Belongs Guidance

Additional Grant Programs
- Grant Opportunities Landing Page
- Stronger Connections Grant
- Culturally Specific After School Learning Grant Program