

## Frequently Asked Questions about Every Student Belongs

### ***Who initiated Every Student Belongs?***

Every Student Belongs was initiated by a student in Oregon in response to their reports that the presence of the noose, confederate flag, and neo-nazi symbolism in their schools caused emotional and physical distress that kept them and others from accessing their education. The student asked the Governor to send a clear message that Oregon will not back down from prohibiting bullying, harassment, violence, and hatred in our schools and is committed to building school environments that ensure safety and belonging.

### ***What problem is Every Student Belongs aiming to solve?***

Disruption of activities and implicit or explicit threats of violence at school or the creation of unsafe school climates resulting from the display of these symbols harms every student and staff member.

### ***Who is Every Student Belongs meant to protect or benefit?***

Prohibiting these symbols in school environments benefits everyone. ESB is for more than protected groups of students — it is designed to ensure that schools are safe learning environments so that students of every race, gender, and ability will benefit from their educational experience.

### ***Why doesn't Every Student Belongs do more to address what schools are required to do under federal civil rights laws? Why doesn't it do more to stop bullying?***

Every Student Belongs is not a standalone rule, but builds on and connects with existing [policies](#) that address bullying, harassment, intimidation, cyberbullying, and federal civil rights law. Safe, welcoming schools confront bullying and harassment, and these acts are regulated by existing rules that remain in place. [ODE's School Safety and Prevention system](#) is a good place to find more information.

### ***Why pass Every Student Belongs if some people feel it is divisive?***

Oregon has a responsibility to ensure that every student has access to a safe and respectful learning environment. Additionally, students have charged us to ensure that their school environments are safe and respectful — starting with prohibiting hate symbols from our schools to live up to that responsibility. This also requires utilizing positive, educational, and restorative measures to increase understanding, create spaces for dialogue, and promote cross-cultural and racial understanding. Every Student Belongs creates the opportunity for communities to unite to ensure that every student feels valued. This can be done through healing, understanding, compassion and conversation.

### ***How does Every Student Belongs relate to other symbols and speech that some view as political or divisive?***

Every Student Belongs is designed to support a positive, educational, and restorative environment to increase understanding, create spaces for dialogue, and promote intercultural and racial understanding. ODE, and every school district, has the responsibility to ensure the civil and human rights of every student by creating the conditions for safe, welcoming school environments. School is a great place to learn how to distinguish between symbols of love and dignity vs. hate and exclusion based on both history and current use. ESB guidance recommends education and conversation that allows this discernment to happen.