



EQUALITY
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20
YEARS

A REPORT FROM EQUALITY CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE

2019 Safe & Supportive Schools Report Card



eqca.org

Equality California Institute

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Equality California brings the voices of LGBTQ people and allies to institutions of power in California and across the United States, striving to create a world that is healthy, just, and fully equal for all LGBTQ people. We advance civil rights and social justice by inspiring, advocating, and mobilizing through an inclusive movement that works tirelessly on behalf of those we serve.

Equality California is made up of two separate organizations with a shared mission. Equality California is an I.R.C. 501(c)(4) organization that uses electoral, advocacy and mobilization programs to achieve our mission. Equality California Institute is an I.R.C. 501 (c)(3) organization that utilizes advocacy, education and mobilization programs to achieve its mission.

Graphic design: Jesse Reed

Electronic versions of this report are available at safesupportiveschools.org.



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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For two decades, Equality California has worked to sponsor and pass pro-equality state legislation in Sacramento. Many of the bills that Equality California has successfully sponsored and passed into law include protections for LGBTQ students and require programs aimed at making California schools safer and more supportive.

But our work does not end at the Capitol. Laws must be implemented in order to be effective, and we must meet more than the basic legal requirements to achieve schools that are safe and supportive and that give every student — regardless of background, zip code, sexual orientation or gender identity — a shot at success. We created the Safe and Supportive Schools Survey in 2017 to help us measure whether or not California unified school districts have these concrete policies in place.

This report, which presents data gathered in our inaugural survey, shines a light on some of the successes and challenges that California school districts said they are experiencing when implementing LGBTQ-inclusive programs, policies and curriculum. While certain districts reported that they have made great strides, other districts reported that much work remains to be done in their schools. Unfortunately, nearly 62% of California's unified school districts failed to respond to the survey at all.

We recognize that even the most well-intentioned school districts may feel impeded by a lack of resources, limited staff capacity, difficult local social climates and other barriers, all of which can slow the journey toward a safe and supportive school climate. We also recognize that those school districts who responded to the survey that informed this report — regardless of how they ranked — have made a commitment to transparency as they work to create safe and supportive learning environments for LGBTQ and all students.

We strived to produce a resource that is both fair and meaningful — a resource that not only illuminates gaps but that also highlights progress. This report is an educational resource, and we need your help — students, parents, teachers, advocates, community leaders and school district officials — to use this report to improve school climate for LGBTQ students across California.

This is a crucial task. Improving school climate benefits all students, but doing so is particularly important for LGBTQ youth, who continue to face bullying, harassment and discrimination at school simply because of who they are. When students feel unsafe at school, they are more likely to miss school, see their academic performance suffer, drop out or even encounter the juvenile justice system than their non-LGBTQ peers, perpetuating the cycle of economic insecurity the LGBTQ community faces. And for LGBTQ youth who are also targets of bullying, harassment or discrimination because of their race, immigration status, zip code, religion or ability, the disparities are even greater.

The future of our youth and our community is at stake. And it is incumbent upon all of us to take action.

In solidarity,



Rick Zbur
Executive Director
EQUALITY CALIFORNIA
EQUALITY CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE



“This report shines a light on some of the successes and challenges California school district officials report they experience when implementing LGBTQ inclusive programs and policies.”

Rick Zbur
Equality California



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION**

TONY THURMOND
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

1430 N STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5901 • 916-319-0800 • WWW.CDE.CA.GOV

March 1, 2019

Dear California Educators, Students, Parents and Community Leaders,

As your State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I'm proud to support Equality California Institute's release of the inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card. This report will help to create transparency as school districts across our state work to implement best practices, policies and programs to protect and support LGBTQ students.

As the son of a public school teacher and myself having spent twenty years as a social worker supporting our school districts, I know the importance of creating learning environments that are safe and supportive for the students who attend them. Schools that have an inclusive culture and environment give every child a shot at success. I am also proud to be a co-sponsor of AB493 with Equality California and Assemblymember Todd Gloria, to further help our schools better support our LGBTQ youth while they are in the learning environment, to help them have better success in the classroom and feel safer on our school campuses.

I also know that this critical mission can only be achieved through collaborative efforts by school board members and administrators, teachers and school staff, parents and students. We need to empower teachers and school staff by giving them the tools and training necessary to support their LGBTQ students. We must be proactive in adopting and implementing policies that make our schools safer for all students. And we need to ensure that the curriculum taught in our schools is inclusive of the LGBTQ community.

I encourage you to use this report as a tool to advance equality in your classrooms and the health and well-being of students in your communities. District leaders, reach out to your peers who have found success in making their schools safer. Parents, teachers and students, reach out to your school administrators and elected school board members and speak up during opportunities to provide public comment. Teachers unions, PTA members and community leaders, advocate for more inclusive policies and practices in your districts.

I am grateful to Equality California Institute and their Safe and Supportive Schools Advisory Committee for their work creating this valuable resource. And I look forward to working alongside all of you to ensure all of California's kids have the same opportunities to learn, grow and succeed in an inclusive setting within our public education system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Tony Thurmond".

Tony Thurmond



HOW TO USE THIS REPORT



THIS REPORT IS AN ADVOCACY TOOL THAT READERS CAN USE AS A GUIDE FOR IMPLEMENTING SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE PROGRAMS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND QUEER (LGBTQ) STUDENTS.

Whether you are a district official or a community stakeholder, check to see whether your unified school district is on the list of respondents to the Safe and Supportive Schools Survey.¹ If it is not, consider writing a letter to your superintendent, school board members and other contacts at the district to urge them to contact Equality California Institute regarding future participation in the survey. If your unified school district is on the list of respondents, consider thanking your district for participating. Take a closer look at how your district reported what they are doing, or plan to do, to support LGBTQ youth and contact your district regarding specific points of concern. This report should serve as a conversation starter about specific, concrete actions your district can take to improve the climate for LGBTQ students.²

Whether your unified school district responded to the survey or not, consider engaging your local teachers union, parent-teacher [or parent-teacher-student] association, LGBTQ student-led organization and other stakeholders to construct a district-specific plan of action using the survey criteria as a starting point. Please refer to the full survey reports that are available online at safesupportiveschools.org for details regarding survey questions and how your unified school district responded.

California's public education system is under the policy direction of the California Legislature, but the responsibility for policy implementation and management of individual unified school districts rests with districts' elected governing boards, or "school boards." School boards are required by state law to hold meetings that are open to the public and include an opportunity for public comment. Providing public comments at a school board meeting can be an effective tool to encourage board members to prioritize your concerns as a student, parent, teacher or community member.

Equality California Institute invites comments regarding additions or updates to the metrics used in this inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Survey. Please send questions and comments to SafeSchools@eqca.org.

¹ Due to capacity limitations, only *unified* school districts in California — school districts that generally include and operate primary schools (kindergarten through middle school or junior high) and high schools under the same district control — were invited to complete the inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Survey. We hope to expand to additional types of school districts in the future.

² A list of contact information for all responding and non-responding unified school districts can be found at [safe-supportiveschools.org](https://safesupportiveschools.org). Additionally, the California Department of Education maintains a list of contact information for most school districts in California at www.cde.ca.gov/SchoolDirectory.

A photograph of two young women in front of a rainbow flag. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is looking towards the camera with a neutral expression. The woman on the right has dark hair tied in a bun, a nose ring, and is smiling broadly. They are both wearing denim jackets. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white box containing the text 'EXECUTIVE SUMMARY'.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

California is home to hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ youth who currently attend school in one of the state's 343 unified school districts. Because youth spend a large portion of their waking hours at school, it is critical that our schools provide a safe and supportive environment for all students, especially for LGBTQ youth, who face disproportionately high rates of bullying, harassment, discrimination and lack of acceptance — and, as a result, are more likely than their non-LGBTQ peers to miss school, see their academic performance suffer, drop out and even consider self-harm or suicide. For more insight into the experiences of California's LGBTQ students, take a look at the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's *California LGBTQ Youth Report* and GLSEN's *School Climate in California* report.³ A safe and supportive school environment allows LGBTQ students to succeed academically and has a significant impact on their future prospects and well-being later in life.

In order to provide every California student with the safe and supportive learning environment they deserve, Equality California has sponsored a number of state laws in California aimed at protecting LGBTQ students.⁴ These laws and their proper implementation can help prevent bullying and harassment, keep LGBTQ students in school and reduce the rates of self-harm and suicide among LGBTQ youth. However, the work to improve school climate does not end at the Capitol, and legal requirements are merely a foundation upon which to build comprehensive policies that protect and nurture LGBTQ students. Many school districts lack the resources to implement these laws, face hostile local social climates that impede implementation or lack awareness regarding the laws' requirements and the best way to meet them.

"The 2018 Safe & Supportive Schools Report Card gives a self-reported snapshot of LGBTQ acceptance and inclusion in California Schools. Our LGBTQ students do not only require a safe and inclusive learning environment, they deserve it!"

C. Scott Miller

Curriculum & Instruction and School Administration
Educator & Chair - California Teachers Association LGBTQ+ Caucus



SAFE & SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS PROGRAM

This inaugural **Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card** is an objective and verifiable assessment of **130** unified school districts' self-reported policies and programs related to LGBTQ youth and staff.⁵ This report is intended to be a starting point for conversation between school district officials and community stakeholders, including parents, students, and teachers. We hope that stakeholders will use this report as an advocacy tool for building relationships with school districts and that school district officials will use this report as a resource for identifying ways to support their LGBTQ youth and improve their programs. State and local lawmakers can build on this report by funding programs and adopting new laws to improve school success and to combat discrimination.

Equality California Institute launched the **Safe and Supportive Schools Program** in 2016 under the guidance of an advisory committee comprised of experts, teachers, school board members, school district administrators, teachers union representatives and LGBTQ and civil rights advocates and organizations.⁶ The program is a collaborative effort led by Equality California Institute to measure, assess, and make public the efforts of school districts in California to implement programs and policies that foster supportive and affirming learning environments for LGBTQ students.

³ *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019, <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>; GLSEN's *School Climate in California [State Snapshot]* (glsen.org/sites/default/files/California%20State%20Snapshot%20-%202017%20NSCS_0.pdf).

⁴ Notably **AB 9** (Seth's Law), **AB 2153** (LGBTQ Cultural Competency for Teachers and School Staff), **AB 2291** (Online Anti-Bullying Training for Teachers and School Staff), **AB 1266** (School Success and Opportunity Act), **SB 48** (FAIR Education Act), **AB 329** (California Healthy Youth Act) and **AB 2246** (Suicide Prevention Policies in Schools). More detailed descriptions of each of these laws is provided in the body of this report.

⁵ See District Summaries on page 47 for a breakdown of responses by district. Additional in-depth responses will be available at safesupportiveschools.org.

⁶ See Appendix I on page 69 for a list of Advisory Committee members.

With the generous pro bono support of Latham & Watkins LLP, Equality California Institute and the Advisory Committee drafted the **Safe and Supportive Schools Survey**, which was sent to **343** unified school districts across California in November 2017. The survey focused on five main topics related to the health and well-being of LGBTQ students and school staff: school climate, cultural competency training, transgender and gender-nonconforming students, curriculum, and suicide prevention.⁷ After a robust, year-long follow-up period, Equality California Institute and Latham & Watkins LLP tabulated the results, compiling the data into the **Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card**.

KEY LIMITATIONS

- Due to the sheer number of school districts in California, distribution of the inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Survey was limited specifically to the **343** unified school districts in California. We hope to include other types of school districts in future rounds of the survey.
- The data gathered for this Report Card relies exclusively on data **self-reported** by unified school districts through a **voluntary** survey.⁸
- While the Safe and Supportive Schools Survey assesses the reported presence or absence of district-wide policies, the survey does not fully capture the extent to which the laws and policies are **actively implemented and enforced**.

KEY FINDINGS⁹

School Climate:

- All 130 responding districts had an existing policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying against students (an “Anti-Bullying Policy”).
- 82 districts reported that they regularly collect data regarding student sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity.

Cultural Competency Training:

- 46 districts reported that they *do not offer* training to employees that *even generally covers* diversity, anti-bias, cultural competency, and/or equity and inclusion.
- Of those districts that do offer general training covering diversity, anti-bias, cultural competency, and/or equity and inclusion, this training is *required* for certificated¹⁰ staff at the early childhood education level in 38 districts, at the elementary level in 45 districts, at the middle school level for 49 districts, and at the high school level for 48 districts. These numbers are different [some higher and some lower] for classified¹¹ staff and administrative¹² staff.

130 of 343

unified school districts were assessed in the inaugural **Safe and Supportive School Report Card**.

Within the analysis, schools fell into **one of four** categories listed below:

22 Spotlight Districts

80 Foundational Districts

28 Priority Districts

213 Non-Responding Districts

⁷ See Survey Criteria on page 24 for information regarding these topics.


⁸ There are a number of excellent resources to learn more about students’ self-reported experiences in California schools, including HRC Foundation’s *California LGBTQ Youth Report* (assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf) and GLSEN’s *School Climate in California [State Snapshot]* (glsen.org/sites/default/files/California%20State%20Snapshot%20-%202017%20NSCS_0.pdf).

⁹ See Findings on page 36 for more information.

¹⁰ The Education Data Partnership defines certificated staff as “school employees who are required by the state to hold teaching credentials, including full-time, part-time, substitute, or temporary teachers and most administrators.” <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/Pages/Glossary.aspx>.

¹¹ The California Department of Education defines a classified staff member as “an employee of a school district who is in a position not requiring certification.” <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/glossary.asp#>.

¹² The California Department of Education defines administrative staff members as “certificated employees who are not teachers or student services personnel.” <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/glossary.asp#c>.



This inaugural Safe and Supportive Report Card is just the beginning.

Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students:

- 64 responding districts reported having established a process for changing a transgender or gender-nonconforming student's name and gender for purposes of official school records or databases [e.g., student transcripts].
- 54 responding districts reported having adopted a policy that requires teachers and other personnel to refer to transgender and gender-nonconforming students according to the student's asserted name and gender identity [e.g., asserted pronouns].
- 112 responding districts reported that all schools in their district allow students to use all restrooms and/or locker rooms that correspond to students' gender identity, and 84 districts reporting having at least one gender-neutral restroom located in an easily accessible area [e.g., not located in the nurse's office or teachers' lounge].

Curriculum:

- 65 responding districts reported that the contributions of LGBTQ individuals are taught in government, history, and/or social studies classes.
- 7 responding districts reported that their sexual health education program still operates under an optional/opt-in system [6 districts reported the same for their HIV prevention education].
- 88 responding districts reported that their sexual health curriculum incorporates discussion of relationships other than cisgender heterosexual relationships.

Suicide Prevention:

- 118 responding districts reported that they have adopted a policy on pupil suicide prevention in grades 7 to 12, and 94 districts indicated that this policy specifically addresses the needs of LGBTQ youth in some way.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

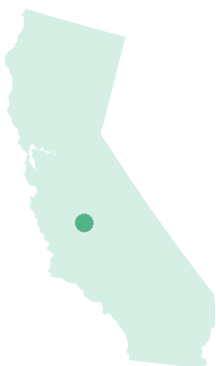
SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Located in San Francisco County | 60,263 students enrolled¹³

- 100% of their certificated, classified and administrative staff from Early Childhood/Pre-K/ to High school have had 1 or more hours of mandatory cultural competency training
- Only 1 of 11 districts that reported having a policy on every survey question related to transgender and gender-nonconforming students, including processes around name/ gender change and access to school facilities
- Over 50% of their middle schools have a GSA or similar LGBTQ student club
- Require all schools in their district to recognize days of special significance concerning the LGBTQ community [e.g., Pride Month, Day of Silence, National Coming Out Day, Harvey Milk Day]

VISALIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Located in Tulare County | 29,107 students enrolled¹⁴

- More than 80% of their certificated, classified¹⁵ and administrative¹⁶ from Early Childhood/ Pre-K/ to High school have had 1 or more hours of mandatory cultural competency training
- Suicide prevention policy addresses the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, youth bereaved by suicide, youth with disabilities, youth with mental illness, youth with substance use disorders and youth experiencing homelessness or who are in out-of-home settings
- Has established a process for changing a transgender and gender-nonconforming students' names on official and unofficial school documents

LAGUNA BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Located in Orange County | 2,861 students enrolled¹⁷

- 100% of their certificated, classified and administrative staff from Early Childhood/Pre-K/ to High school have had 1 or more hours of mandatory cultural competency training
- Reported having a policy allowing students to bring a date of any gender to a school-sponsored event or dance
- Has a sexual health curriculum that intentionally incorporates discussion of relationships other than cisgender, heterosexual relationships
- Reported listing LGBTQ-specific training among their Local Control and Accountability Plan [LCAP]

According to the California Department of Education:

Classified - an employee of a school district who is in a position not requiring certification.

Administrative - certificated employees who are not teachers or student services personnel.

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/glossary.asp#c>.

¹³ 2017-18 Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade: San Francisco Unified Report. California Department of Education, 2018, <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dq census/EnrEthGrd.aspx?cds=3868478&agglevel=district&year=2017-18>.

¹⁴ 2017-18 Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade: Visalia Unified Report. California Department of Education, 2018, <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dq census/EnrEthGrd.aspx?cds=3773569&agglevel=district&year=2017-18>.

¹⁵ The California Department of Education defines a classified staff member as "an employee of a school district who is in a position not requiring certification." <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/glossary.asp#c>.

¹⁶ The California Department of Education defines administrative staff members as "certificated employees who are not teachers or student services personnel." <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/glossary.asp#c>.

¹⁷ 2017-18 Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade: Laguna Beach Unified Report. California Department of Education, 2018, <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dq census/EnrEthGrd.aspx?cds=5071043&agglevel=district&year=2017-18>.



“As a parent myself, I know how important it is for every kid to go to school each day knowing they are in a safe, and supportive environment. It’s critical that all California school districts comply with current law, and ensure that their schools provide such an environment, so ALL students feel safe and are able to study, learn and thrive.”

Eleni Kounalakis
Lieutenant Governor



WHAT'S NEXT

This report highlights some of the ways California unified school districts are succeeding in creating safe and supportive school environments for LGBTQ students. It also sheds a light on the areas in which districts need the most improvement and require the most resources to create campus climates that are truly inclusive of all students.

While there is room for unified school districts to improve across many fronts, **three** key areas for improvement emerged:

- LGBTQ-inclusive cultural competency trainings should be a requirement in order to empower teachers and staff with the tools and language they need to support LGBTQ students. Of the responding districts, 46 — over 35% — reported that they do not provide training to their school staff that even *generally* covers diversity, anti-bias, cultural competency, and/or equity and inclusion.
- Transgender and gender-nonconforming youth often face significant and disproportionate barriers to their health and well-being. Some districts do not require their schools to allow these students to use the restroom or allow them to participate in sex-segregated classes or programs such as competitive sports that correspond to their gender identity, placing these students at increased risk for bullying and harassment. Every district should have explicit policies and procedures to protect these students' rights to be addressed according to their asserted pronouns and for their gender-identity information to remain private, but 77 districts (59%) reported that they do not have an express policy regarding pronoun usage and 75 districts (58%) reported that they do not have an express policy regarding gender-identity privacy.
- Many districts expressed difficulty, citing staff capacity and limited financial resources, in updating policies or curriculum to be in compliance with California's changing educational codes. All school districts should be using educational materials that are compliant with the FAIR Education Act. However, 91 districts (70%) reported that they had not yet adopted LGBTQ-inclusive textbooks or other instructional materials for history and social studies classes.

This inaugural Safe and Supportive Report Card is just the beginning. We envision this report as a tool that students, parents, advocates, district staff and state and local policymakers can use to improve school climate for LGBTQ students. Additional legislation and funding will be needed, new assessments of school climate will need to be conducted, and ongoing community outreach and engagement will be critical. Equality California Institute and Equality California look forward to continued, collaborative efforts to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all.

BACKGROUND

LGBTQ STUDENTS NEED INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The past few years have seen significant advancements for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) civil rights, including the legalization of marriage equality nationwide, the repeal of both Don't Ask Don't Tell and the Defense of Marriage Act, and the adoption of robust non-discrimination protections for the LGBTQ community in California.

However, LGBTQ people still experience great disparities in health and well-being compared to the broader public. LGBTQ people suffer higher rates of homelessness, violence, depression, suicide, arrest, incarceration, substance abuse, and poverty, and have lower rates of health insurance coverage.¹⁸ LGBTQ youth are not exempt from these disparities.

Because youth spend a large portion of their waking hours at school, schools are on the front line of providing a safety net against the effects of discrimination and lack of acceptance. Over 10% of public middle and high school students in California identify as LGBTQ.¹⁹ However, only 32% of LGBTQ students feel comfortable being their authentic selves on campus.²⁰ Teachers and school administrators are uniquely positioned to support the well-being of their students.

LGBTQ students face many barriers to success in school. Approximately 17% of LGBTQ students in California regularly hear homophobic remarks from school staff.²¹ More than three out of four K-12 students in California who are, or are perceived as, transgender have been verbally or physically harassed, sexually assaulted, or prohibited from dressing according to their gender identity.²² For LGBTQ students of color, racial bias creates additional barriers to success.²³ LGBTQ youth who are targets of bullying, harassment or discrimination because of their immigration status, zip code, religion or ability, also face disparities.

Studies routinely show that school climate is related to student success and overall well-being. Over one-third of LGBTQ students nationally have skipped school due to safety concerns.²⁴ Research suggests that LGBTQ youth are more likely than their non-LGBTQ peers to drop out of school, often due to bullying, harassment, discrimination and lack of acceptance.²⁵ Nearly one in three LGB students have attempted suicide, a rate that is vastly higher than for non-LGB youth,²⁶ and 40% of transgender people attempt suicide at some point during their lives.²⁷ Fortunately, studies show that LGB students living in cities and states with protective school climates report fewer suicidal thoughts.²⁸

Schools are on the front line of providing a safety net against the effects of discrimination and lack of acceptance.

¹⁸ *Fair Share for Equality: Report of the Third Convening and Companion Reports of Program Participants*. Equality California Institute, 2018, www.eqca.org/wp-content/uploads/Fair-Share-for-Equality-Report-2017.pdf.

¹⁹ Soon Kyu Choi, Laura Baams, and Bianca D.M. Wilson. *LGBTQ Youth in California's Public Schools: Differences Across the State*. The Williams Institute, 2017.

²⁰ *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019, <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.

²¹ *School Climate in California (State Snapshot)*. GLSEN, 2017, https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/California%20State%20Snapshot%20-%202017%20NSCS_0.pdf.

²² *2015 U.S. Transgender Survey: California State Report*. National Center for Transgender Equality, 2017.

²³ *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019, <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.

²⁴ Joseph G. Kosciw et al. *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools*. GLSEN, 2018, www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%202017%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20%28NSCS%29%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf. Unfortunately this number is on the rise.

²⁵ *Educational Exclusion: Drop Out, Push Out, and School-to-Prison Pipeline Among LGBTQ Youth*. GLSEN, 2016.

²⁶ Laura Kann, Emily O'Malley Olsen, Tim McManus et al. *Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12 — United States and Selected Sites*. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 2015.

²⁷ Sandy James et al. *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016.

²⁸ Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, Michelle Birkett, Aimee Van Wagenen, and Ilan H. Meyer. *Protective School Climates and Reduced Risk for Suicide Ideation in Sexual Minority Youths*. American Journal of Public Health, 2014.

A safe and supportive school environment allows LGBTQ students to succeed academically and has a significant impact on their future prospects and well-being later in life. School achievement gaps reinforce the economic and health disparities faced by LGBTQ people. When LGBTQ youth, and transgender youth in particular, drop out of school, they are less likely to obtain sufficient employment, less likely to be able to afford health care, and more likely to experience homelessness.²⁹ Ensuring that schools are comprehensively serving LGBTQ students is all the more important in light of the fact that many LGBTQ youth also face a lack of acceptance at home and may be pushed out of their homes or may choose to leave for safety reasons, contributing to the disproportionately high rates of homelessness and lack of economic success among LGBTQ young people. Safe and affirming school climates are key to ensuring that LGBTQ students remain in school and are equipped to succeed in life.

According to the Williams Institute, 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBT. [Laura Durso and Gary Gates. *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Services Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*. The Palette Fund, True Colors Fund, The Williams Institute, 2012.]

Equality California [partner organization to Equality California Institute] has sponsored a number of state laws in California aimed at protecting and empowering LGBTQ students, but many school districts lack the resources to implement these laws, face hostile local social climates that impede implementation or lack awareness regarding the laws' requirements and the best ways to meet them.³⁰

AB 9 - Seth's Law (2011)

Authored by Assemblymember Tom Ammiano and co-sponsored by Equality California, ACLU, Gay-Straight Alliance Network and National Center for Lesbian Rights

Strengthened existing anti-bullying laws focusing particularly on students who are bullied based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression; requires schools to adopt and publicize certain anti-bullying policies; and requires school personnel to intervene when they witness bullying

SB 48 - FAIR Education Act (2011)

Authored by Senator Mark Leno and co-sponsored by Equality California and GSA Network

Requires roles and contributions of LGBTQ Americans (along with other marginalized groups) to be incorporated into social science instruction for elementary and secondary school.

AB 1266 - School Success and Opportunity Act (2013)

Authored by Assemblymember Tom Ammiano and co-sponsored by Equality California, GLSEN, Transgender Law Center, GSA Network, National Center for Lesbian Rights, ACLU of California and Gender Spectrum

Built on and clarified California student non-discrimination laws; specified all K-12 students must be permitted to access school programs, activities and facilities in accordance with their gender identity.

AB 329 - California Healthy Youth Act (2015)

Authored by Assemblymember Shirley Weber and co-sponsored by Equality California, ACLU, CA Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Forward Together and Planned Parenthood

Strengthened and mandated comprehensive California sexual health curriculum for grades 7-12; requires sexual health education to be inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity; requires HIV education to be updated to reflect the latest evidence-based understanding of HIV/AIDS.

AB 2246 - Suicide Prevention Policies in Schools (2016)

Authored by Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell and co-sponsored by Equality California and the Trevor Project
Requires adoption of suicide prevention policies for grades 7-12 that address the needs of LGBTQ youth and other high-risk groups.

²⁹ Lourdes Ashley Hunter, Ashe McGovern, and Carla Sutherland, Eds. *Intersecting Injustice: Addressing LGBTQ Poverty and Economic Justice for All: A National Call to Action*. Social Justice Sexuality Project, Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2018.

³⁰ See District Summaries on page 45 for a detailed breakdown by district. Even more in-depth responses are available at safeandsupportive-schools.org.

AB 2291 - Online Anti-Bullying Training for Teachers and School Staff (2018)

Authored by Assemblymember David Chiu and co-sponsored by Equality California, Advancement Project California, Asian Americans Advancing Justice – California and Council on American-Islamic Relations, California

Requires schools to provide teachers and school staff with annual online training on the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying; requires the California Department of Education to post this online training module on its website and ensures that policies and procedures relating to bullying and its prevention are included in school safety plans.

AB 2639 - Suicide Prevention Training for Teachers and School Staff (2018)

Authored by Assemblymembers Marc Berman and Patrick O'Donnell and co-sponsored by Equality California and the Trevor Project

Ensures that schools' student suicide prevention policies are reviewed regularly and updated a minimum of every five years.

AB 493 - Safe and Supportive Schools Act (2019)

Authored by Assemblymember Todd Gloria and co-sponsored by Equality California and Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond

Would require schools to provide teachers and school staff (grades 7 through 12) with annual professional development training and information on resources available to LGBTQ students.

These laws can help prevent bullying and harassment, keep LGBTQ students in school and reduce the rates of self-harm and suicide among LGBTQ youth. However, the work to improve school climate does not end at the Capitol, and legal requirements are merely a foundation upon which to build comprehensive policies that protect and empower LGBTQ students. It is critical to properly implement these laws and policies to build safe and supportive learning environments. There are also many ways in which school districts can go above and beyond legal requirements in fostering safe and supportive school climates for their LGBTQ students and staff.

A sense of pride in one's identity and a sense of belonging among one's peers in school are crucial elements of being able to learn and excel. Safe and supportive school climates are not a matter of politics or requirements but are the means to help today's youth survive and thrive.

"The 2018 Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card is a critical resource in improving the learning environments for LGBTQ students across California. My hope is that every parent or guardian uses this to effect change and make our schools safe for every child in the Golden State."

Assemblymember Todd Gloria

Vice Chair, California Legislative LGBTQ Caucus



EQUALITY CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE'S SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Equality California Institute developed the Safe and Supportive Schools Program to help address the disparities in health and well-being faced by LGBTQ students. This important program aligns with the organization's mission to ensure that the institutions to which people turn in times of need or crisis have the tools and training they need to serve the LGBTQ community. The program is a collaborative effort led by Equality California Institute to measure, assess and make public the efforts of school districts in California to implement programs and policies that foster supportive and affirming learning environments for LGBTQ students.

Equality California Institute launched the Safe and Supportive Schools Program in 2016. With the support of Latham & Watkins LLP, which conducted initial research into laws relating to LGBTQ students in California, Equality California Institute began drafting the survey that informs this report. Equality California Institute also convened an advisory committee to guide the substance and structure of the survey. The advisory committee consists of education experts, teachers, school board members, school district administrators, teachers union representatives and LGBTQ and civil rights advocates and organizations.³¹

By 2017, Equality California Institute and the advisory committee finalized the Safe and Supportive Schools Survey. Then-Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson wrote a letter of support that accompanied the survey upon its distribution to school districts. The survey asked school district officials to provide objective and verifiable information regarding their districts' programs and policies relating to five main topics: school climate, cultural competency training, transgender and gender-nonconforming students, curriculum, and suicide prevention.³² The survey covered many, though not all, topics that are important indicators of how inclusive a school district is for LGBTQ students and staff.

In November of 2017, Equality California Institute mailed the survey to each unified school district in California, addressed to the district's Superintendent and School Board President. The survey was accompanied by a glossary explaining key terms in the survey, a cover letter containing context and instructions for the survey, and a letter of support from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson urging each school district to respond to the survey. School districts were invited to respond via email, by fax, by traditional mail or through an online response portal.

Due to the sheer number of school districts in California, distribution of the inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Survey was limited to the 343 unified school districts in California. Equality California Institute hopes to include other types of school districts in future rounds of the survey.

Over the course of 2018, Equality California Institute conducted extensive outreach to unified school districts to provide survey support and to encourage responses. Outreach included hundreds of emails, phone calls, and in-person meetings. During the response window, Equality California Institute and Latham & Watkins LLP re-sent the survey, by mail and email, to non-responding districts and to districts requesting additional copies. Several extensions were offered to school districts that requested more time to respond.

Of the 343 California unified school districts invited to participate, 130 responded. Equality California Institute and Latham & Watkins LLP then began the process of scoring each response. Districts' responses were tabulated, and each district was placed into one of three tiers,³³ reflecting how much progress each district reported having made in relation to the survey criteria. A more comprehensive report of each school district's responses to individual survey questions is available at safesupportiveschools.org.

Like the survey on which it is based, this report looks at objective and verifiable information from school district records. This report is just the beginning. Equality California Institute encourages parents, students, teachers, staff and advocates to use this material as a starting point for conversations with your school district. For California unified school districts to improve the climate for LGBTQ students, advocates will need to continue to strengthen relationships with school districts and continue to advocate to state and local lawmakers for increased funding and resources. Creating safe and supportive school climates takes a communal effort, and this report is just one part of a much larger landscape.

³¹ See Appendix I on page 69 for a list of Safe and Supportive Schools Advisory Committee members.

³² See Survey Criteria on page 24 for information regarding these topics.

³³ See Tier Descriptions on page 46 for more information.



“This vital report puts cold hard data behind what we’ve found anecdotally in our work for so many years: most of the state’s teachers and school districts lack the training and support they want and need to implement the state’s newly LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. It is imperative to meet this need for our students, our families, and our future.”

Renata Moreira
Executive Director, Our Family Coalition



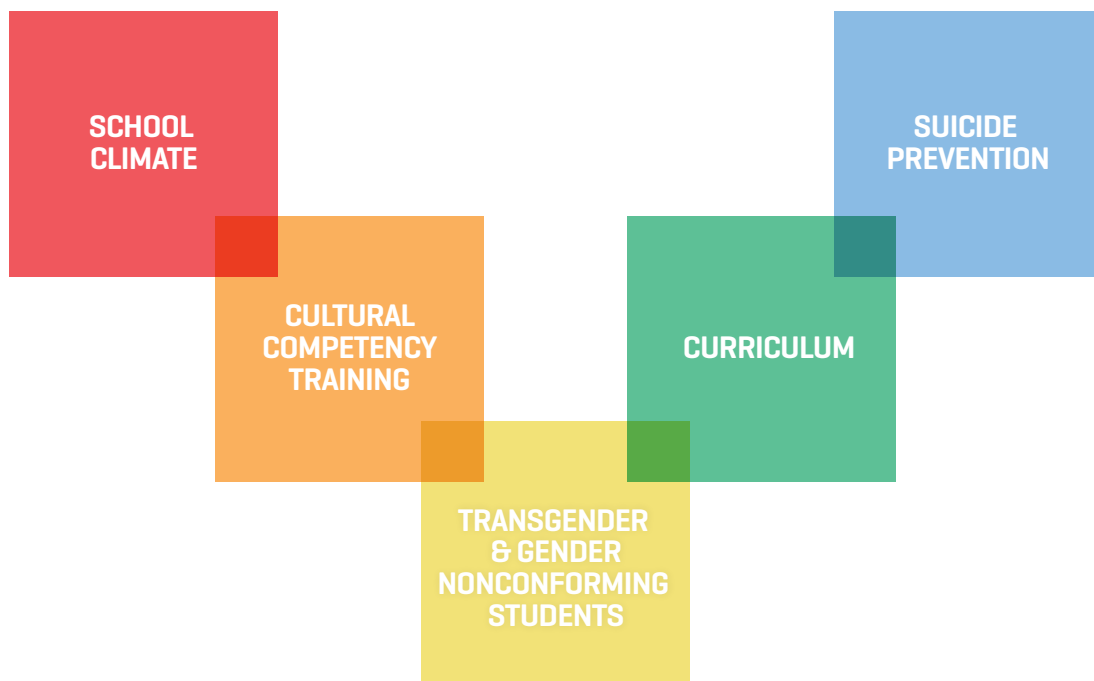
SURVEY

CRITERIA




SURVEY CRITERIA

The following section summarizes the five main topics discussed in the **Safe and Supportive Schools Survey**: school climate, cultural competency training, transgender and gender-nonconforming students, curriculum, and suicide prevention. Each topic includes additional context and an overview of the individual elements upon which each school districts' response was scored. A complete list of survey questions is available at www.safesupportiveschools.org.





1. SCHOOL CLIMATE

All students should feel safe from bullying, harassment and discrimination; affirmed in their identities; and supported by their peers and school staff.


 What is this category? This category evaluates a range of school district programs and policies that are important for ensuring that LGBTQ students feel safe and affirmed.

BULLYING AND SETH'S LAW

 Why important? LGBTQ students face disproportionate rates of bullying, harassment and discrimination at school relative to their non-LGBTQ peers. Almost 20% of LGBTQ students report that they had to transfer to a different school due to safety concerns.³⁴ School districts that have an anti-bullying policy with sexual orientation and gender identity enumerated as protected characteristics see a decrease in bullying directed at LGBTQ students and an increase in these students' sense of safety on campus.³⁵

 What's covered? Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has established anti-bullying policies that apply to cyber-bullying; has established policies that allow transfers to another school to escape bullying or harassment; has distributed anti-bullying policies in public areas; has translated policies into languages other than English; has established intervention requirements for school staff who witness bullying; and has established and distributed a complaint process so that students understand how to safely report instances of bullying or harassment.

LGBTQ INCLUSION AND VISIBILITY

 Why important? A sense of belonging among one's peers and affirmation in one's identity while at school are crucial to being able to learn and excel. LGBTQ student affinity groups — including Gay Straight Alliance or Genders and Sexualities Alliance [GSA] clubs — improve campus climate and student well-being,³⁶ for both LGBTQ students and the student population at large. Students on campuses that have a GSA club report hearing fewer anti-LGBTQ comments from students and staff,³⁷ and the presence of such groups on campus has been shown to decrease instances of LGBTQ discrimination and suicidality and improve LGBTQ students' mental health.³⁸ These groups create networks of support among LGBTQ students and provide a safe space for them to support each other. If a district allows the formation of other student clubs, LGBTQ students have the legal right to create a club and to use such words as "gay" or "queer" in naming their club, under the Federal Equal Access Act³⁹ and the First Amendment to the Constitution, but some students face school policies — written or implied — that are hostile to the formation of these important social spaces. Despite the many benefits of GSA clubs, 30% of LGBTQ students report not having access to one on their campus.⁴⁰ Therefore, district policies should explicitly support the rights of students to form and participate in such affinity groups and to seek out teachers to sponsor and mentor these clubs.

³⁴ Joseph G. Kosciw et al. *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools*. GLSEN, 2018, www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%202017%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20%28NSCS%29%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf.

³⁵ Ryan M. Kul et al. *From Statehouse to Schoolhouse: Anti-Bullying Efforts in U.S. States and School Districts*. GLSEN, 2015, www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%20-%20From%20Statehouse%20to%20Schoolhouse%202015_0.pdf.

³⁶ *Gay-Straight Alliances: Creating Safer Schools for LGBT Students and Their Allies (Research Brief)*. GLSEN, 2007, www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Gay-Straight%20Alliances.pdf.

³⁷ Emily A. Greytak et al. *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited: A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers*. GLSEN, 2016, www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/TeasingtoTorment%202015%20FINAL%20PDF%5B1%5D_0.pdf.

³⁸ Elizabeth Saewyc et al. *School-Based Strategies to Reduce Suicidal Ideation, Suicide Attempts, and Discrimination Among Sexual Minority and Heterosexual Adolescents in Western Canada*. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 2014, doi:10.18357/ijcfs.saewyc.512014.

³⁹ Pub. L. 98-377, title VIII, § 801, Aug. 11, 1984, 98 Stat. 1302.

⁴⁰ *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019, <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.



✓ **What's covered?** Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has collected anonymous data regarding the experiences of LGBTQ students; has established a gender-neutral dress code; has established a policy that formally requires schools to permit students to wear attire that corresponds with a student's gender identity or gender expression; has established a policy allowing students to bring a date of any gender to school events; has LGBTQ student affinity groups like GSA clubs; and has school- or district-level recognition of days of special significance for LGBTQ people.

TEACHER AND STAFF CLIMATE

🔍 **Why important?** An important indicator of a safe and supportive school climate is whether a district has established inclusive programs and policies for LGBTQ teachers and staff. These programs and policies are critical to support LGBTQ individuals working in public education who may face discrimination or lack of acceptance in their profession due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Additionally, these programs and policies communicate a broad commitment to all LGBTQ people, which may help increase LGBTQ students' overall sense of safety and support in their school.⁴¹

✓ **What's covered?** Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has adopted a policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying against teachers or other school staff and whether the district has affinity groups for LGBTQ-identifying teachers and other school staff.

"It is imperative that we continue to shine a light on the impact that safe and supportive school--and specifically GSA clubs--have in creating positive environments for LGBTQ+ students. GSA Network believes that it is crucial to center the voices of trans and queer youth of color in order to create welcoming school environments, and that school administrators and teachers take an active role in listening to the pressing needs of those students who are most impacted."

Ginna Brelsford
Co-Executive Director, GSA Network





⁴¹ Michele Kahn and Paul C. Gorski. *The Gendered and Heterosexist Evolution of the Teacher Exemplar in the United States: Equity Implications for LGBTQ and Gender Nonconforming Teachers*. International Journal of Multicultural Education, 2016, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1104923.pdf>.


2.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

Teachers and school staff must be equipped to identify at-risk LGBTQ youth and engage with LGBTQ students in a respectful, affirming manner.

 What is this category? This category evaluates the content, frequency, and depth of LGBTQ cultural competency training that school districts provide to teachers and other school employees.

 Why important? Inclusive policies alone do not guarantee a positive campus climate. Districts should take steps to provide all staff with the resources and training they need to properly support their LGBTQ students.⁴² Support and affirmation at school is particularly important for LGBTQ students who lack acceptance at home. Teachers must be equipped with the resources they need to identify and support youth who may be particularly at risk of dropping out of school or leaving home. Teachers report that lack of understanding and experience with LGBTQ issues, bullying, and sexuality hamper their ability to adequately support and interact with their LGBTQ students. Conversely, teachers who receive LGBTQ cultural competency training report greater competence, confidence, and positive effects on school climate.⁴³ LGBTQ cultural competency training — on topics such as LGBTQ-inclusive terminology, addressing bullying, and identifying at-risk students — for all teachers and school staff is a crucial component of safe and supportive learning environments.⁴⁴

 What's covered? Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has mandatory cultural competency training for teachers and school staff that focuses on LGBTQ topics and the challenges LGBTQ students face and the degree and frequency with which such trainings take place.

“If an LGBTQ student does not have a supportive family, they often turn to teachers and classified employees. School districts must provide these school employees with the tools they need to create safe and inclusive campuses and classrooms. This tool will empower communities to make sure that districts do their part.”

Jeff Freitas

California Federation of Teachers



⁴² *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019, <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.

⁴³ Laura-Lee Kerns et al. *Building LGBTQ Awareness and Allies in Our Teacher Education Community and Beyond*. Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching, 2014, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1060226.pdf>.


⁴⁴ Equality California has advocated repeatedly for mandatory LGBTQ cultural competency training in California schools. These legislative efforts have been stalled by budgetary limitations and decentralization of school resources under the Local Control Funding Formula. As part of our 2018 legislative package, Equality California sponsored **Assemblymember Tony Thurmond's (D-Oakland) AB 2153 (LGBTQ Cultural Competency for Teachers and School Staff)**, which would have provided California schools with resources to support LGBTQ students and create safer school environments. This legislation would have given teachers and school staff tools to provide culturally sensitive support for students who may be facing harassment, neglect, or lack of acceptance at school; rejection at home; or discrimination in the broader community. Additionally, in 2018, Equality California, along with Advancement Project California, Asian Americans Advancing Justice and the Council on American-Islamic Relations, co-sponsored **Assemblymember David Chiu's (D-San Francisco) AB 2291 (Online Anti-Bullying Training for Teachers and School Staff)**, which requires schools to provide teachers and school staff with annual online training on the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying. It also requires the California Department of Education to post this online training module on its website and ensures that policies and procedures relating to bullying and its prevention are included in school safety plans.




3.

TRANSGENDER AND GENDER-NONCONFORMING STUDENTS


All students deserve to feel affirmed in their identities, to have their privacy and confidential information protected and to participate fully in all school programs.

 **What is this category?** This category evaluates school district programs and policies relating to name and gender changes and access to school facilities and programs.


NAME AND GENDER CHANGES

 **Why important?** Transgender and gender-nonconforming people are systematically marginalized at work, at home, in health care settings, and in our communities. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey reported that transgender people of color and undocumented transgender respondents faced disproportionately high rates of unemployment, physical attack, homelessness, poverty, and intimate partner violence.⁴⁵ These disparities are the result of discrimination, lack of acceptance from society and family, and lack of gender-affirming health care.

Equality California places a high priority on taking steps to ensure that transgender youth receive the care and support they need. Research shows that gender identity usually forms at a very early age, often in preschool.⁴⁶ Children typically have a very strong sense of their gender, even when it does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Unfortunately, when they begin to express an identity that does not match the sex they were assigned at birth, they often face discouragement, lack of acceptance or outright rejection from the adults in their lives. Without the support of parents, guardians, or other caregivers, transgender youth face significant challenges. Young people who experience rejection or lack of acceptance based on their gender identity or expression are at significantly increased risk for negative health outcomes, being excluded from or dropping out of school, homelessness, and involvement in foster care and juvenile justice systems. Important indicators of a safe and affirming school environment for transgender and gender-nonconforming students include policies that validate a student's chosen name and gender. Without policies that allow for name and gender changes and procedures to ensure that school staff protect students' privacy, transgender and gender-nonconforming students face increased barriers to success and well-being.

 **What's covered?** Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has established a process for changing a student's name and gender for official and/or unofficial school records or databases; has established a policy that requires teachers and other personnel to refer to students according to their asserted name, gender identity, and pronouns; has established a policy protecting the privacy of transgender and gender-nonconforming students' birth names and sex assigned at birth; and has adopted a requirement that documents reflecting birth names and assigned sexes be segregated from records reflecting asserted gender identity and name.

FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

 **Why important?** School policies have a significant impact on the well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming students. Students who do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes experience less friendly school environments, and policies such as gender-specific dress codes can increase isolation and harassment of these students.⁴⁷ Similarly, a lack of inclusive policies or processes — for instance, on updating gender or name on school records or establishing the right to use facilities or participate in programs equally — can create further barriers to success and well-being for transgender students.⁴⁸ Over 40% of transgender and gender-nonconforming students in California report being unable to use the bathroom or locker room of the gender with

⁴⁵ Sandy James et al. *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016.

⁴⁶ American Civil Liberties Union et al. *Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools*. https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Schools-In-Transition.pdf?_ga=2.196859563.641366531.1543533395-1948320497.1534546114.

⁴⁷ Emily A. Greytak et al. *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited: A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers*. GLSEN, 2016, www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/TeasingtoTorment%202015%20FINAL%20PDF%5B1%5D_0.pdf.

⁴⁸ Ellen Kahn. *2018 LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign, 2018, https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/2018-YouthReport-NoVid.pdf?_ga=2.39976802.1735661672.1549410512-1112247624.1546994201.



which they identify,⁴⁹ which puts them at increased risk of violence and victimization.⁵⁰ If transgender and gender-nonconforming students are to feel safe at school and participate fully in school programs, it is imperative that they have easy access to their chosen facilities, free of harassment, bullying, and violence.

[What's covered?] Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has established a policy allowing students to use all restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to the student's gender identity; has at least one bathroom designated as gender-neutral that is located in an easily accessible area in every school; and has established policies that facilitate students' participation in sex-segregated programs or classes, including physical education classes and interscholastic, competitive sports programs, that correspond with the students' gender identity.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019, <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.


⁵⁰ *Transgender Inclusion in High School Athletics* (Policy Brief). GLSEN, Aug. 2017, www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Transgender%20Inclusion%20in%20High%20School%20Athletics_0.pdf.

⁵¹ In 2013 Equality California, along with GLSEN, Transgender Law Center, GSA Network, National Center for Lesbian Rights, ACLU of California and Gender Spectrum, co-sponsored **Assemblymember Tom Ammiano's (D-San Francisco) AB 1266 [School Success and Opportunity Act]**, which builds on and clarifies California student non-discrimination laws and specifies that all K-12 students must be permitted to access school programs, activities and facilities in accordance with their gender identity.





4. CURRICULUM

Schools have a duty to ensure that curricula are fair, accurate, inclusive, respectful, and comprehensive regarding the historical contributions of marginalized people. Sexual health education should be also inclusive, respectful, and comprehensive.


 What is this category? This category evaluates school district programs and policies relating to school libraries, history and social science curricula, sexual health education, and HIV/AIDS prevention education.

LIBRARIES

 Why important? LGBTQ students who have access to inclusive curricular resources are more likely to feel safe and to perform better academically. However, less than half of students report being able to find LGBTQ-related resources in their school library.⁵²

 What's covered? Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has LGBTQ-inclusive titles in their school libraries for various grade levels and whether a district allows teachers or other school staff to add LGBTQ-inclusive books to school libraries.

HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES

 Why important? Campus environments are safer and more welcoming when schools adopt curricula that recognize the roles and contributions of LGBTQ historical figures and events. LGBTQ students at schools where LGBTQ topics are taught report higher rates of self-empowerment, and they are more likely to report feeling supported and safe on their campus.⁵³ Teaching using an inclusive curriculum benefits all students, including non-LGBTQ students, who can learn greater acceptance and understanding of their LGBTQ peers.

⁵² Joseph G. Kosciw et al. *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools*. GLSEN, 2018, www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%202017%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20%28NSCS%29%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf.

⁵³ *Safe Place to Learn: Consequences of Harassment Based on Actual or Perceived Sexual Orientation and Gender Non-Conformity and Steps for Making Schools Safer*. California Safe Schools Coalition and 4-H Center for Youth Development, University of California, Davis, 2004.



✓ **What's covered?** Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has adopted LGBTQ-inclusive textbooks and other instructional materials for history and social studies at the elementary, middle, and high school levels; has required schools to use those materials in compliance with the FAIR Education Act; has ensured that the contributions of LGBTQ individuals are taught in history, government, and social studies courses;⁵⁴ and how frequently school districts review textbooks and curricular materials used in their schools.

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION AND HIV/AIDS PREVENTION EDUCATION

🔍 **Why important?** Youth make up 21% of new HIV infections in the United States, and the majority of these new infections are among gay and bisexual males.⁵⁵ California LGBTQ youth are not receiving adequate, inclusive instruction in sexual health education at school. Only 15% report receiving sexual health education that provides LGBTQ-inclusive information, and only 22% report receiving HIV/AIDS prevention education⁵⁶ despite comprehensive sexual health and HIV prevention education being required by AB 329 [the California Healthy Youth Act].⁵⁷ LGBTQ students are also too often made to feel invisible — or worse, stigmatized in health classes when their health concerns related to their sexual orientation and gender identity are not addressed. LGBTQ-inclusive education has been shown to have a positive effect on school climate overall and to make LGBTQ youth feel safer in school by affirming their individual self-worth and educating their fellow students.⁵⁸

✓ **What's covered?** Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has mandatory sexual health education and HIV prevention education programming (barring submission by a parent or guardian of an affirmative opt-out); whether the curriculum incorporates discussion of relationships other than cisgender heterosexual relationships; and whether the district offers sexual health education that includes information on sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV prevention at any grade level below 7th grade.

⁵⁴ In 2011, Equality California, along with GSA Network, co-sponsored **Senator Mark Leno's (D-San Francisco) SB 48 [FAIR Education Act]**, which requires roles and contributions of LGBTQ Americans [along with other marginalized groups] to be incorporated into social science instruction for elementary and secondary school.

⁵⁵ *HIV Among Youth*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018, www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/age/youth/index.html.


⁵⁶ *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019, <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.

⁵⁷ In 2015, Equality California, along with ACLU, CA Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Forward Together and Planned Parenthood, co-sponsored **Assemblymember Shirley Weber's (D-San Diego) AB 329 [California Healthy Youth Act]**, which strengthened and mandated comprehensive California sexual health curriculum for grades 7-12, required sexual health education to be inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity and required HIV education to be updated to reflect the latest evidence-based understanding of HIV/AIDS.


⁵⁸ *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019. <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.


5. SUICIDE PREVENTION

Students should be able to rely on school officials not just for educational information but also for emotional support and mental health services in times of need.


 What is this category? This category evaluates school district programs and policies relating to suicide prevention policies and training.


SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICIES⁵⁹

 Why important? Studies routinely show that school climate is related to student success and overall well-being. Over one-third of LGBTQ students nationally have skipped school due to safety concerns.⁶⁰ Nearly one in three LGB students have attempted suicide, a rate that is vastly higher than that for non-LGB youth,⁶¹ and 40% of transgender people attempt suicide at some point during their lives.⁶² According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people aged 10-24.⁶³ Studies have also shown that LGBTQ youth are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their non-LGBTQ peers.⁶⁴ Fortunately, studies show that LGB students living in cities and states with protective school climates report fewer suicidal thoughts.⁶⁵

 What's covered? Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has adopted a policy on pupil suicide prevention in grades 7 to 12 and whether that policy specifies procedures relating to suicide prevention, suicide intervention, and suicide postvention (support for those impacted by suicide) and addresses the needs of high-risk groups.

SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

 Why important? Schools — teachers and staff in particular — are on the front lines of providing a safety net against the effects of discrimination and lack of acceptance. LGBTQ students may be experiencing bullying or lack of acceptance from families and communities; therefore, student-facing school personnel must be trained to identify students who are at risk for suicide.⁶⁶

 What's covered? Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has established and implemented a mandatory suicide awareness and prevention training program and has identified and publicized relevant and appropriate non-school mental health services for youth in their communities.

⁵⁹ In 2016, Equality California, along with the Trevor Project, co-sponsored **Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell's (D-Long Beach) AB 2246 (Suicide Prevention Policies in Schools)**, which requires adoption of suicide prevention policies for grades 7-12 that address the needs of LGBTQ youth and other high-risk groups. In 2018, Equality California, along with the Trevor Project, also co-sponsored **Assemblymember Marc Berman (D-Palo Alto) and Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell's (D-Long Beach) AB 2639 (Suicide Prevention Training for Teachers and School Staff)**, which ensures that schools' student suicide prevention policies are reviewed regularly and updated a minimum of every five years.

⁶⁰ Joseph G. Kosciw et al. *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools*. GLSEN, 2018, www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%202017%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20%28NSCS%29%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf.

⁶¹ Laura Kann et al. *Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12 — United States and Selected Sites, 2015*. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 2016.

⁶² Sandy James et al. *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016.

⁶³ *Suicide Among Youth*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017, www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainmented/tips/SuicideYouth.html.

⁶⁴ Laura Kann, et al. *Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9-12 — United States and Selected Sites, 2015*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016, www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/ss/ss6509a1.htm.

⁶⁵ Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, Michelle Birkett, Aimee Van Wagenen, and Ilan H. Meyer. *Protective School Climates and Reduced Risk for Suicide Ideation in Sexual Minority Youths*. American Journal of Public Health, 2014.

⁶⁶ *Report On Student Suicide Prevention Policies in California*. The Trevor Project, 2018, www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/California-Student-Suicide-Prevention-Policy-Report.pdf.



"It is the responsibility of every school board to provide a safe and supportive environment in which students can excel. This tool will significantly assist districts in achieving that goal for LGBTQ students."

James Williamson

Past-Chair, Palm Springs Unified School District





OUR FINDINGS

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

While many of California's unified school districts have adopted policies and programs to support LGBTQ students and staff, there is ample room for improvement and growth. Equality California envisions a future in which each and every LGBTQ student, regardless of which district they attend, has access to a safe and supportive learning environment.

ADOPTING WRITTEN POLICIES

Written policies are critical to building lasting LGBTQ-inclusive practices and ensuring they are implemented consistently over time. Policies provide teachers, students, staff, parents, and other stakeholders clear guidance about school policy, offering something concrete to point to in the event that efforts to support LGBTQ students are questioned or challenged. Formalized policies also ensure that LGBTQ-supportive practices are implemented consistently over time and that their implementation is not reliant on individual school staff members, as staffing changes are inevitable.⁶⁷ Policies and regulations also signal to other school districts that they are not alone in fostering LGBTQ-inclusive learning environments and provide examples of how to do so. While these policies are essential, they are only the foundation for success. Districts have the ability to go above and beyond, implementing innovative programs and services that address the unique needs of the LGBTQ students in their own community.

SUPPORTING TRANSGENDER AND GENDER-NONCONFORMING STUDENTS

Transgender and gender-nonconforming students often face lack of acceptance and are disproportionately at risk for negative health outcomes; they must therefore be a priority demographic for districts. This includes the adoption of robust policies that respect student privacy, establish procedures for name/gender changes and guarantee equal access to school facilities. While a majority of districts report that all schools in their district allow students to use all restrooms and/or locker rooms that correspond to students' gender identity, not every district does. In some districts, transgender and gender-nonconforming students are unable to use facilities that correspond to their gender identity. If your school district does not have policies in place supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming students, work alongside administration to adopt new policies and implement programs tailored to advancing transgender and gender-nonconforming student success and well-being.

TEACHER AND STAFF TRAINING

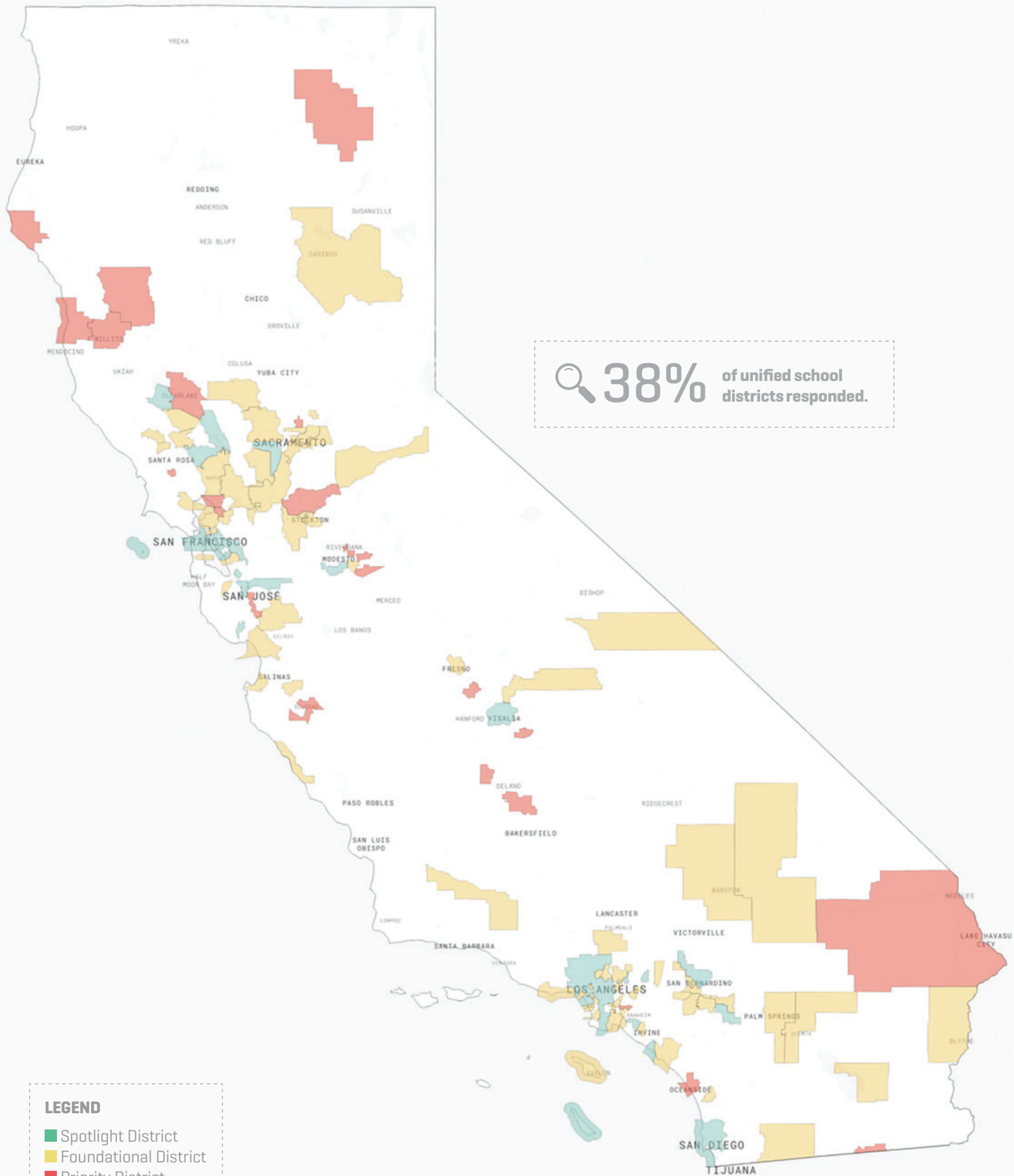
Outside of the home, students spend a majority of their time at school and in the classroom. Teachers and school staff have a responsibility to model positive, respectful behavior for students and to create a learning environment where all students have the ability to thrive. Therefore, LGBTQ-inclusive cultural competency training should be mandatory for all school staff. Unfortunately, 46 districts report that they do not offer training that *even generally* covers diversity, anti-bias, cultural competency, and/or equity and inclusion. Districts should examine potential resources available for the implementation of high-quality cultural competency trainings. Advocates should work with school districts to examine whether their Local Control and Accountability Plan goals include professional development related to LGBTQ-specific topics. The California Legislature should pass Assemblymember Todd Gloria's Safe and Supportive Schools Act of 2019, co-sponsored by Equality California and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, which would require schools to provide teachers and school staff (grades 7 through 12) with annual professional development training and information on resources available to LGBTQ students.

CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES

One way a school district can go above and beyond the current legal requirements is to encourage their libraries to include books that highlight contributions of LGBTQ individuals. The 24 districts that have this policy in place should be applauded, and more school districts are encouraged to expand their collection of textbooks and educational resources that call attention to LGBTQ individuals beyond what is required by the FAIR Education Act. Often in their responses unified school districts stressed the need for additional resources if these policies are to be implemented in a comprehensive manner. For our LGBTQ students to truly thrive, it is imperative that advocates continue to push state and local lawmakers to increase resources to our schools.

For additional resources and sample policies, please see Appendices II and III at the end of this report.

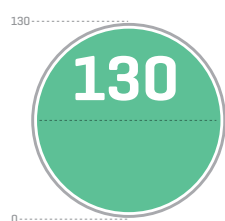
⁶⁷ *Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students in Schools: Key Recommendations for School Administrators (Informational Guide)*. American Psychological Association, 2015, www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/school-administrators.pdf.



Of the **130** responding districts:

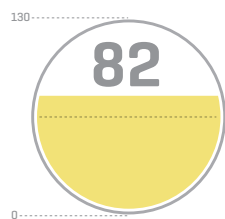
SCHOOL CLIMATE

ANTI-BULLYING



- **All 130 responding districts had an existing policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying against students (an “anti-bullying policy”).**
- Of these anti-bullying policies, 109 explicitly enumerate actual or perceived gender expression; 113 explicitly enumerate actual or perceived gender identity; 114 explicitly enumerate actual or perceived sexual orientation.
- Only 64 districts indicated that their anti-bullying policy addresses the ability of targets of bullying to transfer to a different school.
- 50 districts reported that they had not adopted a policy requiring that the anti-bullying policy be posted in a publicly accessible area in every school in the district, though publication by other means may be taking place.
- Districts publicized their anti-bullying policies via a variety of methods, the most popular of which was inclusion in the student and/or staff handbook [115 districts]. 72 districts publicized their anti-bullying policies by posting them in a publicly accessible area; 110 reported making the policy available on the district’s website and 40 reported publicizing the policy through a live presentation or explanation.
- 96 districts reported that their anti-bullying policies had been translated and made available in languages other than English.
- 121 respondents indicated they have a policy addressing the receipt and investigation of complaints of bullying [“complaint policy and form”].

LGBTQ INCLUSION AND VISIBILITY

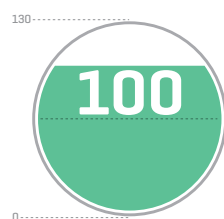


- **82 districts reported that they regularly collect data regarding student sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity. Of these districts, 76 reported doing so via the California Healthy Kids Survey.⁶⁸ Other data collection efforts include the CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey and Project Cornerstone in Santa Clara County.**
- Of the 102 districts that indicated they have a district-wide dress code/appearance policy, 77 reported that the policy is gender-neutral [the same for all students], and 49 of those dress code/appearance policies require that students be permitted to wear attire that corresponds with students’ gender identity or gender expression.
- Only 10 responding districts indicated that they have adopted a policy allowing students to bring a date of any gender to a school-sponsored event or dance.
- 43 districts reported all of their high schools have a GSA or similar and 41 districts reported that 50% or more of their high schools have a GSA or other similar club or organization. 12 reported all of their middle schools have a GSA or similar and only 18 districts reported 50% or more of their middle schools have a GSA or similar.
- Only 7 districts reported that they require all schools in their districts to recognize days of special significance to the LGBTQ community [e.g., Pride Month, Day of Silence, National Coming Out Day, Harvey Milk Day], and districts reported a range of ways in which those days are recognized: 43 reported making topical or curricular resources available to schools or teachers, 31 districts reported relevant assemblies or other gatherings, 10 reported including relevant information in district newsletters, 6 recognized relevant dates through board resolutions.

⁶⁸ The California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) is an “anonymous, confidential survey of school climate and safety, student wellness, and youth resiliency...administered to students at grades five, seven, nine, and eleven.” California Department of Education, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/chks.asp>.



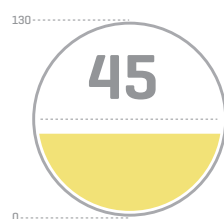
TEACHER/STAFF CLIMATE



- **100 districts reported adopting a policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying against teachers and/or other staff (“teacher/staff anti-bullying policy”).**
- Of these policies, 79 explicitly enumerate actual or perceived gender expression, 82 explicitly enumerate actual or perceived gender identity, and 81 explicitly enumerate actual or perceived sexual orientation.
- Only 5 districts reported having a district-wide affinity group or other association for LGBTQ-identifying teachers and/or other staff, and 125 districts reported that none of their individual schools have such an affinity group or association.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAININGS

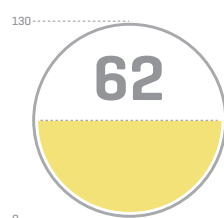
CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAININGS



- **45 districts reported that they do not offer training to employees that even generally covers diversity, anti-bias, cultural competency, and/or equity and inclusion.**
- 37 districts reported that they require cultural competency training for certificated staff at the early childhood education level; 44 require the training at the elementary level; 48 at the middle school level; and 47 at the high school level.
- Of those districts that do offer general training for high school teachers and staff, 58 reported that the training addresses LGBTQ-relevant content [e.g., training on the meaning of “sexual orientation,” “gender identity,” “cisgender” and “asserted pronouns”], 57 reported that the training addresses disparities of risk affecting LGBTQ youth [e.g., higher risk of being bullied, higher risk of sexual assault, higher dropout rate, higher incidence of homelessness and higher risk of depression and suicide], 28 reported that the training addresses discipline rates affecting LGBTQ youth, 55 reported that the training addresses topics related to transgender youth [e.g., proper use of asserted pronouns, access to facilities and safeguarding student privacy], and 19 reported that the training includes discussion of intersectionality or dual/multiple marginality.
- 17 districts listed LGBTQ-specific training among their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) goals, and 25 reported that they allocate Local Control Funding to training that includes LGBTQ-specific topics.
- Only 9 respondents reported that 100% of the certificated staff in their districts had participated in an LGBTQ-specific training within the 24 months preceding the survey, 6 districts reported the same for classified staff, 21 districts reported the same for administrative staff.
- Of districts that require LGBTQ cultural competency training for certificated staff at the high school level, 1 district reported requiring more than three hours, 14 reported requiring between one and three hours, and 10 reported requiring less than one hour of training.

TRANSGENDER & GENDER-NONCONFORMING STUDENTS

NAME AND GENDER CHANGES



- **62 districts reported having established a process for changing a transgender or gender-nonconforming student’s name and gender for purposes of official school records or databases [e.g., student transcripts], while 72 had such a process for unofficial school records [e.g., attendance sheets, school IDs, report cards and diplomas].**
- 53 districts reported having adopted a policy that requires teachers and other personnel to refer to transgender and gender-nonconforming students according to the student’s asserted name and gender identity [e.g., “asserted pronouns”].
- Only 30 of the responding districts reported that they require that documents reflecting a transgender or gender-nonconforming student’s birth name and assigned sex be segregated [physically and electronically] from records reflecting the student’s asserted gender identity and name.

FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS



- **113 districts reported that all schools in their district allow students to use all restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to students' gender identity. Fewer districts [84] reported that each of their schools has at least one gender-neutral restroom that is located in an easily accessible area (e.g., not in the nurse's office or teachers' lounge).**
- 66 districts reported that all their schools allow students to participate in any sex-segregated class or program (including physical education classes and interscholastic/competitive sports programs) that corresponds with the student's gender identity.

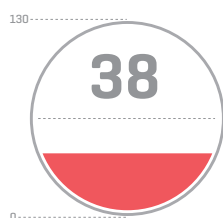
CURRICULUM

LIBRARIES



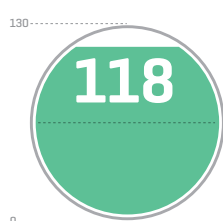
- **22 districts reported that they require specific LGBTQ-inclusive titles to be included in their schools' libraries for one or more grade category (e.g., early childhood education, elementary, middle school, or high school).**
- 97 districts reported that they allow teachers or other staff to add LGBTQ-inclusive books to their schools' libraries.

HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES



- **38 districts reported that they have adopted LGBTQ-inclusive textbooks and/or other instructional materials for history and social studies for one or more grade category (e.g., elementary, middle, or high school).**
- 60 districts reported that the contributions of LGBTQ individuals are taught in government, history, and/or social studies classes.

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION AND HIV/AIDS PREVENTION EDUCATION

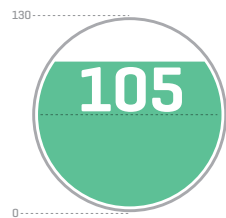


- **118 districts reported that student participation in sexual health and 118 reported participation in HIV prevention education is mandatory (barring affirmative opt-out by a parent or guardian). 7 districts reported that their sexual health education still operates under an optional/opt-in system (6 districts reported the same for their HIV prevention education).**
- 89 districts reported that their sexual health curriculum incorporates discussions of relationships other than cisgender heterosexual relationships.



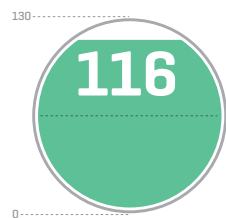
SUICIDE PREVENTION

SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICIES



- **105 districts** reported having established a suicide awareness and prevention training program. Although 89 districts reported that this training program is mandatory, only 52 districts reported that the program has been fully implemented among all staff. One district reported that a suicide prevention campaign was underway, with all staff to be trained within one year. Another district reported training-related partnerships with community-based organizations.

SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAININGS



- **116 districts** reported that they have adopted a policy on pupil suicide prevention in grades 7 to 12, and 92 districts indicated that this policy specifically addresses the needs of LGBTQ youth in some way.

DISTRICT

SUMMARIES



TIER DESCRIPTIONS

Equality California Institute tabulated survey responses and placed each responding school district into one of three tiers, reflecting how much progress each district reports having made in relation to the survey criteria.

22

of 130 Responding
School Districts

SPOTLIGHT DISTRICTS - TOP TIER

These school districts typically reported more extensive programs and policies to foster a safe and supportive school climate for LGBTQ students, including adopting anti-bullying and suicide prevention policies, cultural competency training programs, affinity groups like GSA clubs, inclusive access to facilities, and more.

For these districts, advocates should focus on improving programs and policies relating to bullying and suicide prevention, advocating for increased trainings for teachers and school staff, bolstering identity-affirming student groups, ensuring transgender and gender-nonconforming students have safe and inclusive access to facilities, and other things that might not be required by law but that go above and beyond in fostering an LGBTQ-inclusive school climate.

80

of 130 Responding
School Districts

FOUNDATIONAL DISTRICTS - MIDDLE TIER

These school districts generally reported some basic or initial steps toward fostering a safe and supportive school climate for LGBTQ students, including adopting anti-bullying and suicide prevention policies and more. However, many of these districts did not report important markers of safe and supportive learning environments, such as cultural competency training programs, affinity groups like GSA clubs, or inclusive dress code policies.

For these districts, advocates should focus on ensuring comprehensive and enumerated policies are implemented, and assisting school districts in addressing resource or capacity limitations that may be hampering their ability to move forward.

28

of 130 Responding
School Districts

PRIORITY DISTRICTS - LOWER TIER

These school districts have made modest initial steps toward fostering LGBTQ-inclusive school climate but may lack the resources, understanding or commitment to fully implement the programs and policies discussed in this report. These school districts generally reported little to no cultural competency training, few or no affinity groups like GSA clubs, non-inclusive dress code policies or facility access, lack of policies relating to name and gender changes, and under-inclusive curricula.

For these districts, advocates should focus on opposing programs and policies that are detrimental for LGBTQ students and guiding school districts to establish a foundation for comprehensive LGBTQ student equity by implementing metrics that are outlined in the Safe and Supportive Schools Survey.




For all of these districts, advocates should confirm their districts' responses are accurate, fill in gaps where needed, and work with their district to expand beyond the topics our survey covered toward innovative solutions for challenges these districts may be facing. Please submit any feedback or concerns about responses to SafeSchools@eqca.org.

DISTRICT SUMMARIES

RESPONDING DISTRICTS

Only unified school districts in California — school districts that generally include and operate primary schools [kindergarten through middle school or junior high] and high schools under the same district control — were invited to complete the inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Survey.

To provide an easily digestible summary of responses, we tabulated survey responses by subsection and translated each subsection point total into a corresponding color and icon.

	The color red indicates that a district received fewer than 1/3 of the points available in that subsection
	The color yellow indicates that a district received 1/3 - 2/3 the points available in the subsection
	The color green indicates that a district received 2/3 + of the points available in that subsection

Note: The color red does not necessarily mean a district earned zero points, and the color green does not necessarily mean a district earned all points available.

A more comprehensive report of each school district's responses to individual survey questions is available online at www.safesupportiveschools.org. Responding districts are listed alphabetically within each tier. They are not ranked by overall score.

"As a school board member and member of the LGBTQ community, I am grateful to all of the school districts that completed the survey. Their participation shows a commitment to LGBTQ students, even for the districts that have room for improvement."

ANTHONY DUARTE

Vice President Board of Education, Hacienda La Puente Unified School District



(I) School Climate

(II) CC Training

Sub Section:	County	Tier	(A) Bullying & Seth's Law [AB 9]	(B) LGBTQ Inclusion & Visibility	(C) Teacher & Staff Climate	Cultural Competency Training
SPOTLIGHT - TOP TIER						
Alameda	Alameda	●	●	●	●	●
Arcadia	Los Angeles	●	●	●	●	●
Castro Valley	Alameda	●	●	●	●	●
Ceres	Stanislaus	●	●	●	●	●
Davis Joint	Yolo	●	●	●	●	○
Garden Grove	Orange	●	●	●	●	●
Glendora	Los Angeles	●	●	●	●	●
Kelseyville	Lake	●	●	●	●	●
Laguna Beach	Orange	●	●	●	●	●
Los Angeles	Los Angeles	●	●	●	○	●
Milpitas	Santa Clara	●	●	●	●	●
Newark	Alameda	●	●	●	●	●
Oakland	Alameda	●	●	●	●	●
Saint Helena	Napa	●	●	●	●	●
San Bernardino City	San Bernardino	●	●	●	●	●
San Diego	San Diego	●	●	●	●	●
San Francisco	San Francisco	●	●	●	○	●
San Jacinto	Riverside	●	●	●	●	●
San Lorenzo	Alameda	●	●	●	●	●
Santa Clara	Santa Clara	●	●	●	●	●
Scotts Valley	Santa Cruz	●	●	●	●	●
Visalia	Tulare	●	●	●	●	●

- Green indicates that a district received 2/3 + of the points available in that subsection
- Yellow indicates that a district received 1/3 - 2/3 the points available in the subsection
- Red indicates that a district received fewer than 1/3 of the points available in that subsection

[III] T/GNC Students		[IV] Curriculum			[V] Suicide Prevention	
[A] Name & Gender Changes	[B] Facilities & Programs	[A] Libraries	[B] History & Social Studies	[C] Sexual Health & HIV Ed	[A] Suicide Prevention Policies	[B] Suicide Prevention Training
●	●	○	○	◐	◐	●
◐	●	○	●	●	●	●
○	◐	○	●	●	●	●
●	●	●	●	●	●	●
●	●	●	●	●	●	●
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◐	●	●	◐	●	●	●
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●	●	○	○	●	●	●
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			[I] School Climate			[II] CC Training
Sub Section:	County	Tier	(A) Bullying & Seth's Law [AB 9]	(B) LGBTQ Inclusion & Visibility	(C) Teacher & Staff Climate	Cultural Competency Training
FOUNDATIONAL - MIDDLE TIER						
ABC	Los Angeles					
Acton-Agua Dulce	Los Angeles					
Alhambra	Los Angeles					
Amador County	Amador					
Barstow	San Bernardino					
Beaumont	Riverside					
Berkeley	Alameda					
Beverly Hills	Los Angeles					
Big Pine	Inyo					
Burbank	Los Angeles					
Calipatria	Imperial					
Calistoga Joint	Napa					
Capistrano	Orange					
Claremont	Los Angeles					
Colton Joint	San Bernardino					
Culver City	Los Angeles					
Cutler-Orosi Joint	Tulare					
Cuyama Joint	Santa Barbara					
Desert Sands	Riverside					
Dixon	Solano					
Downey	Los Angeles					
El Rancho	Los Angeles					

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- Red indicates that a district received fewer than 1/3 of the points available in that subsection

[III] T/GNC Students		[IV] Curriculum			[V] Suicide Prevention	
[A] Name & Gender Changes	[B] Facilities & Programs	[A] Libraries	[B] History & Social Studies	[C] Sexual Health & HIV Ed	[A] Suicide Prevention Policies	[B] Suicide Prevention Training
●	◐	○	○	○	●	◐
○	●	○	○	◐	●	●
○	◐	○	○	◐	●	●
○	◐	○	○	◐	●	●
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◐	◐	○	○	◐	●	●
●	●	○	○	◐	◐	●

			[I] School Climate			[II] CC Training
Sub Section:	County	Tier	(A) Bullying & Seth's Law [AB 9]	(B) LGBTQ Inclusion & Visibility	(C) Teacher & Staff Climate	Cultural Competency Training
El Segundo	Los Angeles					
Fairfield-Suisun	Solano					
Folsom-Cordova	Sacramento					
Fresno	Fresno					
Glendale	Los Angeles					
Gonzales	Monterey					
Hacienda la Puente	Los Angeles					
Hayward	Alameda					
Healdsburg	Sonoma					
Hughson	Stanislaus					
Inglewood	Los Angeles					
Jurupa	Riverside					
Lincoln	San Joaquin					
Long Beach	Los Angeles					
Los Alamitos	Orange					
Lynwood	Los Angeles					
Manhattan Beach	Los Angeles					
Martinez	Contra Costa					
Middletown	Lake					
Monterey Peninsula	Monterey					
Moreno Valley	Riverside					
Morgan Hill	Santa Clara					
Mountain Empire	San Diego					

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- Red indicates that a district received fewer than 1/3 of the points available in that subsection

			[I] School Climate			[II] CC Training
Sub Section:	County	Tier	(A) Bullying & Seth's Law [AB 9]	(B) LGBTQ Inclusion & Visibility	(C) Teacher & Staff Climate	Cultural Competency Training
Napa Valley	Napa	●	●	●	●	●
Novato	Marin	●	●	●	●	○
Pajaro Valley	Santa Cruz	●	●	●	●	●
Palm Springs	Riverside	●	○	●	○	●
Palo Alto	Santa Clara	●	●	●	●	○
Palo Verde	Imperial	●	●	●	●	○
Paramount	Los Angeles	●	●	●	●	○
Pasadena	Los Angeles	●	●	●	●	○
Pierce Joint	Colusa	●	●	●	●	○
Pittsburg	Contra Costa	●	●	●	●	○
Plumas	Plumas	●	●	●	●	○
Rialto	San Bernardino	●	●	●	●	○
River Delta Joint	Sacramento	●	●	●	●	●
Riverside	Riverside	●	●	●	○	○
Rocklin	Placer	●	●	○	●	●
Sacramento City	Sacramento	●	●	●	●	●
San Gabriel	Los Angeles	●	●	○	●	●
San Juan	Sacramento	●	●	●	○	●
San Marcos	San Diego	●	●	●	●	○
San Marino	Los Angeles	●	●	●	●	●
Santa Ana	Orange	●	●	●	●	○
Santa Monica-Malibu	Los Angeles	●	●	○	○	●
Silver Valley	San Bernardino	●	●	●	●	○

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- Red indicates that a district received fewer than 1/3 of the points available in that subsection

[III] T/GNC Students		[IV] Curriculum			[V] Suicide Prevention	
[A] Name & Gender Changes	[B] Facilities & Programs	[A] Libraries	[B] History & Social Studies	[C] Sexual Health & HIV Ed	[A] Suicide Prevention Policies	[B] Suicide Prevention Training

			[I] School Climate			[II] CC Training
Sub Section:	County	Tier	(A) Bullying & Seth's Law [AB 9]	(B) LGBTQ Inclusion & Visibility	(C) Teacher & Staff Climate	Cultural Competency Training
South San Francisco	San Mateo	●	●	●	●	○
Stockton	San Joaquin	●	●	●	●	○
Torrance	Los Angeles	●	●	●	●	○
Tracy Joint	San Joaquin	●	●	●	●	○
Twin Rivers	Sacramento	●	●	●	●	●
UnidentifiedDistrict2	Unknown	●	●	○	●	●
UnidentifiedDistrict4	Unknown	●	●	●	○	○
West Contra Costa	Contra Costa	●	●	●	●	●
West Covina	Los Angeles	●	●	●	●	○
Windsor	Sonoma	●	●	●	●	○
Wiseburn	Los Angeles	●	●	●	○	●
Woodland Joint	Yolo	●	●	●	●	●
PRIORITY - LOWER TIER						
Alpaugh	Tulare	○	●	○	●	○
Big Sur	Monterey	○	●	○	○	○
Big Valley Joint	Lassen	○	●	○	○	○
Calexico	Imperial	○	●	○	●	○
Center Joint	Sacramento	○	●	●	●	○
Cotati-Rohnert Park	Sonoma	○	●	●	○	○
Denair	Stanislaus	○	●	○	●	○
Fort Bragg	Mendocino	○	●	○	○	○
John Swett	Contra Costa	○	●	○	○	○
Konocti	Lake	○	●	●	●	○

- Green indicates that a district received 2/3 + of the points available in that subsection
- Yellow indicates that a district received 1/3 - 2/3 the points available in the subsection
- Red indicates that a district received fewer than 1/3 of the points available in that subsection

[III] T/GNC Students		[IV] Curriculum			[V] Suicide Prevention	
[A] Name & Gender Changes	[B] Facilities & Programs	[A] Libraries	[B] History & Social Studies	[C] Sexual Health & HIV Ed	[A] Suicide Prevention Policies	[B] Suicide Prevention Training
○	◐	○	◐	●	●	●
●	●	○	●	●	●	●
●	●	○	○	●	●	●
◐	●	○	○	●	●	●
●	●	○	○	●	○	◐
○	◐	○	○	●	◐	○
○	◐	●	◐	●	●	●
○	◐	○	○	●	●	●
●	●	○	○	◐	●	●
●	●	○	○	◐	●	●
○	●	○	○	●	◐	●
○	◐	◐	○	◐	●	●
○	◐	○	○	◐	◐	
○	◐	○	○	◐	○	○
○	●	○	○	◐	●	●
○	○	○	○	○	●	●
○	◐	○	○	●	○	◐
○	●	○	○	●	○	●
○	●	○	○	◐	◐	○
○	○	○	○	◐	●	○
○	◐	○	○	◐	●	●
○	○	○	○	●	●	◐

			[I] School Climate			[II] CC Training
Sub Section:	County	Tier	(A) Bullying & Seth's Law [AB 9]	(B) LGBTQ Inclusion & Visibility	(C) Teacher & Staff Climate	Cultural Competency Training
Lindsay	Tulare	○	●	○	●	○
Lodi	San Joaquin	○	◐	◐	●	○
Mattole	Humboldt	○	◐	○	◐	○
McFarland	Kern	○	●	○	◐	○
Needles	San Bernardino	○	●	◐	○	○
Norwalk-La Mirada	Los Angeles	○	◐	◐	○	○
Oceanside	San Diego	○	●	◐	○	○
Riverbank	Stanislaus	○	●	○	○	○
Round Valley	Mendocino	○	○	○	○	○
San Jose	Santa Clara	○	●	◐	◐	○
Selma	Fresno	○	●	○	○	○
Soledad	Monterey	○	●	●	○	○
UnidentifiedDistrict1	Unknown	○	●	○	●	○
UnidentifiedDistrict3	Unknown	○	●	◐	◐	○
UnidentifiedDistrict5	Unknown	○	●	◐	○	○
Vallejo City	Solano	○	◐	◐	◐	○
Waterford	Stanislaus	○	●	◐	○	○

- Green indicates that a district received 2/3 + of the points available in that subsection
- ◐ Yellow indicates that a district received 1/3 - 2/3 the points available in the subsection
- Red indicates that a district received fewer than 1/3 of the points available in that subsection

[III] T/GNC Students		[IV] Curriculum			[V] Suicide Prevention	
[A] Name & Gender Changes	[B] Facilities & Programs	[A] Libraries	[B] History & Social Studies	[C] Sexual Health & HIV Ed	[A] Suicide Prevention Policies	[B] Suicide Prevention Training
●	○	○	○	○	●	○
○	●	○	○	◐	◐	○
○	◐	○	○	●	●	●
○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	●	○	○	○	●	●
◐	◐	○	○	◐	◐	○
◐	●	○	○	●	○	○
○	◐	○	○	●	○	◐
○	◐	○	○	◐	●	●
◐	●	○	○	●	○	○
○	○	○	○	◐	◐	●
○	○	●	○	●	◐	○
○	◐	○	○	○	○	○
○	●	○	○	●	◐	○
○	○	○	○	◐	●	●
○	◐	◐	○	◐	○	◐
○	◐	○	○	◐	●	●
○	◐	○	○	◐	○	○
○	◐	○	○	○	●	●

NON-RESPONDING DISTRICTS

Equality California Institute invited 343 unified school districts in California to complete the Safe and Supportive Schools Survey but did not receive identifiable responses from 213 districts. We believe California's public school districts owe greater transparency to the students, parents, teachers, staff and community members they serve. It is often quite difficult for students and their parents to understand whether a district has adopted or implemented policies related to the safety, health and well-being of LGBTQ students. It also can be challenging for advocates to easily determine whether their district is in compliance with California state law. The Safe and Supportive Schools Survey was developed precisely for this reason, and it is deeply disappointing that so many districts failed to respond.

Some of the non-responding districts provided reasons they declined to participate: not having enough time to respond, not having enough staff to collect the needed information to respond, not having the capacity or resources to engage in the programs and policies discussed or lack of overall interest in participating. Other districts ignored the survey altogether. Equality California Institute recognizes that school districts have limited capacity and resources. Thus, Equality California Institute is deeply appreciative of the participation and commitment to transparency that the responding districts displayed.

Please note that five of the 130 responses were submitted anonymously; therefore, Equality California Institute was not able to remove them from the list of non-responding districts below. Your district may be listed as non-responsive but may have responded anonymously.

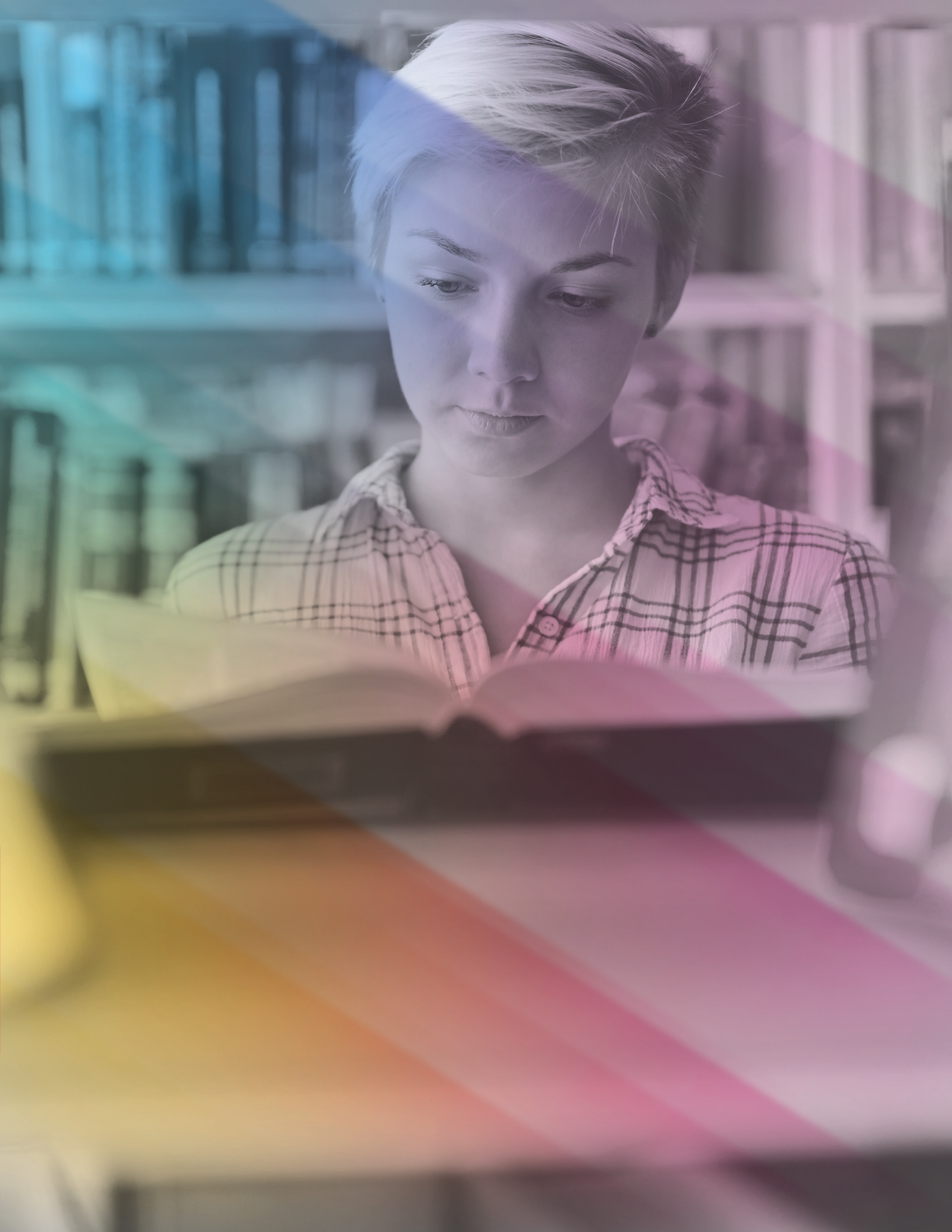
"California's public school districts owe LGBTQ families and the larger public transparency. We have a right to know what they are doing to protect LGBTQ students."

Robbie Rodriguez
Program Director, Equality California



ACTION ALERT:

We need your help! If your unified school district failed to respond to the inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Survey, you have the power to demand transparency. Equality California Institute encourages students, parents, educators and community members to use this Report Card as a tool to contact your school board and administrators and ask why they did not respond. You can also attend a public school board meeting and encourage the district to participate fully in the next iteration of the survey. If you want assistance contacting your school board, reach out to SafeSchools@eqca.org or visit safesupportiveschools.org.



NON-RESPONDING DISTRICTS

Albany City
Alpine County
Alvord
Anderson Valley
Antioch
Apple Valley
Aromas/San Juan
Atascadero
Azusa
Baker Valley
Baldwin Park
Banning
Bassett
Bear Valley
Bellflower
Benicia
Big Oak Flat-Groveland
Biggs
Bishop
Black Oak Mine
Bonita
Bonsall
Borrego Springs
Brea-Olinda
Butte Valley
Cabrillo
Calaveras
Carlsbad
Carmel
Carpinteria
Caruthers
Central
Charter Oak
Chawanakee
Chico
Chino Valley
Cloverdale
Clovis
Coachella Valley
Coalinga-Huron
Coast
Colusa
Compton
Conejo Valley
Corcoran Joint
Corona-Norco
Coronado

Covina-Valley
Death Valley
Del Norte County
Delhi
Desert Center
Dinuba
Dos Palos Oro Loma Joint
Duarte
Dublin
Durham
Eastern Sierra
El Tejon
Elk Grove
Emery
Escalon
Esparto
Exeter
Fall River Joint
Farmersville
Ferndale
Fillmore
Firebaugh-Las Deltas
Fontana
Fort Sage
Fowler
Fremont
Gateway⁶⁹
Geyserville
Gilroy
Golden Plains
Golden Valley
Gridley
Gustine
Hamilton
Hemet
Hesperia
Hilmar
Holtville
Imperial
Irvine
Kerman
Kings Canyon Joint
Klamath-Trinity Joint

La Canada
La Honda-Pescadero
Lake Elsinore
Lake Tahoe
Lakeport
Lammersville Joint
Las Virgenes
Laton Joint
Laytonville
Leggett Valley
Linden
Live Oak
Livermore Valley Joint
Lompoc
Lone Pine
Los Banos
Los Molinos
Lucerne Valley
Lucia Mar
Madera
Mammoth
Manteca
Maricopa
Mariposa County
Marysville Joint
Maxwell
Mendocino
Mendota
Modoc Joint
Mojave
Monrovia
Montebello
Moorpark
Morongo
Mountain Valley
Mt. Diablo
Muroc Joint
Murrieta Valley
Natomas
New Haven
Newman-Crows Landing
Newport-Mesa
North Monterey County
Oak Park
Oakdale Joint
Ojai
Orange

⁶⁹ Gateway Unified School District submitted relevant policies but did not submit responses to survey questions. Accordingly, Equality California Institute did not have survey responses upon which to assign a tier.

Orland Joint
Owens Valley
Pacific Grove
Palos Verdes Peninsula
Paradise
Parlier
Paso Robles Joint
Patterson Joint
Piedmont City
Placentia-Yorba Linda
Pleasanton
Pomona
Porterville
Potter Valley Community
Poway
Princeton Joint
Ramona City
Redlands
Redondo Beach
Reef-Sunset
Rim of the World
Ripon
Riverdale Joint
Rowland
Saddleback Valley
San Leandro
San Lorenzo Valley
San Luis Coastal
San Pasqual Valley
San Ramon Valley

Sanger
Santa Barbara
Santa Paula
Scott Valley
Shandon Joint
Shoreline
Sierra
Sierra Sands
Sierra-Plumas Joint
Simi Valley
Snowline Joint
Sonoma Valley
South Pasadena
Southern Humboldt Joint
Southern Kern
Southern Trinity Joint
Stony Creek Joint
Sunol Glen
Surprise Valley Joint
Tahoe-Truckee
Tehachapi
Temecula Valley
Temple City
Templeton
Travis
Trinity Alps
Trona Joint
Tulelake Basin Joint
Turlock
Tustin

Ukiah
Upland
Upper Lake
Vacaville
Val Verde
Valley Center-Pauma
Ventura
Vista
Walnut Valley
Warner
Washington [Fresno]
Washington [West Sacramento]
Western Placer
Westwood
Williams
Willows
Winters Joint
Woodlake
Yosemite
Yuba City
Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint



LIMITATIONS

All school districts listed in this report are unified school districts. Due to limited capacity, Equality California Institute only distributed the inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Survey to California's 343 **unified school districts**.

This report is meant to assess the existence and implementation of a range of school district policies and programs that affect school climate for LGBTQ students and staff. We recognize that the policies and programs covered in this report are **not comprehensive**. There are many additional ways in which school districts can foster safe and supportive learning environments for their LGBTQ students and staff. Equality California Institute looks forward to including additional metrics in future versions of the Safe and Supportive Schools Survey based on community feedback.

This report is based on responses received between November 2017 and November 2018; thus, responses are **current only as of that date range**. Toward the end of the response window, all responding school districts were **invited to review their responses, confirm that their responses** remained current, and **provide updates to any outdated responses**. This report incorporates any corrections or updates provided by school districts.

The Safe and Supportive Schools Survey focused on **formal policies**. Equality California Institute emphasizes the importance of all school districts having **written and disseminated** district policies and administrative regulations. These written instruments provide teachers, students, staff, parents, and other stakeholders with clear guidance about school policy and something concrete to rely on in the event that efforts to support LGBTQ students are questioned or challenged.

Furthermore, the existence of a policy does not mean that the policy is as robust as it could or should be or that the policy is being effectively **implemented**. The existence of a school district policy does not necessarily reflect the lived experiences of LGBTQ students or staff in that district.

This report reflects school districts' responses to objective questions regarding programs and policies. The results are reflections of the efforts of each individual school district that responded. This report **does not engage in statistical analysis**, nor does Equality California Institute intend for this report to indicate any aggregate, statistically verified trends across the state.

The responses presented in this report and accompanying documents are **self-reported** by school districts. Moreover, the Safe and Supportive Schools survey was **voluntary**. Thus, results are limited to districts that took the initiative to respond.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the support, engagement, and advice of many people:

The Safe and Supportive Schools Program Advisory Committee for their invaluable insight regarding the relationship between school district policy and LGBTQ inclusion and for thoughtfully guiding the contents of the survey that informs this report.

School district staff and board members, who by responding to our survey demonstrated an interest in working toward safer and more supportive school climates for LGBTQ students and staff in their schools.

Members of the California Legislative LGBT Caucus and allies in the California Legislature, who encouraged their constituent school districts to participate in the survey.

Former State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson and his staff at the California Department of Education, for his letter of support that accompanied the Safe and Supportive Schools Survey that was distributed to unified school districts.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond for his letter of support for the inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card. Equality California looks forward to continued collaboration with the California Department of Education.

Latham & Watkins LLP, whose pro bono partnership and contributions throughout the course of this project — including research, technical guidance and logistical support — enabled us to launch the inaugural survey to unified school districts across California and produce this report.

Equality California Institute board members, staff and interns, who contributed to creating the survey and drafting this report and conducted tireless outreach over many months to secure responses from school districts.

Jesse Reed, graphic designer, and **Dean Purvis**, web developer, who spent countless hours creating visuals and developing an interactive website to help bring this report to life.

Finally, we are thankful for **you, the reader**, for investigating the progress being made toward safe and supportive learning environments in California schools. We urge you to read this report with a critical eye, to verify the answers that respondents provided, and to engage with your local school districts to both acknowledge their efforts and to advocate for even more inclusive programs and policies where needed.

Thanks to our sponsors whose generous support made the 2019 Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card possible:







APPENDIX I: ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Equality California Institute sincerely thanks the Safe and Supportive Schools Program Advisory Committee for their invaluable insight regarding the relationship between school district policy and LGBTQ inclusion and for thoughtfully guiding the contents of the survey that informs this report.

CO-CHAIRS

- Anthony Duarte, Hacienda La Puente Unified School District Board Member
- James Williamson, Palm Springs Unified School District Board of Trustees & Equality California Board Member

MEMBERS

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- Rick Oculito, Our Family Coalition
- Shannan Wilber, National Center for Lesbian Rights
- Stephanie Camacho-Van Dyke, The LGBT Center Orange County
- Tarah Fleming, Our Family Coalition
- Vincent "Vinnie" Pompei, Human Rights Campaign Foundation

APPENDIX II: RESOURCES

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Transgender Inclusion in High School Athletics. GLSEN, 2017.
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APPENDIX III: SAMPLE POLICIES

Bullying

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Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students. GLSEN & National Center for Transgender Equality, 2018.

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Suicide Prevention

Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, The Trevor Project and American School Counselor Association & National Association of School Psychologists, 2016.

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