



**EQUALITY
CALIFORNIA**

A Report from Equality California Institute

2022 Safe & Supportive Schools Report Card



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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 Equality California (EQCA) and Equality California Institute (EQCAI). EQCA is an I.R.S. 501(c)(4) organization that utilizes electoral, advocacy, and mobilization programs to achieve its mission. EQCAI is an I.R.S. 501(c)(3) organization that utilizes advocacy, education, and mobilization programs to achieve its mission.

Graphic design: Jesse Finley Reed

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



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Acknowledgments

The work of the Safe and Supportive Schools program at Equality California Institute is guided and informed by our Safe and Supportive Schools Advisory Committee, a group of representatives from districts, teachers' unions, and community organizations that provides feedback and assistance in our work. We acknowledge all the members of the Advisory Committee, but are particularly indebted to our co-chairs, James Williamson and Anthony Duarte; district representatives Erica Hasenbeck, Kena Hazelwood, Erik Martinez, and Dr. Angelov Farooq; teachers' union representatives C. Scott Miller and Jeff Freitas; and organizational representatives Rick Oculito, Rob Darrow, Lex Ortega, Vinnie Pompei, Stephanie Camacho-Van Dyke, Eric Adams, Brian Poth and Justin Tindall, among others. We are grateful for your time, support, expertise, and dedication to students and the LGBTQ+ community.

We would like to thank our pro bono partners, Latham & Watkins LLP, especially Amy Quartarolo, Micah Long, Natasha Philips, Steven Schmulenson, T Finneran, Colleen Rico, and Akilah Paul, for their guidance and support throughout the last year and a half. Their support on research, editing, technical support, and many other areas has been essential.

We are also deeply grateful for the partnership of the It Gets Better Project in gathering and sharing stories of excellence in supporting safe and supportive school environments for LGBTQ+ young people. The It Gets Better Project team, led by Executive Director Brian Wenke and Director of Programs Justin Tindall, and with the support of Sean Worley at Education Counsel, took the initiative and dedicated the resources and time to collect the video and written case studies featured in this report. Their creative contributions have made it possible for us to more vividly and fully illustrate what safe and supportive school environments look like and why it is so important to make progress on the issues addressed in this report.





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Letter from the Executive Director

Every student deserves to learn and grow in a school environment that is welcoming, supportive, and safe.

This is the motivation behind Equality California’s Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card. This report is a tool that collects and makes public district-level efforts to implement policies that contribute to student safety and well-being by reducing bullying, fostering teacher cultural competency, building community among students, and ensuring that students have equal access to facilities and activities, among many other things.

For more than twenty years, Equality California has worked, in partnership with legislators and the community, to pass many of the state laws that established these policies. But we recognize that the work only starts with legislation. Supporting school districts in understanding, funding, and effectively implementing school climate policies matters. Listening and building capacity matters. Partnerships on the ground, with parents, school leaders, teachers, and the broader community, matter.

We believe that, by gathering information on what the landscape looks like and publishing it, we are helping policy-makers and the community to identify areas of need and areas of excellence, building a community that will allow districts to share best practices, resources, and approaches, with an eye toward improving the climate in California’s schools not just for LGBTQ+ youth, but for all students.

The following report presents the self-reported responses of 118 unified school districts to our Safe and Supportive Schools survey, an 89 question survey that asks districts to provide information in connection with their policies concerning school climate, teacher and staff training, curriculum, issues specific to transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) students, and suicide prevention. These questions are specific and detailed. For example, we ask how many times districts circulate bullying complaint forms to students and parents and what percentage of staff at each grade level have received diversity, anti-bias, and inclusion training. We believe that these specific details make a difference, that every policy matters, and each district (regardless of its geography, socio-economic factors, or politics) has an interest in ensuring that their schools provide equal protection, equal safety, and equal quality of instruction to all students.

We recognize that there are limitations to the data presented. Districts self-report their results. They have the option not to respond, which is why only 118 of the 343 unified school districts in the state responded this year. In addition, districts have different resources available to them, affecting their ability to make their facilities gender-neutral or to afford inclusive textbooks, for example.

This report is intended as a resource and a starting place for conversations about successes and challenges, and we need your help—advocates, community stakeholders, school district staff—to leverage the information compiled in this report to improve school climate for LGBTQ+ students across California.

Safe and supportive school climates are important for all students, but they are particularly important for LGBTQ+ kids and teens, who continue to face bullying, harassment, and assault while at school (sometimes even by school staff) because of who they are. When LGBTQ+ students feel unsafe at school, they are more likely than their non-LGBTQ+ peers to drop out, skip classes, score lower grades, and encounter the criminal justice system.

We believe that the work of addressing these disparities is a shared responsibility, and that, today, the vast majority of California’s parents, students, teachers, school leaders, and members of the general community are allies and partners in this important work.

In Partnership,



Tony Hoang
Executive Director
Equality California Institute



**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

October 1, 2022

Dear California Students, Parents, Educators, and Community Leaders:

Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card

As your State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I am proud to support Equality California Institute's release of the second Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card.

The information and recommendations provided in this report will help us identify critical gaps and elevate successes as districts across the state work to support positive school climates not just for LGBTQ+ youth, but for all students.

California has made significant progress toward improving school climate over the past several years. We have worked to create robust policies to reduce bullying, train staff to intervene and prevent suicide, ensure students have equal access to facilities, and encourage inclusion and understanding through curriculum. I am proud of our Department's continuing efforts to build on that progress by sharing resources, helping develop trainings, and providing critical guidance on a range of issues affecting the safety and well-being of LGBTQ+ and all students.

To successfully sustain and advance this work, we should continue to foster collaborative partnerships and work to better understand where further resources and support are needed. The California Department of Education will continue to support the implementation of legislation that has been passed by working with LEAs across the state to uplift best practices, share available resources, build consensus, and serve the best interests of students and families.

I encourage the use of this report as a tool for members of communities to self-evaluate, connect, discuss, and advocate.

I thank the Equality California Institute and its Safe and Supportive Schools Advisory Committee for dedicating time and resources to collect this critical information and make it actionable. I look forward to continuing this important work in partnership with you all in the months and years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Thurmond".

Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent of Public Instruction



How to Use This Report

This report provides data on the implementation of policies and best practices to support positive school climate for all students in unified (K-12) school districts in California, with a particular focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) students.

We encourage its use for self-evaluation, sharing best practices, identifying gaps, and advocating for change. It should spark conversation and help generate ideas for specific, concrete actions that districts can take to improve school climate for LGBTQ+ youth and all students.

If your unified school district is on the list of respondents, consider thanking your district for participating. Take a close look at how your district reported what they are doing to support LGBTQ+ youth and contact your district regarding specific points of concern.

If your unified school district did not respond, consider writing a letter to your superintendent, school board members, and other contacts at the district to urge them to review the Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card, participate in future surveys, and contact Equality California Institute regarding ways in which your district can evaluate and improve school climate for LGBTQ+ youth.

Please note that, if your district is not unified, but rather, an elementary school, high school, or union school district, it was not invited to participate in the survey this year.¹

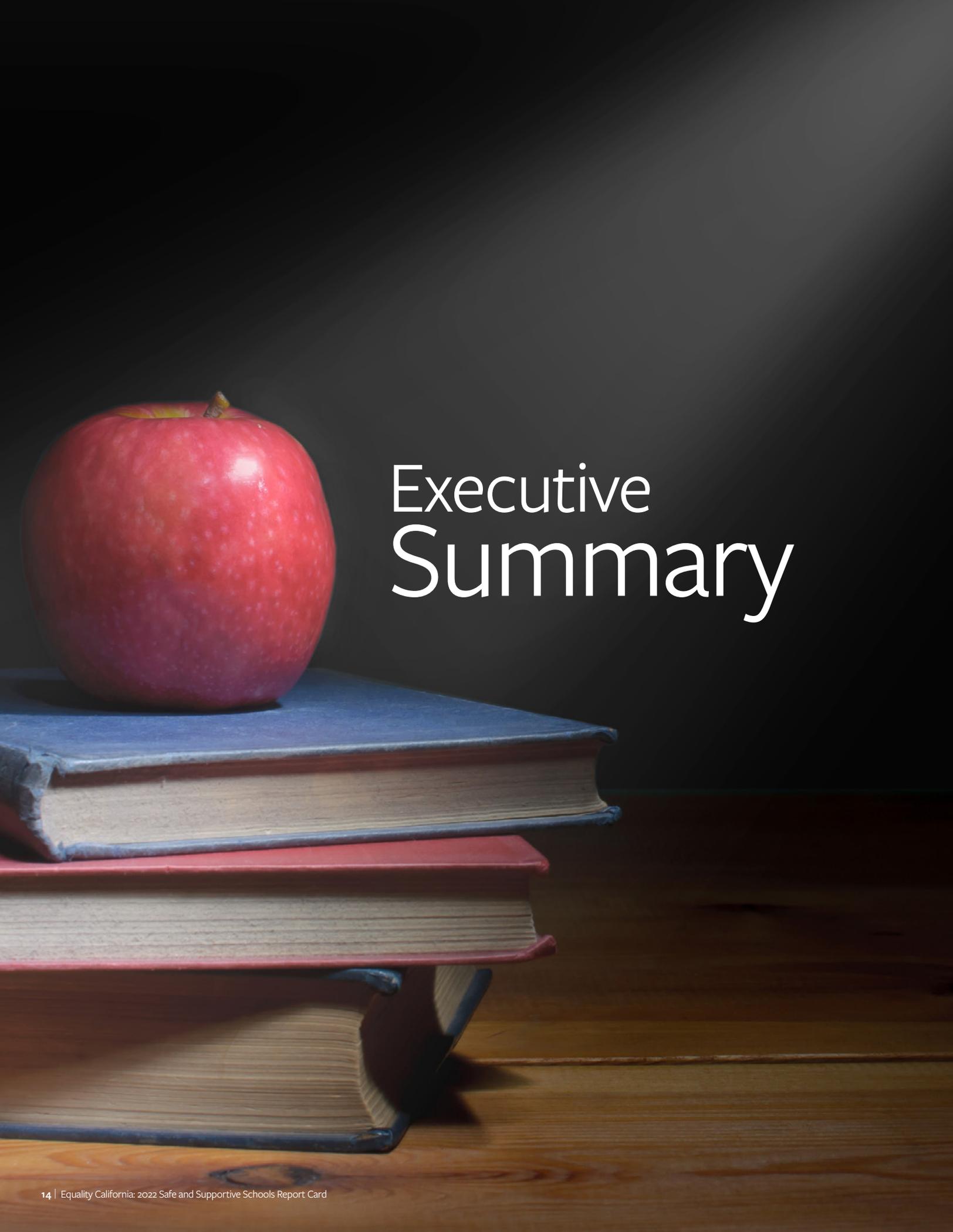
Equality California Institute invites comments regarding additions or updates to the metrics used in the Safe and Supportive Schools Survey. We also welcome requests to participate in meetings and discussions focused on this report and its contents.

Please send all questions, comments, and requests 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 Safe and Supportive Schools Survey. We hope to expand to additional types of school districts in the future.







Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

Hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+ students are learning and growing in California schools. Because all children deserve to learn in a place where they are respected and protected, it is critical that our schools provide a safe and supportive environment for all students.

In the last several decades, California as a state, as well as many individual school districts, have made significant strides toward ensuring that school environments are safe and nurturing for all.

Even so, there is significant evidence that LGBTQ+ youth in California and across the country continue to face disproportionately high rates of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and lack of acceptance at school. As a result, they are more likely than their non-LGBTQ+ peers to miss instruction, see their academic performance suffer, drop out, and consider self-harm or suicide.

A safe and supportive school environment allows LGBTQ+ students, and all students, to succeed academically and has a significant positive 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 wide array of state laws in California aimed at protecting LGBTQ+ students, including requiring school staff suicide prevention training and mandating robust anti-bullying policies that require staff to intervene when they witness bullying.² We have also supported best practices in schools, such as establishing school Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) clubs and allowing students to bring dates of any gender to school functions such as dances.

We believe, and significant evidence shows, that these individual laws, policies, and practices, in concert, make a significant difference in preventing bullying and harassment, keeping LGBTQ+ students in school, and reducing the rates of self-harm and suicide among LGBTQ+ kids, teens, and young adults.

However, the work to improve school climate does not end with the passage of any single law. Indeed, 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 political challenges that impede implementation, or lack awareness regarding the laws' requirements and how to meet them.

The function of this report is to provide those school districts, policymakers, and the general public with another tool to better address and close these gaps and foster a safe and supportive climate in our schools.

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 as compared with the broader public. 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 best 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, and to better support their implementation in schools.

Equality California Institute launched the Safe and Supportive Schools Program in 2016. With the support

² 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 are provided in the body of this report.

of Latham & Watkins LLP, which assisted with research into laws relating to LGBTQ+ students in California, Equality California Institute began drafting the survey that informed the inaugural Safe and Supportive Schools Report Card. 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.³

In 2017, we sent the first survey out to California unified school districts, and 130 districts responded. We issued the first report with results from those districts in May 2019. In the succeeding two years, we met with and discussed the results with more than 60 unified school districts across the state of California.

In November 2021, we disseminated the second Safe and Supportive Schools Survey, with the support of Latham & Watkins LLP and the Safe and Supportive Schools Advisory Committee. Equality California Institute e-mailed the survey to each unified school district in California, addressed to the district's Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent or Director of Student Services.

The survey was accompanied by a glossary, FAQ, letter from our Executive Director, and letter of support from California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond urging each school district to respond.

The survey asked school district officials to provide objective and verifiable information regarding their district's programs and policies relating to five main topics: school climate, cultural competency training, transgender and gender-nonconforming students, curriculum, and suicide prevention. The survey covered many, though not all, topics that are viewed as important indicators of how inclusive a school district is for LGBTQ+ students and staff.

Unified school districts were invited to respond through an online response portal.

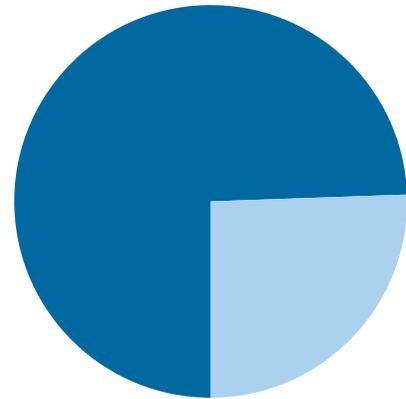
During late 2021 and into 2022, Equality California Institute conducted extensive outreach to school districts to provide survey support and encourage engagement. Such outreach included hundreds of emails, phone calls, and both in-person and virtual meetings.

During the six month response window, Equality California Institute and Latham & Watkins LLP re-sent the survey 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, 118 responded.

Equality California Institute and Latham & Watkins LLP then began the process of compiling and tabulating districts' responses. Equality California Institute then placed each district into one of three tiers, reflecting the 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 provided by the school district.

³ Please see full Advisory Committee List on page 72



118 of 343

Of the 343 California unified school districts invited to participate, 118 responded to our **Safe & Supportive School Report Card.**



As noted above, this report is just the beginning. Equality California Institute encourages parents, students, teachers, staff, and advocates to use this report as a starting point for conversations with your school district and community. 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 is a communal effort, and this report is just one part of a much larger landscape.

KEY LIMITATIONS

- ▶ Due to the sheer number of school districts in California, distribution of the 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.
- ▶ This Report Card relies on data self-reported by unified school districts through a voluntary survey focused on district policy, and is unable to capture individual student experiences.⁴ While we made an effort to validate the self-reported responses by checking publicly available district policies, those who consult the report results may want to request a copy of a given policy from their school district to confirm further.
- ▶ Although 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 laws and policies are actively implemented and enforced, at the district level, school level, or in the classroom.

⁴ 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_o.pdf).

KEY FINDINGS⁵

School Climate:

- ▶ 97% of responding districts (115/118) indicated that they had an existing policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying against students (an “Anti-Bullying Policy”).
- ▶ 70% of districts (83/118) reported that they had an Anti-Bullying Policy that explicitly prohibited bullying on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- ▶ 95% of districts (112/118) have policies that require school personnel to intervene and stop bullying when they witness it.
- ▶ 59% of districts (70/118) have policies that allow students who are victims of bullying to transfer to a different school.
- ▶ 83% of districts (98/118) have policies that allow students who are victims of bullying to transfer to another district if no alternative school placement within the district is available.
- ▶ 75% of districts (89/118) require schools to track bullying incidents.
- ▶ 91% of districts (90/99) have gender-neutral district-wide dress code policies.⁶
- ▶ 34% of districts (34/99) with district-wide dress code policies require schools to permit students to wear attire that corresponds with the student’s gender identity or gender expression.⁷
- ▶ 16% of districts (19/118) have policies that allow students to bring a date of any gender to school functions such as dances.
- ▶ 86% of districts (102/118) require schools to allow students to form GSAs should they wish to form one.
- ▶ 52% of school districts (61/118) have GSAs in at least half of their middle schools. 32% (38/118) have GSAs in all middle schools.
- ▶ 81% of school districts (96/118) have GSAs in at least half of their high schools. 59% (70/118) have GSAs in all high schools.

⁵ See District Level Results on page 60 .

⁶ The remaining nineteen (19) districts that responded to this question indicated that individual schools in the district set their own dress codes.

⁷ The remaining nineteen (19) districts that responded to this question indicated that individual schools in the district set their own dress codes.



Cultural Competency Training:

- ▶ 78% of districts (92/118) offer training on anti-bias, diversity, and inclusion to their school staff members.

Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students:

- ▶ 67% of districts (79/118) have policies that allow for changing name and gender markers for transgender and gender-nonconforming students on official school records.
- ▶ 84% of districts (99/118) have policies that allow students to use locker rooms and restrooms based on their gender identity.
- ▶ 53% of districts (62/118) have at least one gender neutral restroom facility available for students that is easily accessible and not in a nurse's office or faculty lounge.

Curriculum:

- ▶ 52% of districts (61/118) have adopted LGBTQ+ inclusive social science textbooks at the high school level.
- ▶ 87% of districts (103/118) offer sexual health education that is mandatory unless a parent or guardian opts their student out.
- ▶ 76% of districts (90/118) offer LGBTQ+ inclusive sexual health education.

Suicide Prevention:

- ▶ 93% of districts (110/118) have suicide prevention policies.
- ▶ 75% of districts (89/118) have suicide prevention policies that specifically mention the needs of LGBTQ+ kids, teens, and young adults.
- ▶ 87% of districts (103/118) have suicide awareness and prevention training programs for their staff members.
- ▶ 74% of districts (87/118) require their staff members to complete suicide awareness and prevention training.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

This report highlights some of the ways California unified school districts are succeeding and some of the ways in which they face challenges in creating a safe and supportive school climate for LGBTQ+ and all students.

While there is room for unified school districts to improve across many fronts, a few specific key areas for improvement emerged from the survey responses:

DISTRICTS REQUIRE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IN ADDRESSING BULLYING:

- ▶ Additional work is needed to ensure that districts are appropriately addressing bullying on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and fully remediating and taking action to resolve bullying incidents. The vast majority (97%) of districts have comprehensive anti-bullying policies in place. Only 70% indicated that those policies mention sexual orientation and gender identity, however, and 75% indicated that they require schools to track bullying incidents.
- ▶ This suggests that a significant number of school districts across the state are not explicitly prohibiting bullying on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and that a significant number are not keeping track of bullying complaints to ensure that incidents are addressed and resolved.
- ▶ More support and resources are needed to effectively track, quickly remediate, and effectively resolve and stop bullying incidents, both in general and specific to LGBTQ+ students. Additionally, more data collection and accountability are needed to monitor progress and address and fill any gaps.

DISTRICTS REQUIRE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IN ADOPTING LGBTQ+-INCLUSIVE TEXTBOOKS AND MAKING RESTROOMS AND LOCKER-ROOMS ACCESSIBLE TO TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING STUDENTS:

- ▶ Many districts have indicated that they face difficulties in updating policies, curriculum, and facilities to be compliant with California's changing educational codes. All school districts should be using educational materials that are compliant with the FAIR Education Act, which has been state law for more than a decade, and should be allowing students to use accessible restrooms and locker rooms according to their gender identity, which has been law for nearly a decade as well.
- ▶ However, 48% of districts reported that they had not yet adopted LGBTQ+-inclusive textbooks or other instructional materials for history and social studies classes at the high school level. Nearly half (47%) of districts indicated that their schools did not have at least one gender neutral restroom facility available for students that was easily accessible and not in a nurse's office or faculty lounge.
- ▶ Additional support and resources should be made available to districts to support more effective and uniform implementation of these long-standing state laws.

Policy-makers, district administrators, parents, teachers, and the general public should consider these key findings (and others) in identifying areas where additional action is merited.

This Safe and Supportive Schools 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 may be needed, new assessments of school climate may need to be conducted, and ongoing community outreach and engagement is 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 EXPERIENCE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AT SCHOOL AND NEED SAFER AND MORE SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

In the last several decades, our state and country have made significant progress in advancing LGBTQ+ civil rights. These victories have included the legalization of marriage equality nationwide, broad non-discrimination protections in employment and other areas, and, in California and many other states, incredible progress on anti-bullying and suicide prevention efforts and school climate policies in K-12 education.

However, LGBTQ+ people still experience significant 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.⁸ LGBTQ+ kids, teens, and young adults are not exempt from these disparities. Because young people 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.

According to the California Healthy Kids Survey, approximately 5-10% of public middle and high school students in California identify as LGBTQ+.⁹

LGBTQ+ students face many barriers to success as they move through the education system. More than 80% report regularly hearing homophobic remarks and approximately 30% report being physically harassed or assaulted at school.¹⁰

Research suggests that LGBTQ+ students are significantly more likely than their non-LGBTQ+ peers to be chronically absent and tardy from school, achieve lower grades, and have lower expectations of finishing high school, often due to bullying, harassment, discrimination, and lack of acceptance.¹¹ The experiences that LGBTQ+ kids and teens have in school have enduring effects on their life outcomes and professional and economic success.¹²

Encouragingly, studies show that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students who attend school in environments with supportive policies and staff report significantly lower rates of depression and suicidality, lower rates of bullying, and better overall achievement and well-being than LGBTQ+ young people who do not.¹³

Equality California, the partner organization to Equality California Institute, has sponsored an array 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

⁸ Griffith, D. (January 2019). *LGBTQ youth are at greater risk of homelessness and incarceration*. Prison Policy Initiative.; Bowers, A., Turrini, G., Pyda, S., Strickland, K., Chappel, A., De Lew, N., and Sommers, B. (June 2021) *Health Insurance Coverage and Access to Care for LGBTQ+ Individuals* (Issue Brief No. HP 2021 14). Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.; Mongelli, F., Perrone, D., Balducci, J., Sacchetti, A., Ferrari, S., Mattei, G., & Galeazzi, G. M. (2019). *Minority stress and mental health among LGBT populations: An update on the evidence*.

⁹ Hanson, T., Zhang, G., Cerna, R., Stern, A., & Austin, G. (2019). *Understanding the experiences of LGBTQ students in California*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

¹⁰ GLSEN. (2021). *School Climate for LGBTQ Students in California (State Snapshot)*. New York: GLSEN.

¹¹ Steven R. Aragon, V. Paul Poteat, Dorothy L. Espelage & Brian W. Koenig (2014) *The Influence of Peer Victimization on Educational Outcomes for LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ High School Students*, *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 11:1, 1-19, DOI:10.1080/19361653.2014.840761

¹² Wimberly, G. L., Wilkinson, Lindsey, & Pearson, Jennifer. (2015). "LGBTQ student achievement and educational attainment." *LGBTQ issues in education: Advancing a research agenda*, 121-139.

¹³ Trevor Project. (2022). *2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health*. Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.



awareness regarding legal requirements and the best ways to meet them. These laws are now all statutes in the California Education Code and are referenced and hyperlinked below with their Education Code sections and with the bill names and bill numbers that were assigned to them as they made their way through the California Legislature prior to passage.¹⁴

Education Code 234, 234.1, 234.2, 234.3, 234.5

AB 9 - Seth's Law (2011)

- ▶ 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
- ▶ Required schools to adopt and publicize certain anti-bullying policies
- ▶ Required school personnel to intervene when they witness bullying

Education Code 32261, 32282, 32283, 46600, 48900

AB 1156- Bullying and School Safety Plans (2011)

- ▶ Required procedures to prevent bullying in comprehensive school safety plans
- ▶ Required the Department of Justice and California Department of Education to contract to provide the training of school site personnel in the prevention of bullying

Education Code 51204.5, 51500, 51501, 60040, 60044

SB 48 - FAIR Education Act (2011)

- ▶ Required roles and contributions of LGBTQ+ Americans (along with other marginalized groups) to be incorporated into social science instruction for elementary and secondary school (particularly in American history classes)

Education Code 221.5

AB 1266 - School Success and Opportunity Act (2013)

- ▶ Supplemented and clarified then-existing California student non-discrimination laws
- ▶ Required all K-12 students to be permitted to access school facilities and programs in accordance with their gender identity

Education Code 51930-51939

AB 329 - California Healthy Youth Act (2015)

- ▶ Strengthened and mandated comprehensive California sexual health curriculum for grades 7-12
- ▶ Required sexual health education to be LGBTQ+ inclusive
- ▶ Required HIV education to be updated to reflect the latest evidence-based understanding of HIV/AIDS

¹⁴ In conversations with more than seventy school districts over the last two years, our team has repeatedly heard district administrators cite resource and training constraints as factors that adversely affect their ability to effectively implement positive school climate policies.



Education Code 215

AB 2246 - Suicide Prevention Policies in Schools (2016)

- ▶ Required adoption of suicide prevention policies for grades 7-12 that specifically mention and incorporate plans to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ youth and other high-risk groups

Education Code 32283.5

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

- ▶ Required schools to provide teachers and school staff with annual online training on the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying
- ▶ Required the California Department of Education to post online training modules on bullying and cyberbullying on its website
- ▶ Ensured that policies and procedures relating to bullying and its prevention are included in school safety plans

Education Code 215

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

- ▶ Ensured that schools' student suicide prevention policies are reviewed regularly and updated a minimum of every five years

Education Code 218

AB 493 - Safe and Supportive Schools Act (2019)

- ▶ Created CDE-hosted website with LGBTQ+-focused resources for school districts

Education Code 46600

AB 1127- Interdistrict Attendance: Prohibition on Transfers by a School District of Residence (2019)

- ▶ Required districts to allow students who have been bullied to transfer to a school in a new district if it is not possible for a student to transfer to a new school within the district.

These laws and others can help prevent bullying and harassment, keep LGBTQ+ students in school, and reduce the rates of self-harm and suicide among LGBTQ+ kids, teens, and young adults.

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.



School District Spotlight: Moreno Valley Unified

By Jason Gutierrez





Creating a sense of belonging on campuses throughout the **Moreno Valley School District** isn't just something the administration likes to talk about, it's something they have worked hard to measure and accomplish.

Dr. Martinex Kedziora, Superintendent of Schools for the Moreno Valley Unified School District, says the district has found that the best way to provide for students and parents is to directly ask about their needs through a district-wide Panorama Survey. Dr. Kedziora says this has been a crucial tool in gauging the climate of each school site and the families they serve.

“Fortunately, scores come back in the high 80 percent range from students and parents, stating they feel a good sense of connectedness and belonging,” Dr. Kedziora says. “We are looking at a variety of different areas that affect our students, such as culture, climate, safety, security and social-emotional well-being. Each school handles things differently based on the data we receive from these surveys. However, across the district, one thing remains the same and that’s the level of time and attention we give.”

At the school site level, district schools gauge the social-emotional wellness of students in other ways. At Landmark Middle School, students regularly complete a social-emotional survey on their experiences, giving administration a better sense of the pulse on campus.

“We look at these results bi-weekly,” Harold Acord, District Student Success Coach says. “We track and measure how many students are saying they are in need of assistance. Of course, counselors still play a big role in being the first to know if a student is needing assistance and so are some teachers. Our goal is to stay on top of critical issues so we can respond.”

As part of the ongoing response to the well-being and success of students on campus, the Moreno Valley Unified School District encourages students and staff to get involved with student-based support groups, clubs and other inclusive activities.

“Open communication is crucial,” says Johnny Munoz, Activities Director at Vista Del Lago High School. “We have teachers who have a Pride flag in their classroom or display a Safe Space triangle reassuring students that they are someone that can be trusted and know that no matter what may be going on this is where they can come to talk safely if they want.”

Talking openly and honestly is one thing Dr. Kedziora says he has found that is just as important to the parents in the district.

“I’ve had parents come to me and express issues or experiences their students have gone through,” Dr. Kedziora says, “Talking about problems makes us better as a district because we can face those issues and find ways of handling those issues for everybody involved. We want our students and families to feel valued and appreciated. Down to the administrative staff that parents or students may interact with, we like to hire individuals reflective of the culture and inclusive nature of the district.”

One thing Dr. Kedziora acknowledges is that there is always room for improvement.

“Training and education doesn’t stop for anyone,” he says. “Myself included. I still take new trainings with the staff in the district. I believe there is always more to learn and ways to improve how we work together to make a truly inclusive district, to make our campuses happy and healthy for our LGBTQ+ students.”

This spotlight is part of a collection of stories gathered for this report card by the It Gets Better Project, a California-based nonprofit organization working to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe. To learn more, go to www.itgetsbetter.org.



School Climate

All students should be safe from bullying, harassment, and discrimination and supported by peers and school staff.

What is this category?

This category includes district programs and policies that are important for ensuring that LGBTQ+ students are safe and supported and that staff are well-equipped and trained to respond to bullying and harassment incidents when they witness or are alerted to them.

BULLYING AND SETH'S LAW

Why is this important?

LGBTQ+ students face higher rates of bullying, harassment, and discrimination at school relative to their non-LGBTQ+ peers.¹⁵

Almost 20% of LGBTQ+ students report that they had to transfer to a different school due to safety concerns.¹⁶ School districts that have anti-bullying policies with sexual orientation and gender identity explicitly mentioned as protected characteristics see a decrease in bullying directed at LGBTQ+ students and an increase in these students' sense of safety on campus.¹⁷

What indicators do we have for this?

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 or another district 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 is this important?

A sense of connection to other students and being cared for by supportive adults is critical to student well-being.

LGBTQ+ student affinity groups — including GSA clubs — improve campus climate and student well-being for LGBTQ+ students and allies.¹⁸

Students on campuses that have a GSA club report hearing fewer anti-LGBTQ+ comments from students and staff, and the presence of such groups on campus has been shown to decrease instances of LGBTQ+

¹⁵ Koswicz, J. (2020). *The 2019 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools*. GLSEN. Retrieved from https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/NSCS19-FullReport-032421-Web_o.pdf.

¹⁶ Koswicz, J. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools*. GLSEN. Retrieved from https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/FullNSCS_Report_English_2017.pdf.

¹⁷ Kull, R., Kosciw, J., & Greytak, E. (2015). *From Statehouse to Schoolhouse: Anti-Bullying Efforts in U.S. States and School Districts*. GLSEN. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED570446.pdf>.

¹⁸ GLSEN (2007). *Gay-Straight Alliances: Creating safer schools for LGBT students and their allies. (GLSEN Research Brief)*. GLSEN. Retrieved from https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/Gay-Straight_Alliances_Creating_Safer_Schools_2007.pdf.



discrimination and suicidality and improve LGBTQ+ students' mental health.¹⁹ These groups create networks of support among LGBTQ+ students and allow 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 it, under the Federal Equal Access Act and the First Amendment to the Constitution, but some students face school policies — written or implied — that may be hostile to the formation of these important support networks.

Despite the many benefits of GSA clubs, approximately 30% of students in California have reported not being able to access one, a finding corroborated by the results of this survey.²⁰ 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 them.

What indicators do we have for this?

Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has established a gender-neutral dress code; 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, such as LGBTQ+ History Month, Harvey Milk Day, Transgender Day of Visibility, and Day of Silence.

TEACHER AND STAFF CLIMATE

Why is this 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 important to support LGBTQ+ people 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.²¹

What indicators do we have for this?

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.

¹⁹ Kosciw, Joseph, Greytak, Emily, Diaz, E, Bartkiewicz, M (2010). *The 2009 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. GLSEN. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED512338.pdf>; Emily A. Greytak et al. (2016). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited: A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers*. GLSEN. Retrieved from https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/From_Teasing_to_Torment_Revised_2016.pdf.

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

²¹ Michele Kahn and Paul C. Gorski (2016). *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. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1104923.pdf>.



School District Spotlight:
Vista Unified

By Jason Gutierrez





For six years, Maria Al-Shamma has been employed as a social worker for the **Vista Unified School District** in San Diego County. A key part of her job is developing and implementing continuing education classes that advise teachers on how to interact with and relate to LGBTQ+ youth.

As a professional social worker and the mother of an LGBTQ+ child, Maria is well-aware of the challenges that parents of LGBTQ+ students and the students themselves face in schools.

“You’re faced with, what do we do if something happens? Who do we turn to? How do we know if anyone is an ally in their school?” says Al-Shamma. “That’s truly what sparked my activism and passion for this area of work.”

Al-Shamma recalls the early days of the development of the district’s training program.. Teachers in the district were surveyed with hypothetical questions about how to handle issues with regard to LGBTQ+ youth. Many of them said they needed more training and understanding.

Al-Shamma says developing and implementing the training wasn’t easy. It took persistence and first-hand experience for the district superintendent to get buy-in from school sites. “The superintendent saw one of my trainings and later approached me to do a similar training for the district’s principals. At the end of the training, she said to the group, ‘Now I expect you all to take this back to your schools and use it.’ It was in that moment that the door opened.”

Every staff member who completes the course receives a “Safe Space” badge, a marker that many students use to identify LGBTQ+-affirming staff members whom they can talk to on campus.

“For the most part, faculty members continue to be receptive and interested in being supportive,” Al-Shamma says. “There are some instances where a faculty member won’t take the badge and that’s ok. It’s a no-judgment zone. It’s better to have those confident and comfortable wear the badge.”

When it comes to criticism or pushback of Maria’s work, she says she’s not surprised by some discomfort and negative feedback.

“The negativity usually focuses on our trans students and bathroom use. I try to use the pushback or negativity as a teachable moment. It’s important to not shy away from the topic being discussed. It gives everyone an opportunity to experience something that they may be faced with. I always let the group know I’m not here to change anyone’s values or beliefs. I’m here to ensure that as educators, we create a climate and a culture that’s welcoming, affirming and accepting for our LGBTQ+ children.”

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Cultural Competency Training for School & Staff Members

Teachers and school staff should be provided diversity, anti-bias, and equity training that incorporates LGBTQ+ topics, in order to better support LGBTQ+ and all students and work with them in a respectful, supportive manner.

What is this category?

This category evaluates the content, frequency, and depth of diversity, anti-bias, equity, and LGBTQ+ cultural competency trainings that school districts and their organizational partners provide to teachers and other school employees.

Why is this important?

Inclusive policies alone do not guarantee a positive campus climate. Districts should take steps and make investments of time and resources to provide all staff with the resources and training they need to properly support LGBTQ+ and all students.²² Support at school is particularly important for LGBTQ+ students who may lack acceptance at home.

School staff must be equipped with the resources they need to support students who may be particularly at risk of dropping out of school or leaving home as a result of bullying, harassment, or lack of acceptance. Their ability to do this may be hampered by lack of understanding and experience with LGBTQ+ issues, bullying intervention strategies, and other topics.

Conversely, teachers who receive relevant training report greater competence and confidence in promoting a positive school climate.²³

What indicators do we have for this?

Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has mandatory cultural competency training for teachers and school staff that includes LGBTQ+ topics and bullying prevention, intervention, and remediation strategies.

²² Human Rights Campaign Foundation (2019). *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Retrieved from <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.

²³ Laura-Lee Kerns et al. (2014). *Building LGBTQ Awareness and Allies in Our Teacher Education Community and Beyond*. Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1060226.pdf>.



School District Spotlight: San Francisco Unified

By Jason Gutierrez



From being a student to being an educator, one thing was crystal clear to Kena Hazelwood — students need to be able to wake up, go to school and feel that they are seen for who they are, not who the world expects them to be.

Today, Hazelwood works as an LGBTQ+ Student Services Coordinator for the San Francisco Unified School District's Student and Family Services Division. Growing up in San Francisco as a product of the district herself, she learned firsthand the importance of having resources and safe spaces made available to LGBTQ+ youth.

“As a Black, queer kiddo who came up in San Francisco and through this district, I was really aware of where we were showing up for queer youth and where we weren't, because I wasn't supported in various ways.”

San Francisco Unified School District was one of the country's first districts to offer LGBTQ+ student services. The district has offered such support for 32 years.

“When we (the district) first started doing this work, it was assumed that queer and trans kids were having a hard time because there's something wrong with them,” Hazelwood said. “This sparked a more therapeutic approach to our services, but, with time and experience, the district realized that's not the case. The kids are fine. It's the systems in place that need fixing.”

Mark Almanza, a special education teacher and LGBTQ+ Support Liaison for The Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts in the district, is also carving out safe spaces for his students.

As an LGBTQ+ Support Liaison, Almanza works to secure resources from the school district, sponsor events like GLSEN's Day of Silence and Trans Day of Visibility and Remembrance, and ensure awareness stays top of mind for all students. Having several trans friends, he says he strongly empathizes with their struggles and has continued to help raise awareness.

“I'm here to be supportive,” Almanza says. “The student clubs have great ideas and know what they want to accomplish. I'm here to provide resources or help find them within the district. They truly take the lead and are doing the work.”

This type of safe space and camaraderie is something Almanza says he wishes he had growing up and is honored to be a part of today.

“I don't want students today to go through what I went through in high school. Feeling ashamed of being autistic, ashamed of being gay. I'd have really big breakdowns and I never want any of my students to go through that,” Almanza says. “They should be proud of who they are and told to be proud.”

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Issues Specific to Transgender & Gender Non-Conforming Students

Transgender and gender non-conforming students deserve to be respected and treated equally, to have their privacy protected, and to participate fully in school programs.

What is this category?

This category evaluates school district programs and policies with specific regard to transgender and gender non-conforming students. These include policies related to name and gender changes and equal access to school facilities and programs.

NAME AND GENDER CHANGES

Why is this important?

Transgender and gender non-conforming people face specific challenges and barriers, at work, at home, in health care settings, and in our communities.

The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey reported that transgender people, particularly transgender people of color and transgender undocumented people, faced disproportionately high rates of unemployment, physical attack, homelessness, poverty, and intimate partner violence.²⁴

These disparities result from discrimination and lack of acceptance, which transgender and gender non-conforming youth unfortunately encounter early on, in school and elsewhere.²⁵

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, such as being excluded from or dropping out of school, homelessness, and involvement in foster care and juvenile justice systems.²⁶

What indicators do we have for this?

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 separated from records reflecting asserted gender identity and name.

²⁴ James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.

²⁵ Price-Feeney, M., Green, A. E., & Dorison, S. H. (2021). *Impact of bathroom discrimination on mental health among transgender and nonbinary youth*. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 68*(6), 1142-1147; Drabish, K., & Theeke, L. A. (2022). *Health impact of stigma, discrimination, prejudice, and bias experienced by transgender people: a systematic review of quantitative studies*. *Issues in mental health nursing, 43*(2), 111-118.

²⁶ Ibid.

FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS

Why is this important?

School policies have a significant impact on the well-being of transgender and gender non-conforming students.

Transgender and gender non-conforming students experience more hostile school environments, and policies such as discriminatory dress codes and trans-exclusive restrictions on access to restrooms and locker rooms can increase isolation and contribute to harassment.²⁷

Over 40% of transgender and gender non-conforming students in California report being unable to use the bathroom or locker room of the gender with which they identify, which puts them at increased risk of violence, victimization, and a number of other challenges.²⁸

Evidence suggests that lack of access to restrooms can cause serious health problems for transgender and gender non-conforming people. Eight percent of respondents to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey reported that, in the previous year, they had experienced a urinary tract infection or kidney-related issue on account of avoiding restrooms.²⁹

If transgender and gender non-conforming students are to feel safe, be healthy 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 indicators do we have for this?

Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has established a policy allowing students to use restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to students' gender identity; whether every school in the district has at least one bathroom designated as gender-neutral that is located in an easily accessible area; and whether the district has established policies that facilitate students' participation in sex-segregated programs or classes that correspond with the students' gender identity.

²⁷ Johns M.M., Lowry R., Andrzejewski J., et al. (2019). *Transgender identity and experiences of violence victimization, substance use, suicide risk, and sexual risk behaviors among high school students — 19 states and large urban school districts, 2017*. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly.* 68, 67–71. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6803a3>

²⁸ Human Rights Campaign Foundation (2019). *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Retrieved from <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.

²⁹ James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality.





School District Spotlight: Elk Grove Unified

By Jason Gutierrez





Xanthi Soriano has worked in the **Elk Grove Unified School District** for more than 13 years— as a teacher, a dance director, and currently, as the Director of Communications. She’s seen a lot of changes happen across the district and “all for the better.”

Soriano recalls her time as a Dance Director at a school site. She remembers many of her LGBTQ+ students saying that they felt like they had nowhere to turn to when dealing with issues at school.

“I had some young men and young ladies trying to understand what they were going through and wanting to talk or feeling they couldn’t talk about it,” she says. “Some had significant things going on in their lives, especially culturally at home. They needed someone to talk to, someone to understand. Knowing how much our district has grown for students and for teachers with resources and trainings to help in these types of situations, to be able to discuss openly and know how to discuss properly is huge.”

Larrah Feliciano, Program Specialist of the Youth Development Office in the district, says since being in her role for a little over a year, she’s seen the district offer multiple trainings to staff to better serve the LGBTQ+ student population.

“What we are doing pumps me up,” she says. “I love doing this work. As a straight, cisgender woman, doing allyship work, I have learned so much and am proud to work with incredible students who continue to teach me. That student voice is important. We need to know what they need and know what we can do for their educational experience to be the best.”

This school year, the district has also introduced an LGBTQ+ student council. The student council program is comprised of students and a dedicated district staff member. The council provides presentations to middle school and high school students and conducts virtual meetings discussing school climate issues.

“The district and staff always want to do more for all of the students we serve,” Feliciano says. “Our work is never done, especially for our marginalized students. This new student council will give the students a voice and teach advocacy and empowerment as well. Our goal is to have two students per school site be part of the council and bring issues, topics and insight from their schools to the virtual meetings so we can all assist and understand student life more clearly.”

Don Ross, Director of Students Support and Health Services, says the climate and environment across the district’s campuses continues to change in a positive way. He says that is due to the knowledge and visibility of strong, trusted allies on each campus.

“Our work has allowed students to be and feel comfortable,” he says. “The support the students feel, the trainings our staff receive have created a true inclusive environment. You can feel it.”

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Curriculum

Schools have a duty to ensure that the content that is presented to students is fair, accurate, inclusive, respectful, and comprehensive. In social science teaching, American history should include an accurate representation of the historical contributions of all people to the nation. Sexual health education should also be 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 is this 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.³⁰

What indicators do we have for this?

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 has a policy that allows teachers and school librarians to add age-appropriate LGBTQ+-inclusive books to school libraries.

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Why is this important?

Campus environments are safer and more welcoming when schools adopt curricula that recognize the roles and contributions of LGBTQ+ historical figures and particularly the LGBTQ+ civil rights movement, both within the context of the American civil rights movements of the 20th and 21st centuries and broader civics as well.³¹

LGBTQ+ students enrolled in schools where they learn about LGBTQ+ topics report lower levels of bullying and harassment and are more likely to say that they feel supported and safe on their campus.³² “LGBTQ+ topics” chiefly means LGBTQ+-inclusive social science and history, which is what Education Code 51204.5 (The FAIR Education Act) requires.³³ Teaching about LGBTQ+ history within the context of American history also reflects the truth, given that a comprehensive and truthful understanding of 20th and 21st century American history and culture would be impossible without understanding at least essential figures, organizations and milestones such as Stonewall, the careers and activism of individuals such as Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin,

³⁰ Human Rights Campaign Foundation (2019). *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Retrieved from <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>.

³¹ Snapp, S. D., McGuire, J. K., Sinclair, K. O., Gabrion, K., & Russell, S. T. (2015). LGBTQ-inclusive curricula: Why supportive curricula matter. *Sex Education, 15*(6), 580-596; Maguth, B. M., & Taylor, N. (2014). Bringing LGBTQ topics into the social studies classroom. *The Social Studies, 105*(1), 23-28.

³² Kosciw JG, Greytak EA, Palmer NA, Boesen MJ. (2014) *The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

³³ The law that established Education Code 51204.5 is SB 48- The Fair Education Act, which became law in 2011. For the Education Code section, please see Fair Education Act, Cal. Assemb. B. 48 (2010-2011), Section 51204.5 (Education Code). Ed Code section is available here: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=51204.5&lawCode=EDC. Original bill language is available here: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=20110210SB48.

ACT UP, and the debate over marriage equality.³⁴

What indicators do we have for this?

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; and how frequently school districts review textbooks and curricular materials used in their schools.

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION AND HIV/AIDS PREVENTION EDUCATION

Why is this important?

In 2019, teens and young adults made up approximately 21% of HIV diagnoses in the United States. A significant majority of these new infections are among gay and bisexual males.³⁵

California LGBTQ+ students are not receiving adequate, inclusive instruction in sexual and reproductive health education at school. Only 15% report receiving sexual health education that provides LGBTQ+-inclusive information, and only 22% report receiving HIV/AIDS prevention education despite that comprehensive sexual health and HIV prevention education is required by Education Code 51930-51939 (The California Healthy Youth Act).³⁶

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 sex education has been shown to have a positive effect on school climate overall and to reduce the incidence of anti-LGBTQ+ verbal bullying.³⁷ Many studies associate it with reduced STI diagnoses and overall better health outcomes.³⁸

What indicators do we have for this?

Positive indicators in this category include whether a district has mandatory sexual health education and HIV prevention education programming (with the options for a parent or guardian to affirmatively opt-out of such classes); whether the curriculum incorporates discussion of bodies other than cisgender bodies and relationships other than heterosexual relationships; and whether the district offers age-appropriate sexual health education that includes information on sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV prevention at any grade level below 7th grade.

³⁴ Maguth, B. M., & Taylor, N. (2014). *Bringing LGBTQ topics into the social studies classroom*. *The Social Studies*, 105(1), 23-28.

³⁵ CDC (2021) *Estimated HIV incidence and prevalence in the United States 2015–2019*. HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report; 26(1). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/library/reports/surveillance/cdc-hiv-surveillance-supplemental-report-vol-26-1.pdf>

³⁶ Human Rights Campaign Foundation (2019). *California LGBTQ Youth Report*. Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Retrieved from <https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/YouthReport-California-Final.pdf>. The law that established Education Code 51930 is AB 329- The California Healthy Youth Act, which became law in 2015. For the Education Code section, please see California Healthy Youth Act, Cal. Assemb. B. 329 (2014-2015), Section 51930-51939 (Education Code). Ed Code section is available here: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=51930&lawCode=EDC. Original bill language is available here: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB329.

³⁷ Baams, L., Dubas, J. S., & Van Aken, M. A. (2017). Comprehensive sexuality education as a longitudinal predictor of LGBTQ name-calling and perceived willingness to intervene in school. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 46(5), 931-942.

³⁸ Advocates for Youth. (2008). *Science and Success: Sex Education and Other Programs that Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections*. Advocates for Youth, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/storage/advfy/documents/sciencesuccess.pdf>.





School District Spotlight:
Palm Springs Unified

By Jason Gutierrez





As a Coordinator in the Student Support Services Department at the **Palm Springs Unified School District** office, Lisa Todd is dedicated to being a strong ally. Her goal is simple — listen, and then advocate for programs and district-wide policies that allow students to grow and prosper fully.

“I feel that this role gives me a great ability to influence the work being done across the district for LGBTQ+ students,” she says. “There have been things over the years that I’ve seen or have wanted to change and now I am able to address them or find supportive solutions.”

Lisa’s advocacy stems from years of listening. It began while she was the advisor for the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) at Desert Hot Springs High School and became acquainted with Safe Schools Desert Cities, a local youth empowerment organization.

“Palm Springs and the community here overall have the reputation of being very supportive of LGBTQ+ people, in general. That support comes from people that were not necessarily born and raised here. We still see and have some resistance within the population our school district serves. Whether that’s families that are not supportive, attitudes amongst administration, or staff with a general comfort level to talk about issues that are specific to LGBTQ+ students.”

The Palm Springs Unified School District is one of few districts that requires every staff member, regardless of their role, to complete an online training series that includes creating safe and inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ youth with suicide prevention and awareness.

Over the past year, Lisa has worked diligently on a new youth-focused, mental health first-aid training program — a program for non-mental health professionals to recognize signs and symptoms of a young person who may be experiencing a mental health challenge.

“We’ve come a long way on awareness. Still, being ‘aware’ doesn’t really mean that people understand. Now we need to work on comfort and making sure staff is comfortable having difficult conversations about home, school or other personal matters with students when needed,” she says.

It’s Lisa’s first-hand experience that fuels her passion for inclusivity and communication.

“Working as a school counselor, I wanted to make sure we were supporting everybody and one of the things I saw was we were not always doing that consistently. Everything that I’m doing and want to do comes through the stories of many individual students I have met. They have given me more than they could possibly know. Most importantly they have taught me what matters and what really needs to be done for LGBTQ+ youth who feel alone and not supported.”

She says the ultimate goal is to move a step further past awareness and into mission-based work.

“I want to get people, all staff, to believe that everything we do matters because it matters to the students. We don’t want staff to just to say ‘I’m aware’ but have them say, ‘I’m aware and I support the work.’”

This spotlight is part of a collection of stories gathered for this report card by the It Gets Better Project, a California-based nonprofit organization working to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe. To learn more, go to www.itgetsbetter.org.



Suicide Prevention

School staff members must competently and swiftly recognize suicide risks when they become apparent, and, where possible, assist students in critical need of help.

What is this category?

This category evaluates school district programs and policies relating to suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (support for those impacted by suicide) policies and training.

SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICIES

Why is this important?

Nearly one in three lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) young people have attempted suicide, a proportion that is significantly higher than that for non-LGB young people, while 40% of transgender people attempt suicide at some point during their lives.³⁹ These rates are many times higher than that of the non-LGBTQ+ population.

Encouragingly, research suggests that LGB students attending school in districts with policies that encourage positive school climates report fewer suicidal thoughts.⁴⁰

What indicators do we have for this?

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 and addresses the needs of high-risk groups.

SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING

Why is this important?

School staff members— and teachers, in particular — spend more time with school-aged young people than any other adults aside from their parents or guardians. As such, they can play an important role in identifying students who are at risk and getting them help. Studies have shown that suicide prevention training increases teachers' general knowledge of warning signs and promotes best practices in intervening to get students the support they need.⁴¹

What indicators do we have for this?

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.

³⁹ Laura Kann et al. (2016) *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; Sandy James et al. (2016). *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality.

⁴⁰ Mark L. Hatzenbuehler, Michelle Birkett, Aimee Van Wagenen, and Ilan H. Meyer. (2014) *Protective School Climates and Reduced Risk for Suicide Ideation in Sexual Minority Youths*. American Journal of Public Health.

⁴¹ Gould MS, Greenberg T, Velting DM, Shaffer D. (2003) *Youth suicide risk and prevention interventions: A review of the past 10 years*. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. 42:386–405.



Recommendations

This report shows that districts have made significant progress on many fronts and that they have significant room for growth as well. Responding districts report widespread implementation of many positive school climate policies and practices, from robust anti-bullying policies to suicide prevention training.

Yet the survey results also reveal gaps in several areas, particularly in accountability and data collection around the resolution of bullying incidents, the availability of accessible restroom facilities to transgender and gender non-conforming students, adoption of LGBTQ+-inclusive textbooks in American history classes, and other areas.

Equality California envisions a future in which districts are engaged to identify areas of growth, share successes and challenges, and make constructive changes to better support LGBTQ+ and all students.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

WE SHOULD BETTER SUPPORT DISTRICTS IN TRACKING AND EFFECTIVELY RESPONDING TO BULLYING

Almost all the responding districts in this state report that they have comprehensive anti-bullying policies in place, and yet more than a quarter of respondents indicated that they are not tracking bullying reports. A lack of tracking could be an impediment to accountability. It could result in bullying complaints getting lost or not being fully resolved in a quick manner that protects bullying victims.

Responses also showed that a large number of districts do not include mention of sexual orientation and gender identity as specific protected categories in their anti-bullying policies. This may make it easier for individual schools or staff members to dismiss bullying and harassment incidents that are related to gender identity and sexual orientation. For the sake of clarity, on the part of administrators, teachers, and students, policies should include clear and specific definitions of bullying and harassment, including the protected classes or categories that fall under discriminatory harassment.

Districts should be supported in updating their policies and improving their data collection and tracking procedures.

WE SHOULD ASSIST DISTRICTS IN ADOPTING LGBTQ+-INCLUSIVE SOCIAL SCIENCE TEXTBOOKS

Survey results suggest that more than half of the responding districts are not implementing Education Code 51204.5 (The FAIR Education Act), which was passed in 2011. The law requires the inclusion of discussion of the contributions of LGBTQ+ people in American history and, where merited, in other social science classes. Its implementation depends on the adoption of LGBTQ+ inclusive textbooks.

Despite the fact that eleven years have passed since the passage of the law, more than half of responding districts said they did not have LGBTQ+-inclusive high school history textbooks. Additional, focused support should be dedicated to changing this.

WE SHOULD EQUIP DISTRICTS WITH RESOURCES TO UPDATE OR REPLACE RESTROOMS AND OTHER FACILITIES TO BETTER SERVE LGBTQ+ AND ALL STUDENTS

The other area where the responding districts indicate they have particular difficulty is in providing gender-neutral restroom facilities that are easily accessible and not located in a nurse's office or faculty lounge. The responding districts indicate that they are allowing students to use restrooms of their choice, but these are sometimes facilities that are physically separated from other student restrooms and hard to reach. Many

districts we have spoken to in the last several years have indicated that they do not have the knowledge or budget to upgrade or replace their existing restroom facilities.

The state should allocate appropriate funding opportunities and resources (such as guidelines and plans) to enable them to more easily do this.

WRITTEN POLICIES

This survey focuses primarily on written policies and procedures and on other, tangible metrics, such as restroom accessibility, the content of textbooks, and the provision of annual training, all of which research and experience suggests can be conducive to positive school climate.

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.

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.

IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES

Beyond state-mandated laws and policies, this report examines implementation of best practices that provide additional support and safety to students. Students feel safer and experience less harassment at schools with a GSA presence, can explore gender expression without fear of repercussion with gender neutral dress codes, and can be excited for school functions when it is clear that they can bring a date of any gender.

Focusing on consistent implementation of these best practices from a district level demonstrates a commitment to cultivating LGBTQ+ inclusivity that is above and beyond mandated policy changes.

Recognizing that there is more to do than what is in state law is imperative for ultimately achieving the goal of safe and supportive school environments for all students.





Tier Descriptions

After gathering responses from the 118 unified school districts, Equality California tabulated the results and assigned the respondents into one of three tiers. The tiers are not a grade so much as an assessment of past progress and an indication of how much work still remains. Tier assignments are based on districts' self-reported responses to the questions on the survey.

SPOTLIGHT TIER – Blue: 19 of 118 Responding School Districts

School districts in the Spotlight Tier have indicated that they have extensive and well-developed policies and programs to support a safe and supportive school climate.

They have indicated that they have comprehensive anti-bullying and suicide prevention policies, have robust cultural competency training programs for staff, ensure students have equal access to inclusive facilities, and more.

Advocates working in and with these districts should identify remaining gaps in policy and should perhaps connect district administrators to districts that have more significant growth potential to share best practices and successful approaches.

FOUNDATIONAL TIER – Green: 47 of 118 Responding School Districts

School districts in the Foundational Tier have indicated that they have done significant work toward fostering a safe and supportive school climate for LGBTQ+ students, including adopting anti-bullying and suicide prevention policies, and more.

Many of these districts, however, reported that they had not implemented LGBTQ+-inclusive social science requirements, inclusive dress code policies, cultural competency training programs, and other priorities.

Advocates working with these districts should focus on acknowledging the progress these districts have made and connecting them to resources and policies that could build on and advance this progress even further.

PRIORITY TIER – Yellow: 52 of 118 Responding School Districts

School districts in the Priority Tier have made initial steps toward fostering an LGBTQ+-inclusive school climate but may lack the resources to fully implement many of the programs and policies discussed in this report.

For these districts, advocates should first focus on the fundamentals: ensuring that their districts have comprehensive anti-bullying and suicide prevention policies. They should then build on that work by implementing other policies and approaches 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 districts to expand beyond the topics our survey covered toward innovative solutions for challenges these districts may be facing.

Advocates and administrators are also welcome to reach out to the Safe and Supportive Schools team at Equality California to go through district results in detail and discuss points of improvement.

To request a meeting or submit any feedback or concerns about responses, reach out to safeschools@eqca.org.

RESPONSE SCORING

Only unified school districts in California were invited to complete the 2021-2022 Safe and Supportive Schools Survey. The survey was comprised of 89 questions. Responses to each of these questions was assigned a point value, based upon the determined importance of the question. There were 216 possible points.

The three tiers are Spotlight (denoted in blue), Foundational (denoted in green), and Priority (denoted in yellow). Districts were assigned to each tier based upon their scores in the five survey subsections (school climate, cultural competency training, issues specific to transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) students, curriculum, and suicide prevention), as illustrated in the table below, and on their aggregate scores.

	Anti-Bullying	Training	TGNC	Curriculum	Suicide Prevention
Spotlight	54-69	49-81	14-17	16-23	26
Foundational	40-53	33-48	9-13	11-15	17-25
Priority	0-39	0-32	0-8	0-11	0-17

Districts in the Spotlight Tier scored as Spotlight in at least three survey subsections, indicating that they are well-rounded and have strong, supportive policies in multiple areas. Spotlight districts had to earn at least 140 out of 216 points in terms of their aggregate score.

Districts in the Foundational Tier scored as either Spotlight or Foundational in at least three survey subsections and scored as Priority in no more than two subsections. Foundational districts earned at least 115 out of 216 points in terms of their aggregate score.

Districts in the Priority Tier earned less than 115 points in terms of their aggregate score.

A more comprehensive report of each school district's responses to individual survey questions is available online at www.safesupportiveschools.org.





District Level Results

The tables below show each responding district’s aggregate and survey subsection scores. Point values are listed, as well as the assigned scoring tier indicated by color.

The **Spotlight Tier** is indicated in **blue**.

The **Foundational Tier** is indicated in **green**.

The **Priority Tier** is indicated in **yellow**.

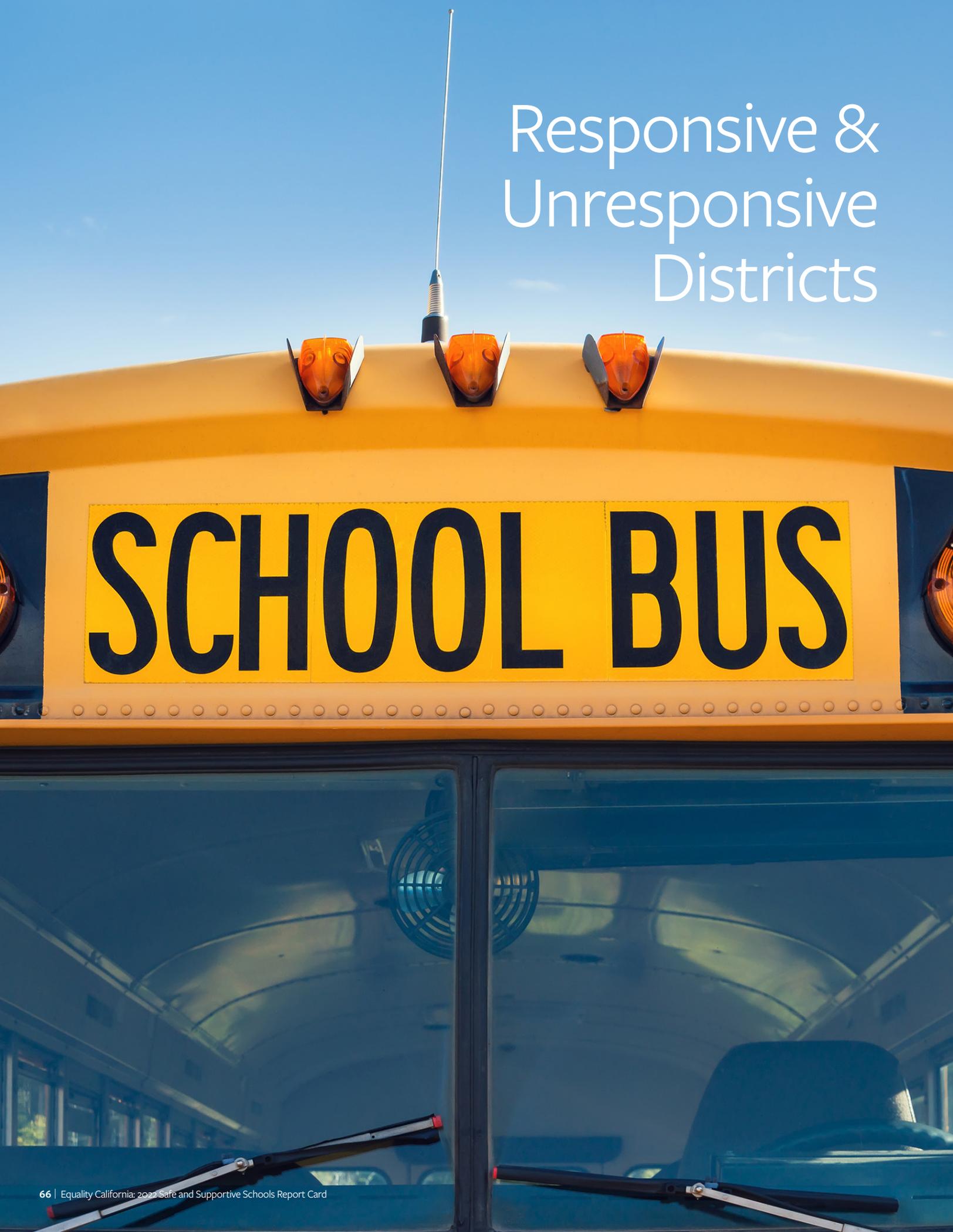
District	Score	Tier	School Climate Score	Staff Training Score	TGNC Score	Curriculum Score	Suicide Prevention Score
Cabrillo	191	Spotlight	57	69	17	23	25
Pittsburg	187	Spotlight	60	68	17	16	26
Moreno Valley	165	Spotlight	61	59	4	21	20
Compton	165	Spotlight	53	59	6	21	26
Downey	163	Spotlight	63	52	13	9	26
Elk Grove	162	Spotlight	61	43	17	15	26
San Francisco	162	Spotlight	53	43	17	23	26
Desert Sands	159	Spotlight	59	41	15	18	26
Selma	158	Spotlight	61	46	17	8	26
San Diego	157	Spotlight	54	57	15	23	8
Oceanside	154	Spotlight	61	43	15	16	19
San Bernardino City	154	Spotlight	56	40	17	16	25
Winters Joint	154	Spotlight	54	51	17	14	18
Kelseyville	154	Spotlight	45	53	15	15	26
Glendale	151	Spotlight	48	38	17	22	26
Washington (Fresno)	150	Spotlight	55	42	8	19	26
Visalia	150	Spotlight	47	50	15	12	26
Oakland	149	Spotlight	55	32	17	20	25
Monterey Peninsula	144	Spotlight	60	33	9	16	26
Stockton	142	Spotlight	55	24	15	23	25

District	Score	Total	School Climate Score	Staff Training Score	TGNC Score	Curriculum Score	Suicide Prevention Score
Saint Helena	166	Foundational	51	67	7	18	23
Lammersville Joint	166	Foundational	48	72	6	15	25
Gonzales	157	Foundational	46	66	4	15	26
Beverly Hills	156	Foundational	51	48	15	21	21
Garden Grove	149	Foundational	49	39	13	22	26
Santa Clara	147	Foundational	59	39	9	15	25
Healdsburg	147	Foundational	57	36	10	19	25
Capistrano	147	Foundational	39	56	12	14	26
Alameda	146	Foundational	53	44	13	10	26
Pasadena	145	Foundational	48	43	17	12	25
Manhattan Beach	143	Foundational	53	47	9	10	24
Fort Bragg	142	Foundational	51	49	6	10	26
Coachella Valley	142	Foundational	43	45	15	14	25
Carlsbad	139	Foundational	53	49	13	8	16
Poway	138	Foundational	58	30	15	15	20
San Juan	137	Foundational	59	24	15	15	24
Folsom-Cordova	135	Foundational	59	32	13	5	26
Berkeley	135	Foundational	56	43	13	4	19
Burbank	133	Foundational	51	36	11	14	21
Exeter	133	Foundational	40	54	6	9	24
Livermore Valley Joint	131	Foundational	54	45	6	8	18
Hemet	128	Foundational	56	24	9	13	26
Beaumont	128	Foundational	47	46	17	12	6
Fresno	128	Foundational	46	28	9	19	26
Long Beach	128	Foundational	45	36	13	8	26
Tracy Joint	128	Foundational	42	30	7	23	26

District	Score	Total	School Climate Score	Staff Training Score	TGNC Score	Curriculum Score	Suicide Prevention Score
Hacienda la Puente	127	Foundational	59	28	11	6	23
Ceres	127	Foundational	54	22	11	15	25
Mariposa	126	Foundational	50	29	15	6	26
Western Placer	125	Foundational	55	22	15	12	21
Riverside	124	Foundational	41	22	15	20	26
Castro Valley	123	Foundational	59	22	9	8	25
Alhambra	123	Foundational	56	12	15	14	26
Amador County	123	Foundational	50	46	4	2	21
Davis Joint	123	Foundational	49	18	15	15	26
Irvine	120	Foundational	45	26	17	6	26
San Ramon Valley	120	Foundational	38	46	9	9	18
Palm Springs	119	Foundational	51	25	9	10	24
South San Francisco	119	Foundational	50	13	15	15	26
Redondo Beach	119	Foundational	50	26	11	8	24
Twin Rivers	118	Foundational	52	19	15	15	17
Culver City	118	Foundational	44	29	11	8	26
San Jose	117	Foundational	56	3	13	19	26
Palo Verde	116	Foundational	51	22	11	6	26
Madera	116	Foundational	43	37	7	8	21
Corona-Norco	115	Foundational	48	15	15	11	26
Temecula Valley	115	Foundational	25	38	13	14	25

District	Score	Total	School Climate Score	Staff Training Score	TGNC Score	Curriculum Score	Suicide Prevention Score
Farmersville	114	Priority	55	20	6	10	23
Glendora	114	Priority	49	50	3	10	2
West Covina	112	Priority	55	8	15	8	26
Azusa	112	Priority	51	24	11	17	9
Fairfield-Suisun	112	Priority	42	19	13	15	23
Hayward	112	Priority	37	23	10	16	26
Orland Joint	111	Priority	43	26	4	12	26
Cuyama Joint	108	Priority	50	26	4	12	16
Lincoln	108	Priority	45	14	9	14	26
Vista	107	Priority	41	35	5	11	15
Paramount	107	Priority	31	42	15	4	15
Golden Plains	104	Priority	38	30	2	8	26
Denair	101	Priority	46	26	4	6	19
Eureka City	101	Priority	39	29	0	14	19
Tahoe-Truckee	99	Priority	48	2	8	16	25
Carmel	98	Priority	53	1	6	14	24
Sonoma Valley	98	Priority	47	3	6	16	26
Baldwin Park	97	Priority	49	0	9	14	25
El Segundo	97	Priority	33	30	9	4	21
Norwalk-La Mirada	96	Priority	30	20	6	14	26
Black Oak Mine	94	Priority	33	25	9	4	23
Kerman	93	Priority	43	1	15	8	26
Esparto	90	Priority	41	9	9	14	17
Morongo	90	Priority	35	19	2	9	25
Fontana	89	Priority	42	16	4	2	25
John Swett	89	Priority	29	24	2	10	24
Potter Valley Community	88	Priority	40	13	11	15	9

District	Score	Total	School Climate Score	Staff Training Score	TGNC Score	Curriculum Score	Suicide Prevention Score
Simi Valley	88	Priority	28	13	11	19	17
Silver Valley	87	Priority	38	8	7	8	26
Emery	85	Priority	37	20	7	10	11
Anderson Valley	85	Priority	33	20	4	8	20
Upland	84	Priority	41	2	9	8	24
Calexico	79	Priority	33	3	9	8	26
Hughson	78	Priority	40	18	4	6	10
Sanger	78	Priority	32	17	4	7	18
Santa Paula	75	Priority	51	5	4	6	9
Bassett	73	Priority	40	0	5	2	26
Redlands	73	Priority	33	15	5	14	6
Cotati-Rohnert Park	72	Priority	46	0	4	8	14
Calipatria	72	Priority	39	0	4	8	21
Lake Elsinore	70	Priority	44	0	9	7	10
Lompoc	70	Priority	38	0	7	8	17
West Contra Costa	70	Priority	32	20	4	6	8
Gustine	67	Priority	35	0	4	6	22
Needles	64	Priority	39	0	4	6	15
Durham	64	Priority	27	0	5	6	26
Warner	60	Priority	45	0	1	4	10
Fowler	60	Priority	35	2	8	6	9
Coalinga-Huron	53	Priority	33	6	0	2	12
Ferndale	47	Priority	23	12	0	6	6
Santa Ana	29	Priority	4	0	0	0	25

A close-up, low-angle shot of the front of a yellow school bus. The bus is centered in the frame, with its three orange emergency lights and a black antenna visible on the roof. Below the roofline, a yellow sign with the words "SCHOOL BUS" in large, bold, black capital letters is prominently displayed. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The bottom portion of the image shows the interior of the bus through the windshield, including the dashboard, steering wheel, and seats, all in a slightly desaturated, blue-tinted color.

Responsive & Unresponsive Districts

SCHOOL BUS

The Equality California team reached out to all 343 unified school districts in the state of California to offer them an opportunity to submit responses. One hundred eighteen unified school districts responded. Two hundred twenty-five unified school districts did not respond.

Districts that Responded (118)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Alameda Unified School District | 45. Fowler Unified School District |
| 2. Alhambra Unified School District | 46. Fresno Unified School District |
| 3. Amador County Unified School District | 47. Garden Grove Unified School District |
| 4. Anderson Valley Unified School District | 48. Glendale Unified School District |
| 5. Azusa Unified School District | 49. Glendora Unified School District |
| 6. Baldwin Park Unified School District | 50. Golden Plains Unified School District |
| 7. Bassett Unified School District | 51. Gonzales Unified School District |
| 8. Beaumont Unified School District | 52. Gustine Unified School District |
| 9. Berkeley Unified School District | 53. Hacienda la Puente Unified School District |
| 10. Beverly Hills Unified School District | 54. Hayward Unified School District |
| 11. Black Oak Mine Unified School District | 55. Healdsburg Unified School District |
| 12. Burbank Unified School District | 56. Hemet Unified School District |
| 13. Cabrillo Unified School District | 57. Hughson Unified School District |
| 14. Calexico Unified School District | 58. Irvine Unified School District |
| 15. Calipatria Unified School District | 59. John Swett Unified School District |
| 16. Capistrano Unified School District | 60. Kelseyville Unified School District |
| 17. Carlsbad Unified School District | 61. Kerman Unified School District |
| 18. Carmel Unified School District | 62. Lake Elsinore Unified School District |
| 19. Castro Valley Unified School District | 63. Lammersville Joint Unified School District |
| 20. Ceres Unified School District | 64. Lincoln Unified School District |
| 21. Coachella Valley Unified School District | 65. Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District |
| 22. Coalinga-Huron Unified School District | 66. Lompoc Unified School District |
| 23. Compton Unified School District | 67. Long Beach Unified School District |
| 24. Corona-Norco Unified School District | 68. Madera Unified School District |
| 25. Cotati-Rohnert Park Unified School District | 69. Manhattan Beach Unified School District |
| 26. Culver City Unified School District | 70. Mariposa Unified School District |
| 27. Cuyama Joint Unified School District | 71. Monterey Peninsula Unified School District |
| 28. Davis Joint Unified School District | 72. Moreno Valley Unified School District |
| 29. Denair Unified School District | 73. Morongo Unified School District |
| 30. Desert Sands Unified School District | 74. Needles Unified School District |
| 31. Downey Unified School District | 75. Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District |
| 32. Durham Unified School District | 76. Oakland Unified School District |
| 33. El Segundo Unified School District | 77. Oceanside Unified School District |
| 34. Elk Grove Unified School District | 78. Orland Joint Unified School District |
| 35. Emery Unified School District | 79. Palm Springs Unified School District |
| 36. Esparto Unified School District | 80. Palo Verde Unified School District |
| 37. Eureka City Unified School District | 81. Paramount Unified School District |
| 38. Exeter Unified School District | 82. Pasadena Unified School District |
| 39. Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District | 83. Pittsburg Unified School District |
| 40. Farmersville Unified School District | 84. Potter Valley Community Unified School District |
| 41. Ferndale Unified School District | 85. Poway Unified School District |
| 42. Folsom-Cordova Unified School District | 86. Redlands Unified School District |
| 43. Fontana Unified School District | 87. Redondo Beach Unified School District |
| 44. Fort Bragg Unified School District | |

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| 88. | Riverside Unified School District | 16. | Bellflower Unified School District |
| 89. | Saint Helena Unified School District | 17. | Benicia Unified School District |
| 90. | San Bernardino City Unified School District | 18. | Big Oak Flat-Groveland Unified School District |
| 91. | San Diego Unified School District | 19. | Big Sur Unified School District |
| 92. | San Francisco Unified School District | 20. | Big Valley Joint Unified School District |
| 93. | San Jose Unified School District | 21. | Biggs Unified School District |
| 94. | San Juan Unified School District | 22. | Bishop Unified School District |
| 95. | San Ramon Valley Unified School District | 23. | Bonita Unified School District |
| 96. | Sanger Unified School District | 24. | Bonsall Unified School District |
| 97. | Santa Ana Unified School District | 25. | Borrego Springs Unified School District |
| 98. | Santa Clara Unified School District | 26. | Brea Olinda Unified School District |
| 99. | Santa Paula Unified School District | 27. | Butte Valley Unified School District |
| 100. | Selma Unified School District | 28. | Calaveras Unified School District |
| 101. | Silver Valley Unified School District | 29. | Calistoga Joint Unified School District |
| 102. | Simi Valley Unified School District | 30. | Carpinteria Unified School District |
| 103. | Sonoma Valley Unified School District | 31. | Caruthers Unified School District |
| 104. | South San Francisco Unified School District | 32. | Center Unified School District |
| 105. | Stockton Unified School District | 33. | Central Unified School District |
| 106. | Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District | 34. | Charter Oak Unified School District |
| 107. | Temecula Valley Unified School District | 35. | Chawanakee Unified School District |
| 108. | Tracy Joint Unified School District | 36. | Chico Unified School District |
| 109. | Twin Rivers Unified School District | 37. | Chino Valley Unified School District |
| 110. | Upland Unified School District | 38. | Claremont Unified School District |
| 111. | Visalia Unified School District | 39. | Cloverdale Unified School District |
| 112. | Vista Unified School District | 40. | Clovis Unified School District |
| 113. | Warner Unified School District | 41. | Coast Unified School District |
| 114. | Washington Unified School District (Fresno) | 42. | Colton Joint Unified School District |
| 115. | West Contra Costa Unified School District | 43. | Colusa Unified School District |
| 116. | West Covina Unified School District | 44. | Conejo Valley Unified School District |
| 117. | Western Placer Unified School District | 45. | Corcoran Unified School District |
| 118. | Winters Joint Unified School District | 46. | Coronado Unified School District |
| | | 47. | Covina-Valley Unified School District |
| | | 48. | Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District |
| | | 49. | Death Valley Unified School District |
| | | 50. | Del Norte Unified School District |
| | | 51. | Delhi Unified School District |
| | | 52. | Desert Center Unified School District |
| | | 53. | Dinuba Unified School District |
| | | 54. | Dixon Unified School District |
| | | 55. | Dos Palos Oro Loma Joint Unified School District |
| | | 56. | Duarte Unified School District |
| | | 57. | Dublin Unified School District |
| | | 58. | Eastern Sierra Unified School District |
| | | 59. | El Rancho Unified School District |
| | | 60. | El Tejon Unified School District |
| | | 61. | Escalon Unified School District |
| | | 62. | Fall River Joint Unified School District |
| | | 63. | Fillmore Unified School District |
| | | 64. | Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District |
| | | 65. | Fort Sage Unified School District |

Districts that Did Not Respond (225)

1. ABC Unified School District
2. Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District
3. Albany Unified School District
4. Alpaugh Unified School District
5. Alpine County Unified School District
6. Alvord Unified School District
7. Antioch Unified School District
8. Apple Valley Unified School District
9. Arcadia Unified School District
10. Aromas/San Juan Unified School District
11. Atascadero Unified School District
12. Baker Valley Unified School District
13. Banning Unified School District
14. Barstow Unified School District
15. Bear Valley Unified School District

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| 66. | Fremont Unified School District | 116. | Mojave Unified School District |
| 67. | Gateway Unified School District | 117. | Monrovia Unified School District |
| 68. | Geyserville Unified School District | 118. | Montebello Unified School District |
| 69. | Gilroy Unified School District | 119. | Moorpark Unified School District |
| 70. | Golden Valley Unified School District | 120. | Morgan Hill Unified School District |
| 71. | Gridley Unified School District | 121. | Mount Diablo Unified School District |
| 72. | Hamilton Unified School District | 122. | Mountain Empire Unified School District |
| 73. | Hesperia Unified School District | 123. | Mountain Valley Unified School District |
| 74. | Hilmar Unified School District | 124. | Muroc Joint Unified School District |
| 75. | Holtville Unified School District | 125. | Murrieta Valley Unified School District |
| 76. | Imperial Unified School District | 126. | Napa Valley Unified School District |
| 77. | Inglewood Unified School District | 127. | Natomas Unified School District |
| 78. | Jurupa Unified School District | 128. | New Haven Unified School District |
| 79. | Kings Canyon Unified School District | 129. | Newark Unified School District |
| 80. | Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District | 130. | Newman-Crows Landing Unified School District |
| 81. | Konocti Unified School District | 131. | Newport-Mesa Unified School District |
| 82. | La Canada Unified School District | 132. | North Monterey County Unified School District |
| 83. | La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District | 133. | Novato Unified School District |
| 84. | Laguna Beach Unified School District | 134. | Oak Park Unified School District |
| 85. | Lake Tahoe Unified School District | 135. | Oakdale Joint Unified School District |
| 86. | Lakeport Unified School District | 136. | Ojai Unified School District |
| 87. | Las Virgenes Unified School District | 137. | Orange Unified School District |
| 88. | Laton Joint Unified School District | 138. | Owens Valley Unified School District |
| 89. | Laytonville Unified School District | 139. | Pacific Grove Unified School District |
| 90. | Leggett Valley Unified School District | 140. | Pajaro Valley Unified School District |
| 91. | Linden Unified School District | 141. | Palo Alto Unified School District |
| 92. | Lindsay Unified School District | 142. | Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District |
| 93. | Live Oak Unified School District | 143. | Paradise Unified School District |
| 94. | Lodi Unified School District | 144. | Parlier Unified School District |
| 95. | Lone Pine Unified School District | 145. | Paso Robles Joint Unified School District |
| 96. | Los Alamitos Unified School District | 146. | Patterson Joint Unified School District |
| 97. | Los Angeles Unified School District | 147. | Piedmont Unified School District |
| 98. | Los Banos Unified School District | 148. | Pierce Joint Unified School District |
| 99. | Los Molinos Unified School District | 149. | Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District |
| 100. | Lucerne Valley Unified School District | 150. | Pleasanton Unified School District |
| 101. | Lucia Mar Unified School District | 151. | Plumas Unified School District |
| 102. | Lynwood Unified School District | 152. | Pomona Unified School District |
| 103. | Mammoth Unified School District | 153. | Porterville Unified School District |
| 104. | Manteca Unified School District | 154. | Princeton Joint Unified School District |
| 105. | Maricopa Unified School District | 155. | Ramona City Unified School District |
| 106. | Martinez Unified School District | 156. | Ramona Unified School District |
| 107. | Marysville Joint Unified School District | 157. | Reef-Sunset Unified School District |
| 108. | Mattole Unified School District | 158. | Rialto Unified School District |
| 109. | Maxwell Unified School District | 159. | Rim Of The World Unified School District |
| 110. | McFarland Unified School District | 160. | Ripon Unified School District |
| 111. | Mendocino Unified School District | 161. | River Delta Unified School District |
| 112. | Mendota Unified School District | 162. | Riverbank Unified School District |
| 113. | Middletown Unified School District | 163. | Riverdale Unified School District |
| 114. | Milpitas Unified School District | 164. | Rocklin Unified School District |
| 115. | Modoc Joint Unified School District | 165. | Round Valley Unified School District |

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| 166. | Rowland Unified School District | 215. | Westwood Unified School District |
| 167. | Sacramento City Unified School District | 216. | Williams Unified School District |
| 168. | Saddleback Valley Unified School District | 217. | Willits Unified School District |
| 169. | San Gabriel Unified School District | 218. | Willows Unified School District |
| 170. | San Jacinto Unified School District | 219. | Windsor Unified School District |
| 171. | San Leandro Unified School District | 220. | Wiseburn Unified School District |
| 172. | San Lorenzo Unified School District | 221. | Woodlake Unified School District |
| 173. | San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District | 222. | Woodland Joint Unified School District |
| 174. | San Luis Coastal Unified School District | 223. | Yosemite Unified School District |
| 175. | San Marcos Unified School District | 224. | Yuba City Unified School District |
| 176. | San Marino Unified School District | 225. | Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District |
| 177. | San Pasqual Valley Unified School District | | |
| 178. | Santa Barbara Unified School District | | |
| 179. | Santa Monica–Malibu Unified School District | | |
| 180. | Scott Valley Unified School District | | |
| 181. | Shandon Joint Unified School District | | |
| 182. | Shoreline Unified School District | | |
| 183. | Sierra Sands Unified School District | | |
| 184. | Sierra Unified School District | | |
| 185. | Sierra-Plumas Joint Unified School District | | |
| 186. | Snowline Joint Unified School District | | |
| 187. | Soledad Unified School District | | |
| 188. | South Pasadena Unified School District | | |
| 189. | Southern Humboldt Unified School District | | |
| 190. | Southern Kern Unified School District | | |
| 191. | Southern Trinity Joint Unified School District | | |
| 192. | St. Helena Unified School District | | |
| 193. | Stony Creek Joint Unified School District | | |
| 194. | Sunol Glen Unified School District | | |
| 195. | Surprise Valley Joint Unified School District | | |
| 196. | Tehachapi Unified School District | | |
| 197. | Temple City Unified School District | | |
| 198. | Templeton Unified School District | | |
| 199. | Torrance Unified School District | | |
| 200. | Travis Unified School District | | |
| 201. | Trinity Alps Unified School District | | |
| 202. | Trona Joint Unified School District | | |
| 203. | Tulelake Basin Joint Unified School District | | |
| 204. | Tustin Unified School District | | |
| 205. | Ukiah Unified School District | | |
| 206. | Upper Lake Unified School District | | |
| 207. | Vacaville Unified School District | | |
| 208. | Val Verde Unified School District | | |
| 209. | Vallejo City Unified School District | | |
| 210. | Valley Center-Pauma Unified School District | | |
| 211. | Ventura Unified School District | | |
| 212. | Walnut Valley Unified School District | | |
| 213. | Washington Unified School District (Sacramento) | | |
| 214. | Waterford Unified School District | | |



APPENDIX I: ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Equality California Institute is grateful to the members of the Safe and Supportive Schools Advisory Committee for their guidance and participation throughout this process, and for informing the design of the survey and our outreach efforts.

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

1. Eric Adams, GSA Network
2. Stephanie Camacho-Van Dyke, The LGBT Center Orange County
3. Rob Darrow, San Cruz Safe Schools Project
4. Liam Day, Gender Spectrum
5. Angelov Farooq, Riverside Unified School District Board Member
6. Jeff Freitas, California Federation of Teachers & Equality California Board Member
7. Erica Hasenbeck, Fresno Unified School District
8. Kena Hazelwood, San Francisco Unified School District
9. Colin Kutney, Human Rights Campaign
10. Eddie Martinez, Latino Equality Alliance
11. Erik Martinez, San Francisco Unified School District
12. C. Scott Miller, California Teachers Association & Equality California Board Member
13. Rick Oculito, Our Family Coalition
14. Asaf Orr, National Center for Lesbian Rights
15. Lex Ortega, The LGBT Community Center of The Desert
16. Vincent “Vinnie” Pompei, Human Rights Campaign Foundation
17. Brian Poth, The Source LGBT Center
18. Justin Tindall, It Gets Better Project

APPENDIX II: RESOURCES

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

FAIR Education Act: Information and Resources for Educators and Families. FAIR Education Act Implementation Coalition and Our Family Coalition, 2018. <http://www.faireducationact.com>.

Governance and Policy Resources. California School Boards Association. 2018. <https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources>. GSA Network Resource Packet. GSA Network, 2018. https://gsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018AR_ONLINE.pdf.

Know Your Rights: Schools. National Center for Transgender Equality, 2019. <https://transequality.org/know-your-rights/schools>.

Safe Space Kit: A Guide to Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students in Your School. GLSEN, 2016. www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%20Safe%20Space%20Kit.pdf

School Climate in California (State Snapshot). GLSEN, 2019. <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/California-Snapshot-2019.pdf>

Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools. American Civil Liberties Union et al. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/schools-in-transition-a-guide-for-supporting-transgender-students-in-k-12-s>.

Separation and Stigma: Transgender Youth & School Facilities. Movement Advancement Project, National Center for Transgender Equality, National Education Association, GLSEN, 2017. www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Separation%20and%20Stigma%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf.

Start a GSA: 10 Steps. GSA Network, 2018. <https://gsanetwork.org/resources/10-steps-for-starting-a-gsa/>.

Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse Students in Schools: Key Recommendations for School Administrators. Division of School Psychology, Society for the Psychological Study of LGBT Issues, American Psychological Association, 2015. <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/school-administrators.pdf>.

Welcoming Schools: Resources for Your School. Human Rights Campaign Foundation, www.welcomingschools.org/resources/school-tips/

APPENDIX III: SAMPLE POLICIES

Bullying

Model District Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy.

GLSEN. <https://www.glsen.org/activity/model-district-anti-bullying-harassment-policy>

Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students

Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students.

GLSEN & National Center for Transgender Equality. <https://www.glsen.org/activity/model-local-education-agency-policy-on-transgender-nonbinary-students>

Suicide Prevention

Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, The Trevor Project, American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Psychologists. <https://afsp.org/model-school-policy-on-suicide-prevention>



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