

2020

# STATE OF SAFE SCHOOLS REPORT

## Unsafe, Unseen, Unacknowledged: Addressing Hostile Educational Conditions for LGBT Youth in Oregon

### Abstract:

Thanks to more than a decade of national research, educators and youth advocates now know that **anti-bias trained education professionals, inclusive curriculum, enumerated anti-bullying policies, and student community building organizations like gay-straight alliances (GSA's)**<sup>ii</sup> improve school climate, reduce bullying and reduce risk of suicide attempts in **lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT+) youth**.<sup>iii</sup>

The Oregon Safe Schools and Community Coalition (OSSCC) 2020 *State of Safe Schools in Oregon* report analyzed results from the 2019 Oregon Healthy Teens (OHT) survey<sup>iv</sup> in relation

to results from the US Center for Disease Control's (CDC) 2017 *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBS)*<sup>v</sup> and the GLSEN's 2017 *National School Climate Survey*.<sup>vi vii</sup> The goal of the annual OSSCC report is to help Oregon educators, advocates and community leaders identify school safety, risks, and resiliency factors for LGBT+ youth.

This report indicates LGBT+ Oregon students are at a significantly high risk for **bullying, school-based violence, sexual assault, absences from school, and suicidal ideation**. The report also highlights the ways in which racial and ethnic minority youth experience similar outcomes to LGBT+ youth. Our analysis of the 2019 Oregon

Healthy Teens survey is consistent with the national findings in each of these high-risk areas. Each of these national reports along with this new Oregon report, highlight that LGBT+ youth continue to experience pervasive verbal, physical, psychological and sexual violence at more than **double the rate of their peers**. And LGBT+ youth who identify as racial/ethnic minorities are at an additional risk as a result of racial disparities within the same areas.

The 2020 Annual Safe Schools Report alerts Oregon educators of this crisis in school safety and adolescent wellbeing for our youth and charts a way forward for advocates and educators.

### Key Findings

#### Positive Youth Development (PYD)

- Positive youth development is on the decline for all Oregon youth with only one half of all Oregon youth showing indicators for PYD in 2019.
- Current positive youth development is further reduced among the population of sexual orientation and gender identity minority youth. Less than one third of LGBT+ youth show PYD indicators.

#### School climate concerns associated with race/ethnicity

- Among race/ethnicity groups there is an increased risk of bullying, harassment, threats of violence, fear-based absences, sexual and partner violence, and suicidality. Specifics on overrepresentations are indicated throughout the report.

#### School climate of bias, bullying, intimidation, harassment, and threats of violence

- LGBT+ youth were twice as likely to experience bullying and harassment at school.

- LGBT+ youth were twice as likely to have been threatened with a weapon.

#### Students reporting fear-based absences from school

- LGBT+ youth were three times as likely to have stayed home from school because they were afraid for their safety at school.

#### Students reporting sexual coercion and sexual assault (11th grade only)

- LGBT+ youth were two to three times as likely as their peers to report having been physically assaulted by a dating partner.
- LGBT+ youth were two times as likely as their peers to report having been coerced into sex.
- LGBT+ youth were two to three times as likely as their peers to report having been sexually assaulted.

#### Students with suicidal ideation and suicide attempts

- One half of LGBT+ youth expressed they considered suicide during 2019.
- One quarter of LGBT+ youth expressed they attempted suicide during 2019.

## Key Recommendations

### TO MAKE STUDENTS SAFE:

- Equity and Anti-Bias Review of School and District Policies
- Redesign and Implement Systems to Support Equity and Anti-Bias

### TO MAKE STUDENTS SEEN:

- Establish Statewide School Climate Data Collection
- Evaluation of School Safety and School Climate by Diverse Community Representatives
- Establish School Climate Equity Improvement Plans

### TO MAKE STUDENTS VALUED:

- Establish Inclusive Curriculum Standards
- Establish Inclusive Social and Emotional (SEL) Anti-Bias Curriculum
- Equity informed Trauma Sensitive Classrooms
- Equity Informed Restorative Practices

## Introduction: Barriers to Safety and Inclusion

The following report communicates the ways in which Oregon schools continue to exclude LGBT+ people and harbor unsafe environments for LGBT+ youth. The report examines hostile learning climate indicators for LGBT+ youth. In addition, where statistics were significant, the report also highlights how racial/ethnic minority Oregon youth experienced higher rates of bullying and harassment, more fear-based absences, higher rates of intimate violence, higher suicide ideation and suicide attempt rates, and increases in conflicts at home.

Overall, in 2018-19 youth who identify as LGBT+ experienced lower resiliency factors, experienced higher rates of bullying and harassment, more fear-based absences, higher rates of intimate violence, higher suicide ideation and attempt rates, and increases in conflicts at home. In many instances this was also true of race/ethnic minority youth.

Analysis of the data helps us consider the unsafe and exclusionary pressures of racism, homophobia, and transphobia that clearly produce unsafe and exclusionary schools. The report will illustrate how LGBT+ Oregon youth are disproportionately unsafe, unseen, and unacknowledged in our schools. We conclude with recommendations to address these concerns and improve outcomes for all of our youth.

### UNSAFE: Targeted Harassment and Violence

There is abundant data on the targeted harassment and violence LGBT+ youth experience in schools. LGBT+ youth face targeted harassment and violence from peers, from romantic interests, from teachers and staff, and from community members. In addition, LGBT+ youth experience higher rates of school-based punishments specifically related to their identity (ex: dress code violation discipline).

### UNSEEN: Systemic Invisibility of Student Experiences

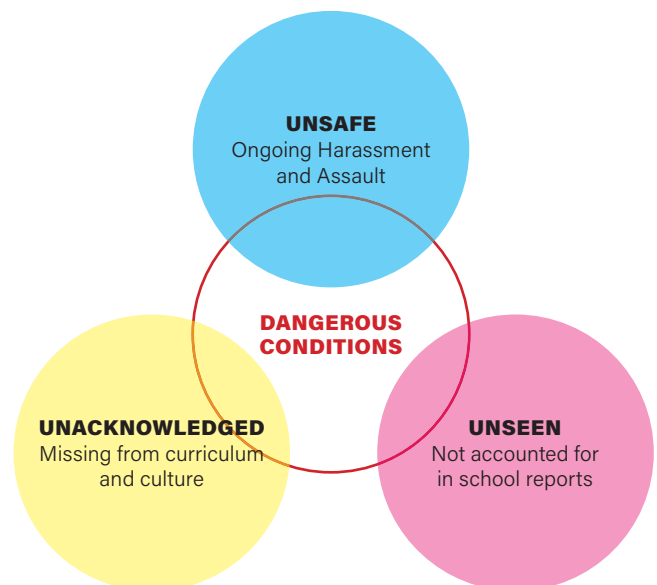
Oregon schools need a valid and reliable tool to measure, assess, and respond to school climate and student safety concerns. The Oregon Department of Education lacks any valid mechanism for assessing student experience of wellbeing at school. Therefore, school districts and the Oregon Department of Education rely heavily upon academic, attendance, and discipline data to account for student wellbeing.

A statewide school climate survey would provide Oregon families with systematic information to consider the equitable and inclusive climate of a school community. This would also allow for survey results to inform educational designs for prevention measures to improve equity and overall school climate. Without a school climate survey, the Oregon Health Authority provides Oregon with excellent data on student health and wellbeing which can be used as indicators of school climate, school safety, and experiences of inclusion and belonging.

### UNACKNOWLEDGED: Curricular Invisibility of Community

Over the past two years, educators and legislators have acknowledged the educative and cultural results of omitting and erasing the lives of racial and ethnic minority communities from public education. The Tribal History/Shared History (SB13), the African American/Black Student Success Plan (HB2016), and the Oregon Ethnic Studies Standards (SB739) each identified the measurable and accumulated negative consequences of disregarding and erasing the experiences of diverse communities from the Oregon content standards as well as establishing a mandate to create new inclusive content standards.

However, at the time of this report, there remains a lack of curricular representation of LGBT+ historic and current contributions to society and LGBT+ community facts from the state curriculum standards.



# The Report: Positive Youth Development Continues to Decline

## Oregon Positive Youth Development (PYD) from 2013-2019

When considering the national trends in education it is important to look at student resilience and well-being as well as to highlight where there are negative impacts on Oregon youth development. Therefore, we highlight the outcomes related to Positive Youth Development (PYD) in Oregon. According to the Oregon Public Health Division,

*The positive youth development framework is a holistic view of the physical, psychological, and social supports for healthy youth development. The Positive Youth Development (PYD) score for a child is strongly associated with behaviors that promote physical and emotional health, as well as academic achievement.*

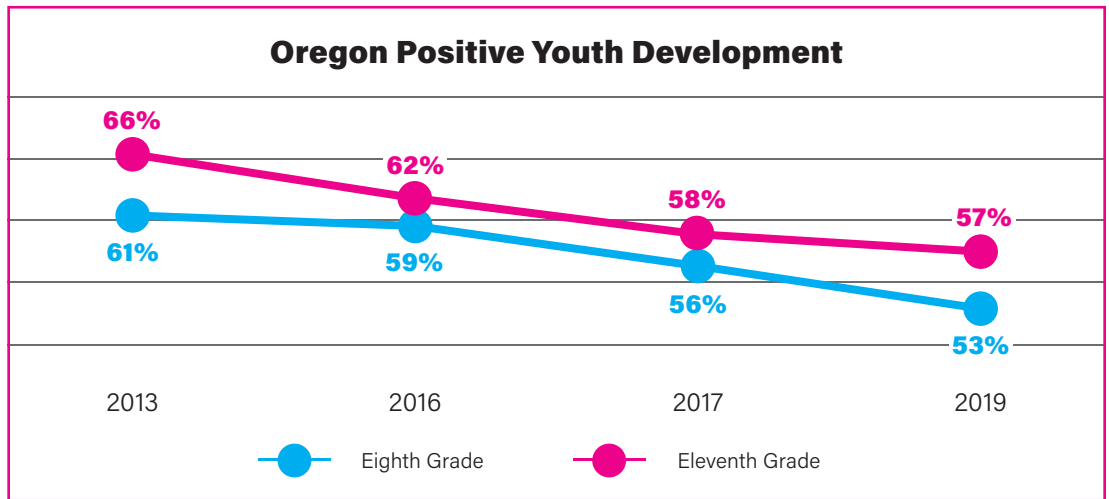
In examining the results from the past four cycles of the Oregon Healthy Teens (OHT) survey data **it is clear that healthy development supports for all Oregon youth continue to decline.** These critical protective factors for Oregon youth are available to fewer and fewer Oregon youth for both middle and high school students.

### Comparing 8th and 11th Grade Survey Results

When comparing the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade student respondents to the 2019 survey, it is important to note that Oregon’s nationally high dropout rate has a demographic impact when comparing the student population of 8th and 11th grade respondents.

Oregon Department of Education data on the Oregon Dropout Rate clearly indicate that race/ethnic minority students, English language learners, migrant students and homeless students drop out at double and triple the rates of their peers.<sup>viii</sup> Unfortunately, the state does not collect demographic data on sexual orientation and gender identity minority status. However, national data would confirm that this minority population also has a significantly higher dropout rate.

This means that, the overall demographics of the students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade survey is different from the overall demographics of the students surveyed in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. By the 11<sup>th</sup> grade year we know there are a disproportional number of minority students missing because they have already dropped out of school.



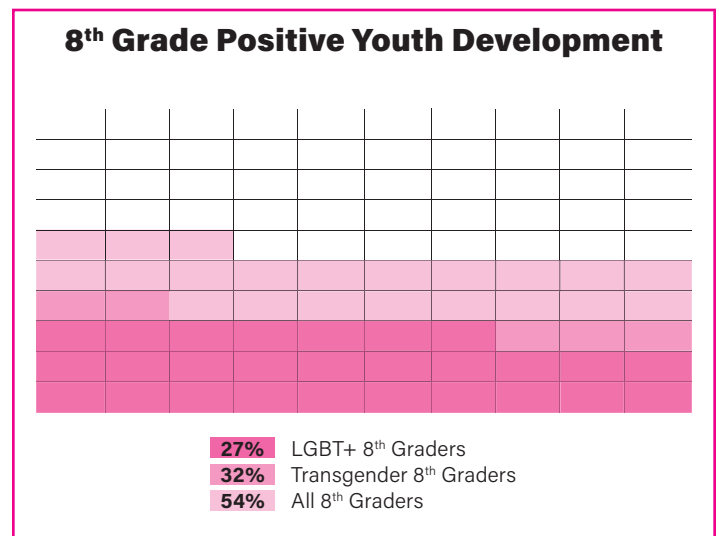
### LGBT+ Positive Youth Development Protective Factors

Among 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders who self-identify as LGBT+, the population who have positive youth development indicators is severely low. Just over half the general population are strengthened by the PYD indicators, fewer than one third of LGBT+ youth have the physical, mental and emotional health status, and protective individual and environmental factors we know are necessary for developing healthy children.

**Only 3 of every 10 lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender 8th graders possess the protective factors in the Positive Youth Development variable.**

### LGBT+ Underrepresentation of Positive Youth Development

The low numbers of students with PYD characteristics of resilience indicates Oregon youth have escalating unmet needs. The remaining sections of this report will look at some of the more concerning risks LGBT+ students are facing.



## Inequitable Experiences of Safety in School

In considering climate and safety within middle and high schools across Oregon, students were asked the following two questions about bullying, intimidation, harassment, and threats of violence:

*During the past 30 days, have you ever been bullied at school in relation to any of the following issues? This includes in person and cyber bullying. (race, gender, sexual orientation, body shaming)*

*During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened you with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property (at least one day)?*

Oregon is one of 19 states in the U.S. which requires school districts to have enumerated anti-bullying policies, procedures and trainings in place.<sup>ix</sup> An enumerated anti-bullying policy refers to naming characteristics of identity that have historically been targeted by bullying. Oregon law<sup>x</sup> enumerates targeted bullying as directed at “a group of persons distinguished, or perceived to be distinguished, by race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, familial status, source of income or disability.”

These two questions help us to look at **how both a culture of bias-based hostility and an educational setting where students are threatened with weapons** are impacting the lives of LGBT+ youth. And in fact, the dangers of both identity-based bullying and threats of violence are multiplied for race/ethnic minority students.

### Bullying and Harassment

Overall, 30% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 20% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders experienced bullying at school in 2018-19. However, those averages look very different when they are broken down by social identity. For example, when considering the association between bullying and sexual orientation, we found an average of **6 of every 10 LGB 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported experiencing bullying at school** in comparison to 2 of every 10 of their straight identifying peers. This disparity holds true in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade as well.

When considering the ways in which gender identity is a predictor for bullying there are several concerning results. One key finding is that survey results suggest that higher rates of bullying are associated with male cultural norms in middle school and female cultural norms in high school. You can see that males are slightly more likely to experience bullying in 8<sup>th</sup> grade than females and females are twice as likely as males in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. However, transgender and gender diverse youth experience a much higher rate of bullying in 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades than peers. In fact, in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, half of these students’ report experiencing bullying at school.

Racial and ethnic identity are also associated with different experiences of bullying at school in both 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. Several different groups of race/ethnic minority students experience higher rates of bullying than their peers. The compounding results means that a child who identifies across these three minoritized groups can be impacted by three systems of inequality in a school day (racism, homophobia, and gender bias).

It is clear from these results, which are consistent with national data on bullying, that the decade old enumerated anti-bullying policy is insufficient at addressing the pervasive hostile climate toward these differences among children.

| Inequalities in Bullying Experiences  |   |
|---|---|
| 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Bullying (overall average 30%)  | 11 <sup>th</sup> Grade Bullying (overall average 20%) |
| <b>Sexual Orientation</b>   |   |
| Minority Sexual Orientation 60%   | Minority Sexual Orientation 36%                       |
| Straight Identifying 26%  | Straight Identifying 17%                              |
| <b>Gender Identity</b>  |   |
| Transgender & Gender Identity Minority 50%  | Transgender & Gender Identity Minority 36%            |
| Female 22%  | Female 24%  |
| Male 35%  | Male 14%  |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity*</b>  |   |
| Native American 38%   | Native American 21%                                   |
| Black/African American 37%  | Black/African American 22%                            |
| Mixed Race 37%  | Mixed Race 28%  |
| Middle Eastern/North African 38%  | -----   |
| White 33%   | White 20%   |
| *Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Hispanic race/ethnicity youth in 8 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> grades report rates of bullying below the overall average. |   |



## Threatened with a Weapon at School

Overall, the number of Oregon youth threatened with weapons on campus continues to increase. There is an ongoing increase in weapons-based threats in both Oregon middle and high schools.

Among Oregon 8th graders, one in ten students reported that they were threatened with a weapon at school. And LGBT+ 8th graders were twice as likely as their peers to be threatened with a weapon at school in 2019.

The overall weapons exposure/threat risk of 10% among 8th graders, drops to a 6% risk among 11th graders. Nonetheless, 19% of gender diverse 11th graders and 11% of LGB 11th graders reported they were threatened with a weapon during high school in 2019.

LGBT+ 11th graders were more than twice as likely to have been threatened with a weapon in both middle and high school during the 2018-19 school year.

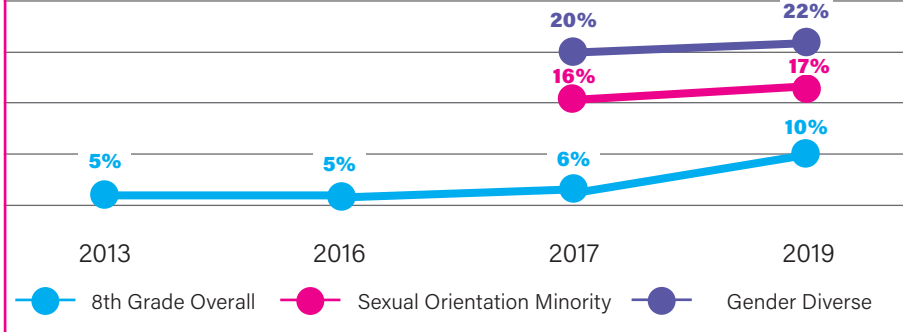
## Race/Ethnicity Intersectionality and Multiplying Risks

Given the multiplicity of a student's social identities (race + gender + sexual orientation, etc.), we examined the risk level of being threatened with a weapon at school based on a student's race/ethnic identity. We compared the average threat of 10% to threats across OHT race/ethnicity groups. Again, we found inequitable risks to attending school for diverse students.

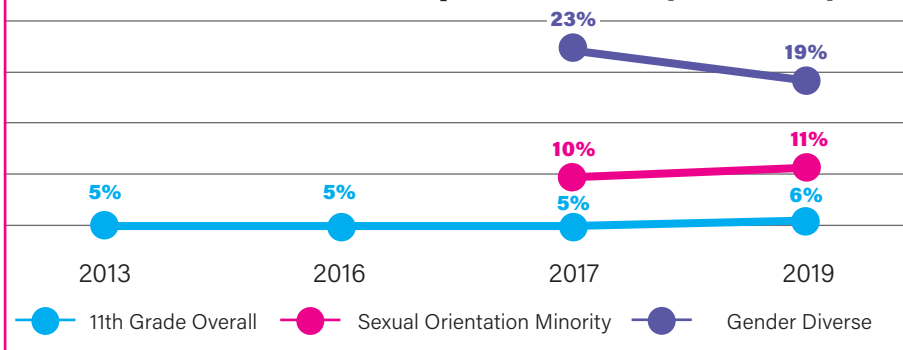
An 8th grader who identifies as either Native American, Black, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Mixed Race, Middle Eastern or North African is at an additional increased risk of being threatened with a weapon in middle school (overall average 8th grade risk is 10%).

And among the 11th graders, those who self-identified as Native American, Black or Mixed Race there is an additional increased risk of being threatened with a weapon at school (overall average 11th grade risk is 6%, Native American 7%, Black 10%, Mixed Race 9%).

### Threatened with a Weapon at School (8<sup>th</sup> Grade)



### Threatened with a Weapon at School (11<sup>th</sup> Grade)



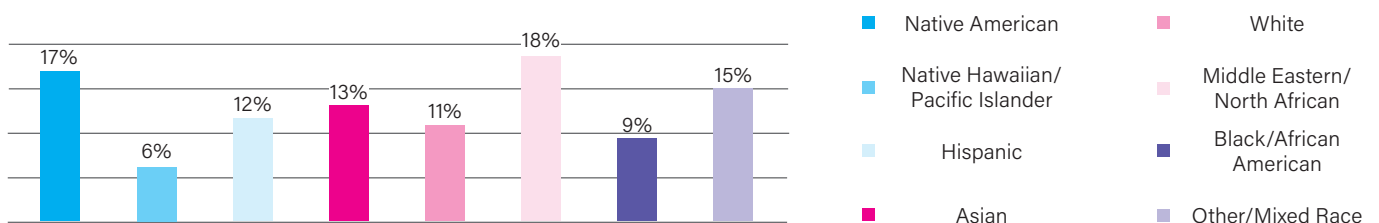
## Intersectional Effect: Race + Gender Identity + Sexual Orientation

Based on the survey, we conclude that a student faces a crossroads of higher risks for experiencing a weapon threat during their school day depending upon their gender identity, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity.

The intersectional impact of this risk creates a heightened risk for any youth holding more than one of these minoritized identities. If an Oregon student identifies as Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Asian, Black/African American, Middle Eastern/North African, or Mixed Race and also identifies as a gender diverse or transgender person, they will experience two increased risks during the school day. And if that same student is also a self-identifying member of the LGB community their risks at school are triply compounded.

The disproportional experiences of weapons and danger on campus are consistent with both the CDC and the GLSEN national findings on LGBT+ youth experiences in school.

## Race/Ethnicity and Weapons Threats at School (8<sup>th</sup> Grade)



## Impact of Safety on Attendance in School

### Fear-Based Absence From School and Pushing Minoritized Students Out of School

PUSH OUT is the term used to describe an education setting where the climate and culture are known to be hostile toward particular students without significant systemic intervention to support the safe inclusion of these students into the school community.

Push out can be seen in overrepresentation of tardies to class, skipped classes, and overall absences from school. Push out is ultimately seen in disproportional dropout rates among minority students discussed at the beginning of this report.

To consider school attendance in association with the overall school climate and student safety we examined the results of students self-reported absences for personal safety reasons. We calculated the average number of students who reported missing at least one day of school within the past 30 days out of fear for their personal safety.

### Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Safety Absences

In the 8th and 11th grade, LGBT+ youth were twice as likely to report staying home from school at least one time in the last 30 days because they felt unsafe. In addition, both students who identify as gender diverse or transgender and students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual have a higher rate of chronic absences. **Among these LGBT+ student groups, 2 of every 10 students reported to have stayed home for safety reasons within a month of the survey.**

### Race/Ethnicity and Safety Absences

Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black/African American, Middle Eastern/North African, and Mixed Race youth are also more likely to have stayed home from school due to fear-based absences. These students reported staying home from school at least once within the past month due to a fear for their personal safety at school. As one contextual race/ethnicity example, one Oregon district faced a significant attendance drop among Hispanic identifying students in the week following a news story about a large anti-immigrant display in the high school lobby.

## School Push Out and Drop Out

**Push out** is an educational term used to describe an education setting where the climate and culture are known to be hostile toward particular students without significant systemic intervention to support the safe inclusion of these students into the school community.

Decades of education data show that school conditions are hostile for many minority groups in public education. However, for the LGBT student population there have not been significant systemic interventions to transform the education setting. Rather the scope of establishing educational inclusion for these students has primarily involved telling their peers not to bully them.

Therefore, we use the term push out to acknowledge that these students are not simply dropping out, but instead experience a hostile and dangerous space, where they most frequently do not see themselves

or the LGBT community reflected in curriculum, extra-curricular activities, professional representation, or community celebrations and rites of passage.

Some of the known and measured educational results of persistent unsafe, unseen, and exclusionary conditions for targeted and excluded populations of students include:

- becoming accustomed to violence and harassment
- electing not to report violence over the course of their educational experience
- electing to skip specific classes where conditions are unsafe
- electing to skip a day or repeated days of school for safety reasons
- developing anxiety disorders at disproportional rates
- acting out in response to harassment
- dropping out of school altogether
- self-harm or suicidal ideation

These patterns of disproportional harassment and threats of violence toward LGBT+ students and Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Asian, Black/African American, Middle Eastern/North African, or Mixed Race students have been highlighted for Oregon educators and child advocates since the passage of the enumerated Safe Schools Act.

The annual OSSCC Safe Schools Report continues to pinpoint that students who experience higher rates of harassment as well as weapons-based threats while at school have a reasonable concern with their safety. As a result of the unsafe and unseen culture and climate, these students, more often than their peers, make the calculated decision to stay away from school.

## Inequitable Experiences of Connection: Reduced Access to Healthy and Safe Relationship Development Opportunities

Public education is the location of an array of rites of passage for maturing youth to develop skills related to developing healthy and safe peer relationships, social identities, civic identities, and partnering relationship identities. These social and emotional learning opportunities (SEL) benefit both individual students and the broader culture of Oregon.

From comprehensive health and sexuality education, to a civics curriculum of public engagement, to athletic/club opportunities, to school dances there are an array of opportunities that have been structurally established and professionally supported for Oregon youth to develop social skills and social maturity. In fact, in the majority of settings our schools go so far as to sanction and host some form of competition for school couples and courts. These educational socialization structures are designed with the intention of helping us collectively raise healthy, safe, and socially connected young adults.

Unfortunately, these social and emotional learning supports are associated with exclusion, harassment, and abuse directed toward LGBT+ youth. Within this aspect of the educational context, we see yet again, invisibility and hostility toward gender diversity and sexual orientation diverse youth. Inadequate and sometimes hostile *social and emotional learning* educational structures for LGBT+ youth establish a culture of invisibility, exclusion, and shaming. Given the disproportional peer violence (bullying and weapons threats) these students experience at school, we examined their experiences with disproportional relationship and intimate violence.

### Sexual coercion and sexual assault (11th grade only)

While sexual pressure and intimate violence are generally events that happen outside of the school setting, students are most often victimized by a school peer/s. This in turn means survivors of sexual coercion and sexual assault are frequently forced into an education setting alongside the very person or people who victimized them.

Only 11th grade students were asked to report on their experiences with intimate violence. These students were asked:

*During the past 12 months, did your boyfriend or girlfriend ever hit, slap, or physically hurt you on purpose?*

*Have you ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?*

*Have you ever given in to sexual activity when you didn't want to because of pressure?*

The results showed an increase in partner violence, sexual coercion and

violence from 2017. The 2019 report identified that among 11th graders, 4% reported experiencing relationship violence, 15% pressured into sexual activity, and 6% a sexual assault.

However, the disaggregated data points to disproportional and intersectional intimate violence targeting and harming certain groups of students. Below are the disaggregated statistics on these three questions with specific communities with elevated risk highlighted in red.

### Gender Identity and Elevated Risks of Intimate Harm

Across gender identities many students are pressured to have sex and are experiencing sexual assault. Gender diverse 11th grade students are at an increased risk of intentional relationship violence. The remaining experiences of transgender and gender diverse students closely matched those of female identifying students, with gender minority students experiencing a higher likelihood of pressured sex (21%) as well as sexual assault (13%). Female identifying students report having been pressured into sex (22%) or sexually assaulted (10%) at alarming rates by the 11th grade.

### Sexual Orientation Inequity

At a rate of **3 to 1** sexual minority youth in the 11th grade report having been sexually assaulted (16%) in comparison to straight identifying peers (5%). Similarly, a disproportional number of sexual minority youth (12%) reported being coerced into sex with someone compared to straight identifying peers (5%). These youth are also more likely to have experienced relationship violence within the last year.

| Eleventh Grade: Sexual Coersion and Sexual Assault |                       |                  |                 |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|  | Relationship Violence | Coerced Into Sex | Sexual Assault  |
| Overall Average                                    | 4%                    | 15%              | 6%              |
| Gender   |                       |                  |                 |
| Male   | 4%                    | 6%               | 2%              |
| Female   | 4%                    | <b>22%</b>       | <b>10%</b>      |
| Other Gender (incl. Transgender)                   | <b>7%</b>             | <b>21%</b>       | <b>14%</b>      |
| Sexual Orientation                                 |                       |                  |                 |
| Straight   | 3%                    | 12%              | 5%              |
| Lesbian/Gay, Bisexual, and Other                   | <b>6% - 9%</b>        | <b>17% - 31%</b> | <b>8% - 16%</b> |
| Race/Ethnicity                                     |                       |                  |                 |
| Native American                                    | <b>6%</b>             | <b>22%</b>       | <b>14%</b>      |
| Asian  | 2%                    | 8%               | 3%              |
| Black/African American                             | <b>5%</b>             | 14%              | 6%              |
| Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander                  | 4%                    | 12%              | <b>8%</b>       |
| White  | 4%                    | 16%              | 6%              |
| Other/Mixed Race                                   | <b>7%</b>             | <b>13%</b>       | <b>7%</b>       |
| Hispanic   | 4%                    | 13%              | <b>7%</b>       |
| Middle Eastern or North African                    | ---                   | 12%              | ---             |

## Race/Ethnicity Inequity

As a final point of concern, race/ethnicity is a strong predictor of relationship/dating violence, sexual pressure and sexual assault. Native American (14%), Native Hawaii/Pacific Island (8%), Mixed Race (7%), and Hispanic (7%) students experience higher than average rates of sexual assault. These findings are consistent with national findings in these areas.

It is critically important for communities and educators to be aware of these additional vulnerabilities and to provide culturally appropriate and connected paths for students to seek support while simultaneously providing culturally relevant social and emotional learning and sexuality education.

These intersections of vulnerability should not be missed on educators and advocates as we work to establish and improve **culturally appropriate and equity oriented social and emotional learning** structures address these destructive outcomes for our students.

## Mental Health Impacts

### Mental and Emotional Health: Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts

In this final section of the report we highlight the data where both suicidality, and attempted suicide intersect with a climate of bullying, harassment, threats of violence and relational and sexual violence.

Among all Oregon 8th and 11th grade youth suicidal ideation continues to be on the rise. When responding to the question, "During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?" both middle and high school students are reporting "yes" with increasing frequency.

Suicidal ideation is one clear indicator of an unsafe environment for 8th and 11th grade students. In the trendlines shown here, the overall results are alarming and continue to rise from previous OHT survey years.

## Gender Identity is Not a Feature of Sexual Orientation

Gender identity and sexual orientation are two distinct aspects of a person's identity. Throughout this report, we will share data on the ways in which both sexual orientation and gender identity are associated with experiences of bullying, harassment, violent victimization, school absence, and even suicidal ideation. We report on both of these identity categories together for three reasons:

- The forms of harassment related to transgender and gender diverse youth are often homophobic / anti-gay harassment. This happens because people commonly mistake gender identity or gender expression for sexual orientation and thereby use anti-gay harassment tactics.
- The forms of harassment directed at gay, lesbian, and bisexual (LGB) youth are often different types of gender harassment.
- Finally, we cluster sexual orientation and gender identity results because the impacts and outcomes of gender identity and sexual orientation hostility in Oregon schools result in similar negative impacts for children who fall into either group.

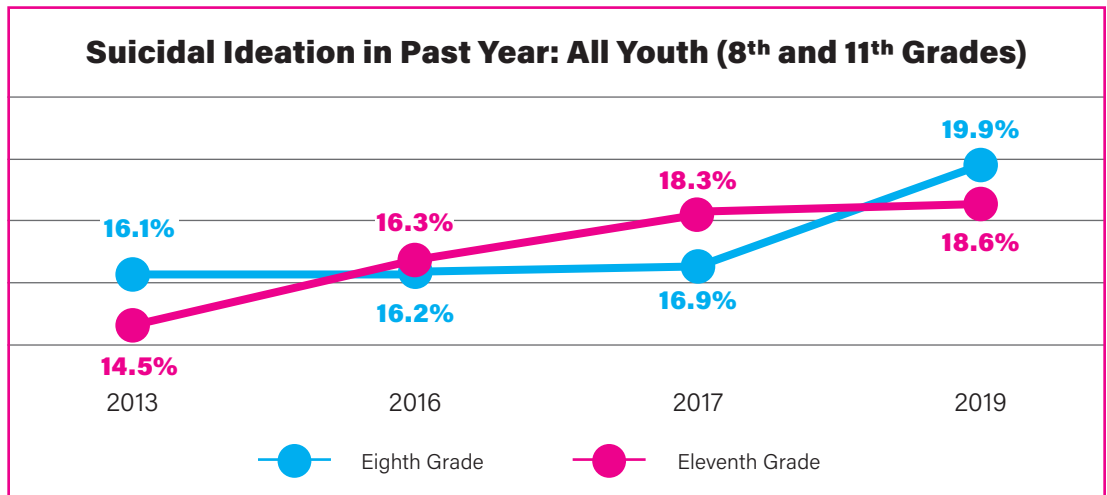
It is critical to identify and mitigate specific social risks to the mental health and wellbeing of our students. For example, in the 8th grade there is a dramatic increase in suicidality for a gender minority student (47%), a sexual orientation minority student (50%), and a Native American or Mixed-Race Student (25%).

### Gender Identity

When you consider gender identity bullying and marginalization as it relates to mental health and wellbeing, the suicide outcomes are considerably worse for transgender and gender diverse youth.<sup>xi</sup> Almost half of those students who identify as transgender or gender diverse expressed having seriously considered suicide in 2019. And in response to the follow up question, over one quarter of LGBT+ youth stated that they had actually attempted suicide in the past year.

### Transgender & Gender Diverse Student Responses

|                  |              |             |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Grade 8:</b>  | ideation 47% | attempt 29% |
| <b>Grade 11:</b> | ideation 41% | attempt 16% |





## Sexual Orientation

In looking at the impacts of pervasive anti-gay social hostility there is an increase in suicidal ideation and attempts by sexual minority youth as well. Among sexual orientation minority youth nearly half of all 8th and 11th graders seriously considered suicide in 2019.

### Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Student Responses

|                  |              |             |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Grade 8:</b>  | ideation 50% | attempt 27% |
| <b>Grade 11:</b> | ideation 44% | attempt 18% |

## Race/Ethnicity

And finally, there is clear evidence of a racial element of overrepresentation of suicidal risk that is important to consider when developing systemic interventions to school climate, social and emotional curriculum, and mental health learning for youth.

### Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Student Responses

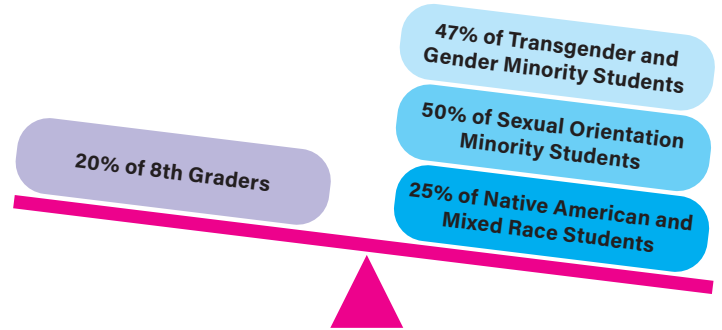
|                  |              |             |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Grade 8:</b>  | ideation 50% | attempt 27% |
| <b>Grade 11:</b> | ideation 44% | attempt 18% |

*Note: Native American, Mixed Race, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander all fall at double the overall average for their grade level.*

Sociocultural health risks require sociocultural interventions. Educators and advocates must dedicate serious time and attention to developing culturally specific school climate and culture supports to mitigate the impacts of inequity and hostility toward diverse students.

**Roughly half of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender diverse seriously considered suicide in 2019.**

### 8th Grade Suicidality



## Runaway and Rejected

The overall household tensions of raising teenage children as they are developing independence are exacerbated in families where the systemic and social hostilities of homophobia, transphobia, and racism are also disruptive forces which both the children and the parents must wrestle with on a daily basis.

When parenting and family dynamics are under the added pressures of a culture of racism, homophobia and transphobia, neither youth nor their parents have the benefit of social supports in family dynamics. National surveys and statistics confirm that LGBT+ youth face disproportional rates of homelessness and family separation. This statistic holds true among Oregon youth. Transgender youth, LGB youth, and some racial/ethnic minority youth are at a greater risk for family and housing instability than the majority of Oregon teens.

The chart to the right illustrates that in 2019 LGBT, Black/African American, Mixed Race, Native American, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander youth disproportionately reported being kicked out or having run away within the month of the survey.

|                                  | 8th Grade | 11th Grade |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Overall Average                  | 3%        | 3%         |
| <b>Gender</b>                    |           |            |
| Transgender                      | 6%        | 8%         |
| <b>Sexual Orientation</b>        |           |            |
| Lesbian/Gay                      | 5%        | 5%         |
| Bisexual                         | ---       | 7%         |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>            |           |            |
| Black/African American           | 6%        | 5%         |
| Mixed Race                       | 4%        | 4%         |
| Native American                  | ---       | 6%         |
| Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | ---       | 5%         |

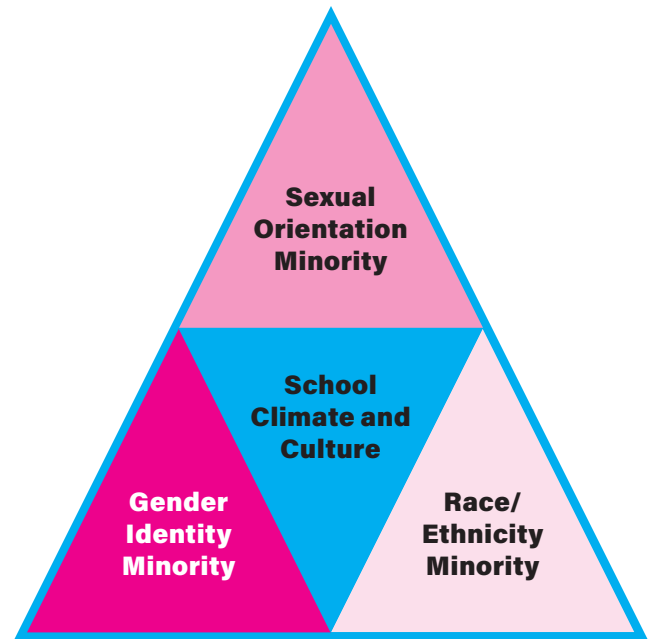
## Conclusion of Findings

Overall, the school climate and external social culture have produced a particularly unsafe and inaccessible education setting for sexual orientation, gender identity, and racial/ethnic minority Oregonian students.

2019 was a difficult year for all Oregon youth. The continuing decrease in positive youth development and the increase in suicidal ideation are a call to action to educators and child advocates across the state to act on the social and emotional needs of our youth.

In addition, we must deeply consider the structural and systemic bias within our culture and within the climate of our schools and the preparation of school staff to adequately support the wellbeing of diverse Oregon youth.

With harassment, bullying, and assault policies in place to address identity-based violence, **it is now time for schools to become social and emotionally affirming and sustaining educational spaces for all Oregon youth.**



*Design and Implement Educational Systems to Support Diverse Communities:*

School and community leadership need to work together to design culturally specific interventions in specific areas (ex: bully prevention). Only an anti-bias design can address identity-based risks to safety and inclusion.

*Evaluate Teachers on Equity and Inclusion Pedagogy:*

Professional educators must be evaluated on their educational expertise in equity and inclusion in curriculum and instruction. A teacher or administrator who cannot identify and articulate equity-based risks and incidents within the school should set professional development goals specifically addressing the increased dangers of schooling for minority youth.

### TO MAKE STUDENTS SEEN:

*Statewide School Climate Data Collection:*

The Oregon Department of Education must design a school climate survey of baseline questions for all Oregon school districts to implement. This survey should capture the known school climate concerns and leave room for individual districts to include specific climate concerns relevant to their community.

*Evaluation of School Safety and School Climate by Diverse Community Representatives:*

Once we have begun collecting school climate data as an educational system, it will be time to bring together diverse community representatives to help school districts establish school climate equity improvement plans.

*Establish School Climate Equity Improvement Plans:*

Apply information from this report, state and district climate data, and other student data sources to develop school and district equity improvement plans.

### Findings Summary

Oregon LGBTQ+ and race/ethnic minority students experience overrepresentation in surviving:

1. Targeted bullying at school
2. Threats with a weapon at school
3. Missing school days out of fear for safety
4. Experiencing Dating Violence
5. Experiencing Sexual Coercion
6. Experiencing Sexual Assault
7. Home and Family Conflicts
8. Suicidality
9. Suicide Attempts

## Recommendations to Create Safe and Inclusive Schools

### TO MAKE STUDENTS SAFE:

*Review and Update School and District Policies to Address Documented Bias:*

School district, school, and classroom policies that do not explicitly take into account systemic inequity should be reviewed, revised, or redesigned. The Oregon Equity Lens is one appropriate tool for a community to review district, school, and classroom policies and practices for bias.

**However, the Oregon Equity Lens does not take into account the sexual orientation and gender identity bias addressed in this report.** Therefore, in addition to an equity lens analysis, it is necessary to provide LGBTQ expertise to an anti-bias and inclusion review in order to establish safe and inclusive public schools in Oregon.

## TO MAKE STUDENTS VALUED:

### *Establish Inclusive Curriculum Standards:*

The OSSCC Report has repeatedly called for LGBT inclusive curriculum standards similar to those within the California FAIR Education Act.

### *Establish Inclusive Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Anti-Bias Curriculum:*

Statewide educators are aware of the importance and lack of a comprehensive plan to support the social and emotional lives of youth in Oregon schools. Data in this report indicates that the SEL movement must have an anti-bias and equity focus or we will once again miss the unhealthy patterns of youth being socialized to enact bias or to experience ongoing bias at school.

### *Equity Informed Trauma Sensitive Practices, Restorative Practices, and Culturally Responsive PBIS:*

Educators must center on anti-bias equity and inclusion in all adopted teaching practices. To implement any “new” teaching innovation without explicitly addressing marginalized communities, equity and inclusion, will not improve outcomes.

## The time is now to reverse these trends in Oregon.

## Endnotes

- i Sadowski, M. (2016). *Safe Is Not Enough: Better Schools for LGBT Students*. Harvard University Press.
- ii Meyer, Elizabeth J. and Pullen Sansfaçon, Annie (eds.) (2014). *Supporting Transgender and Gender Creative Youth Schools, Families, and Communities in Action*. Peter Lang, Inc.
- iii Throughout this report, we use different terminologies to identify sexual orientation and gender identity minority youth. We do so because each study we utilize uses different terminology depending upon the demographic options youth were offered in each study.
- iv The OHT Survey is an anonymous and voluntary survey sponsored by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).
- v Kann, L., Olsen, E.O., McManus, T., 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. *MMWR Surveill Summ* 2016;65(No. SS-9):1-202.
- vi Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J.G., Villenas, C., & Giga, N. M. (2016). *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited, A Survey of U.S. Secondary Students and Teachers*. GLSEN.
- vii Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. GLSEN.

## Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Sexual orientation and gender identity are two distinct elements of an individual person's identity. The Oregon Healthy Teens survey provided teens the means to identify on both the sexual orientation and the gender identity spectrum. Among the national data sets, the CDC national survey does not ask students to provide their gender identity, while the GLSEN survey does. Therefore, we used both reports to compare Oregon results to the national average.

Sexual orientation is the umbrella term used for romantic attraction. A youth can be romantically attracted to persons of the same sex, of a different sex, or of multiple sexes. Romantic attraction is commonly expressed in children beginning in the pre-pubescent period of their lives. It is commonly expressed in early crushes and later in partnering and dating activities during middle and high school.

### Sexual Orientation

- Gay / Lesbian
- Straight, that is, not lesbian or gay
- Bisexual
- Something else fits better

### Gender Identity

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Gender non-conforming
- Something else fits better

Gender identity is an umbrella term for the gender a person knows themselves to be in the world. Gender identity is generally seen as a developmental awareness which takes place in early childhood (ages 3-7). The two most common gender identities are boy and girl (or man and woman). The organization Gender Spectrum ([genderspectrum.org](http://genderspectrum.org)) offers a great deal of education information regarding gender identity and schools.

For the 2020 Annual Report, we use the above specific sexual orientation and gender identity categories which students selected in the OHA Oregon Healthy Teens survey. While there are many other terms in common use within our society for these identity categories, the above terms were consistently used by eighth and eleventh grade students when responding to this survey of Oregon teen wellbeing.

- viii Dropout Rates in Oregon High Schools (2019). Oregon Department of Education: Salem, OR: <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/reports-and-data/students/Pages/Dropout-Rates.aspx>
- ix *Enumeration of Statewide Anti-Bullying Laws and Local Policies* (2019). GLSEN.
- x ORS 339.351
- xi Ybarra, M.L., Mitchell, K.J., Kosciw, J.G., et al. (2015). Understanding Linkages Between Bullying and Suicidal Ideation in a National Sample of LGB and Heterosexual Youth in the United States. *Prev Sci* 16:451.

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## A Brief History of the OSSCC Report

Founded in 2003, the Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition is a 501c3 comprised of educators and advocates for Oregon public education. Our work supports community efforts

to reduce school-based violence and harassment as well as youth suicide and other adverse outcomes in the often hidden and historically underserved gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth population. Although the primary focus of OSSCC is sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, we recognize the harm caused by harassment, violence, and discrimination of any kind.

As early as the 1980's the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was linking youth sexual orientation minority status to suicidal ideation. Further studies confirmed that this stigmatized youth identity was also subject to harassment, discrimination, and family rejection. In 2010 education researchers began to evaluate the educational experiences of these youth in Oregon schools and consistently found that a safe and inclusive school climate increased positive youth development while also reducing suicidal ideation and other public health concerns.

In 2008-09, OSSCC joined a broad coalition of organizations to strengthen Oregon's safe schools' statutes regarding school bullying. The results were the improved Safe Schools Statutes (ORS 339.351 to 339.364) which strengthened protections for students, specifically students who either identify or are perceived to be sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression minority youth. In 2012, the statute was further amended to address cyber-bullying and require enumerated anti-bullying training for school employees. That same year OSSCC offered the first annual State of the Safe Schools Act report.

### OSSCC Mini Grants

Each year OSSCC offers mini grants to GSAs to strengthen their efforts to make schools safe. Final selection of 2020 applications to fund will be made in March 2020. Watch the OSSCC website for future opportunities.

The OSSCC report began an annual ranking of Oregon school districts based on

### 2019 Safe Schools Award Winners

#### Front row, from left:

Jess Firestone, Buckman Elementary  
Erin Rook, OSU-Cascades  
Leslie Lucir, Junction City High School  
Martha Rampton, Pacific University

#### Back row, from left:

Wes Chernin, Consultant  
Sam Blanchard, Sacramento Elementary  
Frank Leavitt, Portland Public  
Michael Sanchez, Jefferson High School  
David Nester, NW Youth Corps  
Darian Lightfoot, NW Youth Corps  
KT Emerson, OSAA



compliance with the school safety statutes. Over the course of the subsequent years the OSSCC report found that districts across the state moved into compliance with the inclusive safe schools' statute. In 2016, the state released additional guidance to districts on addressing gender identity and gender expression. The Oregon gender guidelines now comply with federal Title IX educational protections against sex based educational discrimination for transgender students.

### LGBT+ Inclusive Curriculum and Additional Resources

faireducationact.com—curriculum from a California public education project  
genderspectrum.org—an education non-profit to support gender inclusive environments  
GLSEN.org—an education non-profit to support LGBT education issues  
rethinkingschools.org—both a magazine and publications addressing these topics  
teachingforchange.org—a social justice oriented 503(c)3 for educating teachers  
tolerance.org—curriculum as a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center  
welcomingschools.org—a project of the HRC Foundation  
Transactive Gender Center [https://graduate.lclark.edu/programs/continuing\\_education/transactive/](https://graduate.lclark.edu/programs/continuing_education/transactive/)

In 2018, Title IX protections and access to education for LGBT+ youth are clearly supported by both law and consistent legal precedents.

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