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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

ELIZABETH MIRABELLI, an
individual, and LORI ANN WEST, an
individual,

Plaintiffs,

v.

MARK OLSON, in his official capacity as
President of the EUSD Board of
Education, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No.: 3:23-cv-0768-BEN-VET

**Supplemental Declaration of Paul
M. Jonna, Esq., in Support of
Plaintiffs' Ex Parte Application for
an Order to Show Cause re:
Sanctions**

Judge: Hon. Roger T. Benitez
Courtroom: 5A
Date: November 17, 2025
Time: 10:30 a.m.

1 I, Paul M. Jonna, Esq., declare and state as follows:

2 1. I am an attorney at law duly licensed to practice in the State of California
3 and in the Southern District of California. I am a Partner with LiMandri & Jonna LLP,
4 and am counsel of record for the Plaintiffs and the certified class. The matters
5 discussed below are based on my own personal knowledge. I could and would testify to
6 them if called upon to do so in court. I submit this declaration in further support of
7 Plaintiffs' application for an OSC re: sanctions. *See, e.g.*, ECF Nos. 292, 295, 300, 303.

8 2. To date, the State Defendants have engaged in a *repeated*, serious and
9 inexcusable attempt to mislead the Court by seeking to have Plaintiffs' claims
10 dismissed on the basis that the California Department of Education ("CDE") had
11 withdrawn its FAQ page on gender identity—"Plaintiffs' only basis for suit." *See* ECF
12 No. 292 at 4 (quoting ECF No. 256, Def. Opp. to MSJ, at 17).

13 3. In reality, however, the CDE had merely moved the content of that page
14 to its new password-protected PRISM training that all teachers are required to take.
15 *See* ECF No. 295-1, 2d Jonna Decl. Then, when challenged, the State Defendants
16 quickly took down the PRISM website wholesale and argued that the inclusion of
17 Parental Exclusion Policies was inadvertent and should be forgiven. *See* ECF No. 299.
18 They further testified that the PRISM website was down pending discussion of
19 "appropriate changes," *see* ECF No. 299-1, Garfinkel Decl., ¶16, that removes the
20 "conflicting content," ECF No. 303, Hearing Transcript, at 20-21, but declined to
21 appear at the hearing to answer questions. And the CDE Defendants abandoned their
22 mootness argument that relied on the withdrawal of the FAQ page, *see* ECF No. 298,
23 but the Attorney General did not disavow his standing argument or his opposition to
24 class certification—both of which equally relied on the withdrawal of the FAQ page.
25 *See* ECF No. 303 at 62:5-8, 79:15-20.

26 4. Now, Plaintiffs' further review of the PRISM training reveals both that it
27 continues to hyperlink to the objectionable webpage of its advisory board partner the
28 ACLU of Southern California, and that it hyperlinks to a previously unseen

1 “Queeriosity” document—both of which promote Parental Exclusion Policies. This
2 provides yet another reason why this case is justiciable—even against the Attorney
3 General, who has to date maintained his standing arguments—and that the State
4 Defendants’ arguments to the contrary continue to be frivolous, made in bad faith, and
5 warrant sanctions. Thus, Plaintiffs reaffirm their request that the Court sanction the
6 State Defendants. *See, e.g., Gastelum v. 7-Eleven, Inc.*, No. 25-cv-637, 2025 WL
7 3302888 (S.D. Cal. Nov. 27, 2025) (imposing \$4,500 sanction payable to the Court)

8 9 SUMMARY OF PRIOR BRIEFING / ARGUMENT

10 5. As stated in Plaintiffs’ original request for sanctions, the State Defendants
11 have made egregious misrepresentations to the Court, seeking to unjustly prejudice
12 both Plaintiffs and the Class. For example, in opposing summary judgment, the State
13 Defendants argued that Plaintiffs lack standing to sue them because of the California
14 Department of Education’s (“CDE”) removal of the FAQ page:

15 [W]hat previously happened to Parent Plaintiffs ... *does not itself establish*
16 *an injury that confers standing against State Defendants....* Here, the record
17 does not show a likelihood of *future* injury traceable to State Defendants.
18 Parent Plaintiffs’ prior experiences with non-disclosure centered entirely
19 around their schools’ purported applications of CDE’s prior FAQ
20 guidance. But all public schools have now been informed that this
21 guidance has been withdrawn and replaced with guidance that conveys
22 instead the requirements of AB 1955. This explicit withdrawal and
23 replacement of those earlier FAQs unequivocally conveys to districts that
24 the rescinded guidelines are no longer in effect.

25 ECF No. 256 at 21 (original emphasis; footnote omitted); *see also id.* at 17 n.7
26 (“Teacher Plaintiffs have not established an injury for standing purposes ... [b]ecause
27 they point to no currently operative State policy or conduct of State Defendants”).
28 Similarly, in opposing class certification, the State Defendants argued that “Plaintiffs’
definition [of the class] relies wholly on a nonexistent webpage that contained non-
binding guidance in a withdrawn FAQ, formerly issued by the California Department
of Education.” ECF No. 257 at 12.

1 6. These statements were false but have never been abandoned or
2 disavowed. *See* ECF No. 298 (only withdrawing CDE-specific mootness argument).
3 As stated in Plaintiffs’ application for an OSC re: sanctions, my office reviewed Course
4 3 of the California Department of Education’s new PRISM training and submitted
5 information to the Court showing that the CDE was continuing to push the identical
6 Parental Exclusion Policies from the withdrawn FAQ page via different methods. *See*
7 ECF No. 295. The Court then rightly set an OSC hearing because if the State
8 Defendants had been successful in deceiving the Court, the prejudice to Plaintiffs and
9 the Class would have been immense—as the State Defendants would have had the
10 claims against them dismissed while continuing to violate Plaintiffs’ and the Class’s
11 constitutional rights. *See* ECF No. 294.

12 7. During the OSC hearing on November 17, 2025, the Court expressed
13 concern with the fact that the State Defendants had taken down the PRISM training
14 and how it was then impossible for the parties to confirm what was actually contained
15 in it. *See* ECF No. 303 at 18:25-29:23. Thus, following the OSC hearing, my office
16 waited for the PRISM training to come back online and, once it did, I instructed a
17 paralegal with my office to take all six of the training courses. Each course takes
18 approximately 60-90 minutes to complete. An attorney then confirmed all of the
19 information that is listed below.

20 8. As explained in the CDE’s “Statewide Informational Webinar,” each
21 PRISM course generally consists of four modules—A, B, C, and D. All modules are
22 informational except the last one of each course (Module D in Courses 1-5; Module E
23 in Course 6), which provides links to further resources. *See* Cal. Dep’t of Educ.,
24 *PRISM Statewide Informational Webinar*, YouTube (June 26, 2025),
25 <https://youtu.be/Cu5QuEqh9Iw>. Further information regarding the content of each
26 course and module is available in the “Facilitator’s Guide.” *See* ECF No. 255-3 at 8-
27 185 (Ex. Q). Below is a summary of the objectionable material that that my office found
28 continues to be required viewing for all teachers who take the PRISM training.

MATERIAL FROM COURSE 3 THAT REMAINS ONLINE

9. As stated, my office originally reviewed a video of an individual taking the CDE’s PRISM “Course 3” and submitted information concerning it to the Court. *See* ECF No. 295. Since that time, a paralegal with my office has personally taken the Course 3 training and found that objectionable material remains.

10. **First**, Course 3 continues to link to a webpage of the ACLU of Southern California that explicitly promotes Parental Exclusion Policies. *See* ECF No. 295-1 at 28-41 (Ex. 7-2). As acknowledged by the State Defendants, the ACLU helped developed the PRISM training, and the State Defendants’ “aren’t running away from that.” ECF No. 303 at 24. Previously, the document was hyperlinked in Module D, regarding further “Resources for LGBTQ+ Support.” *See id.* at p.26. However, that same document remains hyperlinked twice in Module C, titled “Laws and Policies Supporting LGBTQ+ Students,” within the section on “Gender Support Plans.”

11. Below is the location of the two hyperlinks:¹

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

60% COMPLETE

- Introduction ☒
- Module A - Strategies and Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+ Spaces ☒
- Module B - Impacts of Bias on LGBTQ+ Students ☒
- Module C - Laws and Policies Supporting LGBTQ+ Students ☒
- Module D - Strategies and Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐

Key Components

While not all General Support Plans (GSPs) look the same or follow the exact same process, they do share several essential components. These key elements are outlined below—click the plus icons to explore each one in more detail.

Name Student Uses

Students have the right to be addressed by the name that aligns with their gender identity. This is allowed, even if a student has not formally or legally changed their name. [\(Source\)](#)

Pronouns Student Uses

Students have the right to be addressed by the pronouns that align with their gender identity. This is allowed, even if a student has not formally or legally changed their gender marker. [\(Source\)](#)

¹ <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/know-your-rights/lgbtq-student-rights-k-12-california-public-schools>.

12. Although the ACLU document is cited for the purpose of names and pronouns, it contains extremely problematic language. It was previously submitted as Exhibit 7-2 and is being re-submitted with this declaration. In relevant part, it states:

Do I have the right to keep information about my gender identity and/or sexual orientation private?

YES. Generally, school staff cannot share information about your gender identity and sexual orientation without your permission, except under very limited circumstances, such as in case of an emergency.

California law requires that school districts provide a safe and welcoming environment where you can learn and be yourself. **Disclosing a student's gender identity or sexual orientation without their permission may violate California's antidiscrimination laws by potentially exposing the student to increased harassment. Additionally, under the California and U.S. Constitutions, you have a protected right to privacy, which includes the right to keep your sexual orientation and your gender identity private (what courts call a "reasonable expectation of privacy"). This means that you have the right to control to what extent and to whom you disclose this information.** While your school should support your coming out by supporting you and encouraging parental involvement, your school should also first check with you to ensure they are not accidentally outing you. Being open about your gender identity and sexual orientation at school does not mean you automatically give up your right to privacy outside school, and school staff should not disclose your LGBTQ+ status without your permission.

However, under some limited circumstances, your school can tell your parents about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity—but only if they have a very good reason for doing so, such as a serious concern for your physical safety where your gender or sexual identity is relevant to the concern....

Can my school district adopt a policy requiring school staff to out students against their will?

... Your school may try to support your coming out by encouraging parental involvement, but it is ultimately your choice. Because you have a right to privacy regarding personal information, including LGBTQ+ status, your school should first check in with you before

disclosing your private information to anyone. If you share that you aren't comfortable sharing your LGBTQ+ status with your family, your school should acknowledge and try to understand your concerns and work with you towards getting your family's support whatever that may look like for you.

13. **Second**, Modules A and C also continue to contain material that is ambiguous, could be interpreted in multiple ways, and that would likely lead teachers to recall the Parental Exclusion Policies on the CDE's FAQ page. The problem is that the PRISM training uses words like "never" and "only" to describe disclosure of a student's social transition, without mentioning parents. By using all-encompassing words that cover all situations, without mentioning parents, the CDE is including them as individuals with whom a child's gender identity cannot be shared:

14. For example, Module A introduces the concept of a "Gender Support Plan," stating that students "may choose" to include their parents in its development. Absent any indication of when parents can or should be excluded, the implication is that the decision rests solely with the child:

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

40% COMPLETE

- Introduction ☒
- Module A - Strategies and Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+ Spaces ☒
- Module B - Impacts of Bias on LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- Module C - Laws and Policies Supporting LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- Module D - Strategies and Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐

Anti-transphobia:

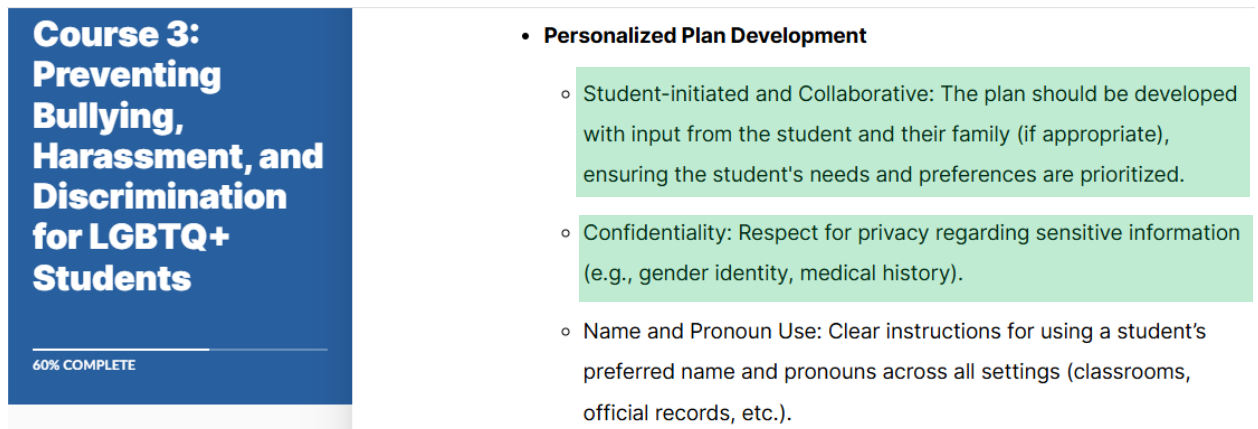
Anti-transphobia refers to the proactive measures and educational practices designed to prevent and eliminate discrimination, harassment, and exclusion based on gender identity or gender expression. This commitment involves not only responding to incidents of transphobia but also taking intentional steps to foster understanding, respect, and affirmation of gender diversity throughout the school community.

Examples:

- Teachers use gender-neutral language and avoid assumptions about students' gender identities.
- A transgender student is offered a Gender Support Plan convening that is confidential. Students may choose to include their parent/guardian(s) in the Gender Support Plan convening.

15. In Module C, the Course then elaborates upon the “Gender Support Plan.” Screenshots of the entire section on “Gender Support Plans” is being submitted as **Exhibit 10**. Like Module A, Module C does not explicitly state that a student has a constitutional right of privacy that requires school staff to not apprise his parents if he is socially transitioning at school. But, with the CDE’s FAQ page of recent memory, various statements in the PRISM training strongly imply as much.

16. For example, the PRISM training states that a Gender Support Plan should only seek input from the family “if appropriate” and that “the student’s ... preferences are prioritized.” When is parental involvement appropriate? There is no guidance—but the next bullet emphasizes that “gender identity” is a private matter. Whose preferences should the student’s preferences be prioritized over? The parents? The PRISM training is ambiguous.



The screenshot displays a training interface. On the left, a blue box contains the text: "Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students" and "60% COMPLETE". To the right, under the heading "Personalized Plan Development", there are three bullet points, each in a light green box:

- Student-initiated and Collaborative: The plan should be developed with input from the student and their family (if appropriate), ensuring the student's needs and preferences are prioritized.
- Confidentiality: Respect for privacy regarding sensitive information (e.g., gender identity, medical history).
- Name and Pronoun Use: Clear instructions for using a student's preferred name and pronouns across all settings (classrooms, official records, etc.).

17. Scrolling down, the PRISM training then discusses “Implementing the Gender Support Plan.” Again, in this section, the CDE does not explicitly state that teachers must deceive parents about their child’s gender presentation at school. But the continuation of the directives from the FAQ page are reasonably inferred by simply putting the various directives together:

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///

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

60% COMPLETE

- ≡ Introduction ☒
- ≡ Module A - Strategies and Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+ Spaces ☒
- ≡ Module B - Impacts of Bias on LGBTQ+ Students ☒
- ≡ Module C - Laws and Policies Supporting LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- ≡ Module D - Strategies and Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

60% COMPLETE

- ≡ Introduction ☒
- ≡ Module A - Strategies and Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+ Spaces ☒
- ≡ Module B - Impacts of Bias on LGBTQ+ Students ☒
- ≡ Module C - Laws and Policies Supporting LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- ≡ Module D - Strategies and Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐

Implementing the Gender Support Plan

While the order of steps may vary from school to school, these are the basic steps one will follow in creating a Gender Support Plan.

- Initial Consultation: Meet with the student, family (if applicable), and relevant staff to discuss and create the plan. This meeting should be conducted in a confidential and supportive environment, ensuring that the student feels comfortable sharing their gender identity needs.
- Communication with Staff: After the plan is created, ensure that relevant staff—such as teachers, counselors, and administrators—are informed, but **only with the student's consent**. This may involve offering training on gender inclusivity to help staff better understand how to provide effective support for the student.
- Respect Privacy: Be sure to maintain confidentiality around the student's gender identity and provide the plan in a manner that respects their privacy.
- Review and Update: A GSP is a dynamic document that should be reviewed periodically and adjusted as necessary. Check in with the student and their family, if appropriate, to ensure that the accommodations are still working and that the student feels supported.
- Monitor and Address Issues: Continuously monitor the student's experience and be proactive in addressing any incidents of bullying, harassment, or exclusion. Ensure that the school climate remains supportive by providing ongoing professional development for staff on issues related to gender diversity.

What the Law Says About Confidentiality for LGBTQ+ Students:

Confidential conversations with counselors are protected. If a student (12 years or older) shares personal information—including their sexual orientation or gender identity—with a school counselor, **that information is confidential** under California Education Code § 49602. Counselors are legally and ethically bound to protect it.

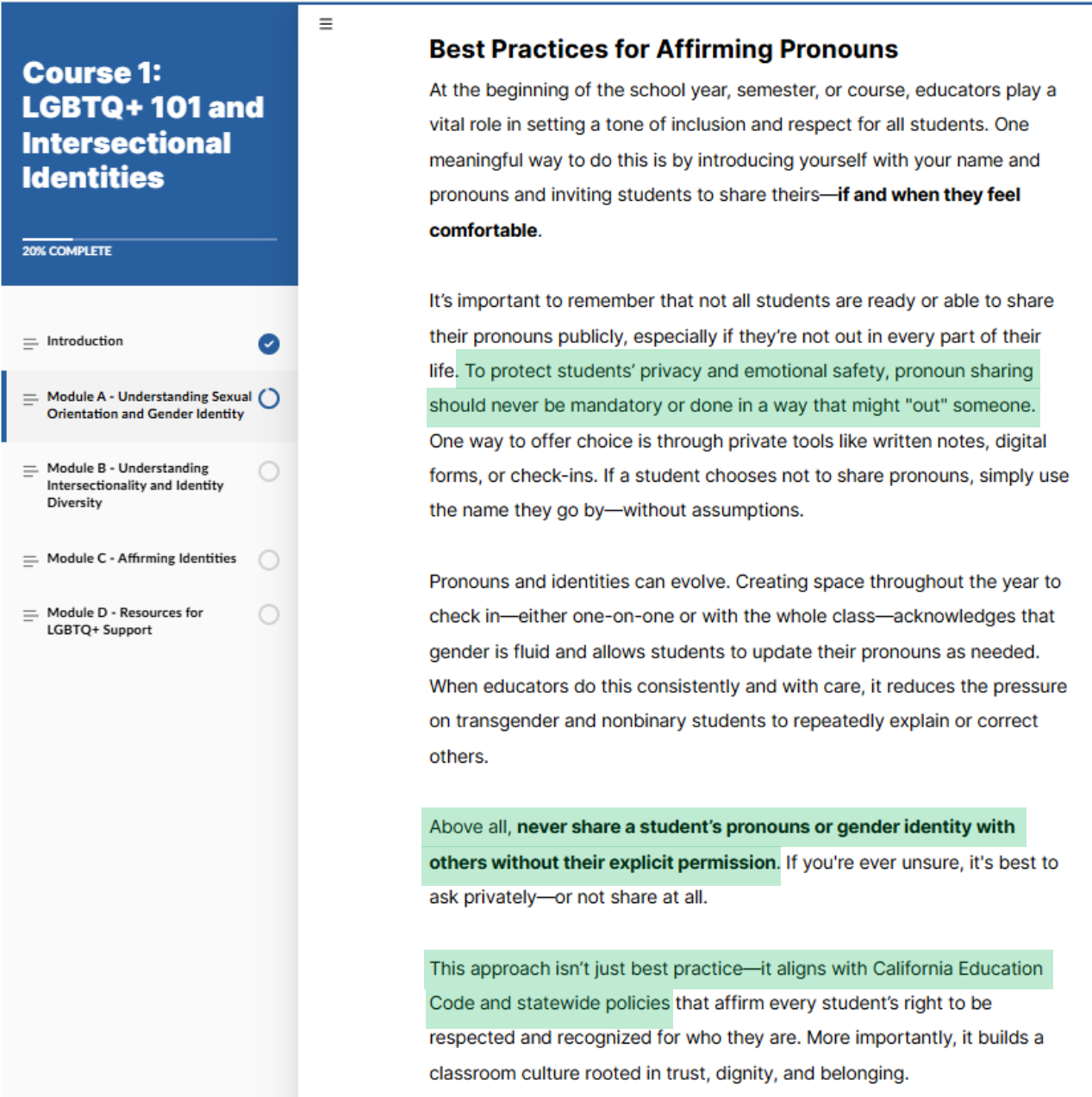
Why this matters: Students may feel safer exploring or sharing their identity when they trust that school staff won't "out" them without their consent.

When Can Information Be Shared? Confidentiality can *only* be broken if:

The counselor reasonably believes it's necessary to prevent a clear and present danger to the student's health, safety, or welfare.

MATERIAL FROM OTHER COURSES

18. In addition to Course 3, other courses in the CDE’s PRISM training contain problematic material. **First**, in Course 1, Module A, the PRISM Training instructs teachers that they should “never share a student’s pronouns or gender identity with others without their explicit permission.” Again, there is no explicit reference to parents, but the word “*never*” covers all situations; thus, by not specifically referencing parents, the CDE is including them as individuals with whom a child’s gender identity cannot be shared:



Course 1: LGBTQ+ 101 and Intersectional Identities
20% COMPLETE

- Introduction ☒
- Module A - Understanding Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity ☒
- Module B - Understanding Intersectionality and Identity Diversity ☐
- Module C - Affirming Identities ☐
- Module D - Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐

Best Practices for Affirming Pronouns

At the beginning of the school year, semester, or course, educators play a vital role in setting a tone of inclusion and respect for all students. One meaningful way to do this is by introducing yourself with your name and pronouns and inviting students to share theirs—if and when they feel comfortable.

It’s important to remember that not all students are ready or able to share their pronouns publicly, especially if they’re not out in every part of their life. To protect students’ privacy and emotional safety, pronoun sharing should never be mandatory or done in a way that might “out” someone. One way to offer choice is through private tools like written notes, digital forms, or check-ins. If a student chooses not to share pronouns, simply use the name they go by—without assumptions.

Pronouns and identities can evolve. Creating space throughout the year to check in—either one-on-one or with the whole class—acknowledges that gender is fluid and allows students to update their pronouns as needed. When educators do this consistently and with care, it reduces the pressure on transgender and nonbinary students to repeatedly explain or correct others.

Above all, **never share a student’s pronouns or gender identity with others without their explicit permission.** If you’re ever unsure, it’s best to ask privately—or not share at all.

This approach isn’t just best practice—it aligns with California Education Code and statewide policies that affirm every student’s right to be respected and recognized for who they are. More importantly, it builds a classroom culture rooted in trust, dignity, and belonging.

19. **Second**, in Course 2, Module A, the PRISM training references AB 1266—the statute that was the original basis for the CDE’s FAQ page. It then states: “California School Boards Association (CSBA) has model board policies available here.” The hyperlink, however, does not take the reader to the CSBA’s model policies, but to a 2014 guidance document. The Court’s prior concern about spoliation is particularly relevant here as the text of the PRISM training—“model board policies”—does not match the current hyperlink, and it is unclear why.

Course 2: LGBTQ+ History and Culture
20% COMPLETE

- Introduction ☒
- Module A - Impact of LGBTQ+ Contributions Across Fields ☐
- Module B - Exploring LGBTQ+ Contributions in Pop Culture ☐
- Module C - Key LGBTQ+ Historical Events and Contributions ☐
- Module D - Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐

Civics

You are invited to take a closer look at the ways in which civics has advanced the safety and education of California students. If your time is limited, please choose the one with which you are least familiar.

LGBTQ+ EDUCATION CODE LAWS	CALIFORNIA LEGISLATIVE LGBTQ CAUCUS	COLIN EX REL V. ORANGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPREME COURT CASE	SCHOOL SUCCESS AND OPPORTUNITIES ACT
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AB 1266, also known as the *School Success and Opportunities Act*, aims to ensure that California public schools uphold their duty to support the success and welfare of every student, including those who are transgender. By granting transgender students the opportunity to engage fully in all school activities, such as sports teams, and providing access to facilities aligned with their gender identity, the bill promotes inclusivity and equality. The facilities in question include, but are not limited to, restrooms and locker rooms.

California School Boards Association (CSBA) has model board policies available [here](#).

20. In any event, following the hyperlink currently takes the reader to the CSBA’s 2014 guidance titled “Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students, Privacy, Programs, Activities & Facilities.”² This document contains the same problem as above, *i.e.*, unqualified statements regarding child privacy that, because they do not mention parents, imply that children have privacy rights against their parents. This document was previously submitted at ECF No. 137-2 at 71-74 (Ex. 9),

² https://www.csba.org/Advocacy/~media/CSBA/Files/Advocacy/ELA/2014_03_AB1266_FinalGuidance.ashx.

and is being re-submitted as **Exhibit 10**. In relevant part, it states:

Privacy Rights of Transgender or Gender Nonconforming Student

A student's decision to inform the district that his or her gender identity differs from his or her biological gender is extremely personal and private. In addition, transgender and gender nonconforming students may face bullying and harassment as a result of other students or staff not understanding or tolerating the public representations of their gender identity. **At the same time, the decision may potentially involve very public components if, for example, the student starts to go by a different name. Despite this potential for public awareness, districts are still legally responsible to maintain a student's privacy according to the student's wishes.** Therefore, as with a request to use facilities or participate in programs or activities, it is recommended that a district address each situation on a case-by-case basis. This will allow the district to understand the student's privacy needs and to identify potential challenges the district may face in meeting those needs. It will also provide the student with an opportunity to understand the implications of his or her request and the impact it may have on the student's privacy.

21. **Third**, in Course 6, Module E provides further resources. The PRISM training links to a document published by the nonprofit Moving Traditions that is titled, "Queeriosity: an LGBTQ Resource Guide for High School Educators":

The screenshot displays a digital interface for 'Course 6: Inclusive Pedagogy and Facilitation', which is 83% complete. To the right, there is a section titled 'Queeriosity: An LGBTQ Resource Guide for High School Educators'. The text describes it as a comprehensive, student-authored toolkit designed to help educators create inclusive, affirming, and informed classroom environments that support the well-being and academic success of LGBTQ+ students. A 'CLICK HERE' button is visible next to the description. Below the description, the 'Suggested Audience' is listed as: Administrator, Librarian, School Counselor, School Psychologist, Teacher, and Other Certificated Staff.

22. The linked document is attached as **Exhibit 12**.³ Its relevant content is very similar to the ACLU page referenced above. It states that it is "imperative" that a teacher "keep the student's identity confidential," which the document later states "includes talking to a student's parents":

³ <https://www.movingtraditions.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Queeriosity-An-LGBTQ-Resource-Guide-for-High-School-Educators.pdf>.

1 What You Can Do

2 Ultimately, each coming out is an experience unique to the student. It's
3 impossible to give specific advice that will apply to every coming out that
4 you, as a teacher, will encounter. That being said, there are some general
5 suggestions that can apply to all sorts of coming out situations....

6 **• Confidentiality is key: Any student who is coming out to you trusts**
7 **you as a teacher and mentor. In order to cement that trust, it is**
8 **imperative that you keep the student's identity confidential unless**
9 **the student states otherwise.** One's sexuality and gender identity is
10 sensitive information (especially in a high school setting) and one of the
11 best things you can do to support a student is to understand that their
12 identity is not your information to share. Of course, teachers are
13 mandated reporters. If during the student's coming out conversation,
14 they express that they are a danger to themselves or others, then it is
15 crucial to their safety that you get other people involved.

16 ...

17 Supporting a student's gender transition

18 If/when a student comes out to you as transgender or non-binary, you
19 might have more questions than a student coming out as gay, lesbian,
20 bisexual, etc. Here are some things to check-in with your student about
21 as it relates to transitioning....

22 **• Ask if they want other people to know: If a student has chosen a new**
23 **name or a new set of pronouns, they might want your help in correcting**
24 **other staff members. After all, coming out to one teacher is scary. Coming**
25 **out to six or seven is an inconceivable amount of pressure. However,**
26 **don't be surprised if a student wants their new name or pronouns to**
27 **stay confidential, for now. This includes talking to a student's**
28 **parents/guardians.**

23. **Fourth**, and last, in Course 6, Module B, the teacher taking the training
must answer correctly to a question about how to address the situation of a transgender
student who will not change for class. If the teacher clicks on the answer for "Call
Leilani's parents," the teacher is informed that is incorrect because "Calling a
student's parents to ask about their identity is a violation of student privacy." Rather,
the teacher must click on "Privately check in with Lielani" and "affirm her right to
privacy." The "Source" for this answer is the CSBA's 2021 guidance, which is cited

but not (or no longer) hyperlinked.

Course 6: Inclusive Pedagogy and Facilitation


33% COMPLETE

- Introduction ☒
- Module A - Inclusive Practices in STEM for LGBTQ+ Students ☒
- Module B - Inclusive Practices in Physical Education and Health ☐
- Module C - Inclusive Practices in ELA, History and Social Sciences for LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- Module D - Inclusive Practices in Electives and World Languages for LGBTQ+ Students ☐

Mr. Dhruv teaches 10th grade Physical Education at a California high school. One of his students, Leilani, a transgender girl, has recently begun avoiding dressing out for class. Instead of changing into her Physical Education clothes, she lingers outside the girl's locker room and sometimes starts fights with other students when asked why she isn't dressed out.

Leilani hasn't spoken to Mr. Dhruv directly about what's going on, but he's starting to notice a pattern. When he asks if everything's okay, she shrugs it off or says, "It's fine." Mr. Dhruv is unsure how to help without making her feel singled out or uncomfortable.

What is the most appropriate and legally aligned step Mr. Dhruv should take next to support Leilani?



☒ Call Leilani's parents to ask if she has come out as LGBTQ+ and whether she has expressed discomfort about the locker room at home.
 ☐ Assign Leilani a failing grade for not dressing out, and inform her she must participate like everyone else.
 ☐ Continue monitoring the situation without intervening to avoid overstepping boundaries or making assumptions.
 ☒ Privately check in with Leilani, affirm her right to privacy, and ask if she'd like to talk about changing options or would benefit from a Gender Support Plan.

Incorrect

Calling a student's parents to ask about their identity is a **violation of student privacy**. Outing a student, even unintentionally, can cause harm and may also violate district policy and FERPA protections.

Course 6: Inclusive Pedagogy and Facilitation

33% COMPLETE

- Introduction ☒
- Module A - Inclusive Practices in STEM for LGBTQ+ Students ☒
- Module B - Inclusive Practices in Physical Education and Health ☐
- Module C - Inclusive Practices in ELA, History and Social Sciences for LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- Module D - Inclusive Practices in Electives and World Languages for LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- Module E - Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐

Privately check in with Leilani, affirm her right to privacy, and ask if she'd like to talk about changing options or would benefit from a Gender Support Plan.

Correct

This is the most appropriate and legally sound response. Under **California Education Code § 221.5(f)**, students have the right to participate in physical education and access facilities, including locker rooms, **in alignment with their gender identity**, regardless of the gender listed in their school records. This includes the **right to privacy**, and no student should be required to disclose or prove their gender identity in order to access accommodations.

A private check-in provides Leilani with a supportive space to share her needs without pressure. Mr. Dhruv can also mention the option of a **Gender Support Plan (GSP)**, which is a collaborative document designed to outline support strategies tailored to a student's needs, including restroom and locker room access, preferred name and pronouns, and staff communication protocols.

This response centers **student autonomy, empathy, and legal compliance**, helping Leilani feel seen, respected, and safe.

Source:

- California EC § 221.5
(https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=221.5&lawCode=EDC)
- California School Boards Association. (2021). *Providing a Safe, Supportive School Environment for Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students*.

24. The citation to guidance from the CSBA dated 2021 is particularly worrisome as it appears that the document would have been hyperlinked and simply had the hyperlink taken off. Moreover, my office was aware of similar guidance (with a similar title) dated 2014 and 2022—but not 2021—and cannot find any reference to 2021 guidance online. *See* ECF No. 137-2 at 71-74 (2014 guidance), at 196-203 (2022 guidance).

* * *

25. The State Defendants' continued hyperlinking to the ACLU and Queeriosity documents in their PRISM training reveals the absurdity of their arguments that the removal of the FAQ page made this case nonjusticiable. Apparently, the State Defendants actually maintain that Parental Exclusion Policies are required by California law, but want to argue that they never say so publicly, so

1 Plaintiffs lack standing to sue *them*. This is a nonsense argument that is endlessly
2 confusing because of the State Defendants' role in ensuring school districts comply
3 with their interpretation of California law.

4 26. Moreover, both the ACLU and the Queeriosity pages show that the State
5 Defendants' standing argument is an impossible game to play. Indeed, the State
6 Defendants have no control over the content of the pages to which they hyperlink.
7 Presumably the ACLU could have removed reference to these "Student Privacy"
8 rights in advance of the State Defendants' motions, and then re-posted them a month
9 later, after misleading the Court into dismissing the case as moot.

10 27. And despite Mr. Garfinkel testifying that he reviewed the PRISM training
11 itself—just not the hyperlinks—the continued inclusion of the instruction that the P.E.
12 teacher should not call the transgender student's parents because doing so would
13 violate the student's privacy rights is inexcusable. *See* ECF No. 299-1, Garfinkel Decl.
14 Its current format also raises for Plaintiffs a concern about spoliation, but Exhibit 1 to
15 Mr. Garfinkel's declaration reveals that he does possess a PDF copy of the entire,
16 original PRISM training.

17 28. In light of the above, Plaintiffs reaffirm their request that the Court issue
18 a sanction pursuant to its inherent authority, payable to the Court. Doing so is
19 absolutely necessary to vindicate the interests of justice and caution the State
20 Defendants, who did not abide by the Court's instructions when "ordered to *appear*
21 and show cause," ECF No. 294 (emphasis added), that efforts to mislead the Court
22 are unbecoming to the legal profession and will not be countenanced.

23 29. Plaintiffs also respectfully request that the Court order the State
24 Defendants to provide Plaintiffs with a full copy of the original PRISM training, prior
25 to modification, and order the State Defendants to file a declaration on the docket
26 identifying all changes made to the PRISM training while it was taken down.

27 ///

28 ///

1 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States and the
2 State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

3 Executed on December 4, 2025, in Rancho Santa Fe, California.

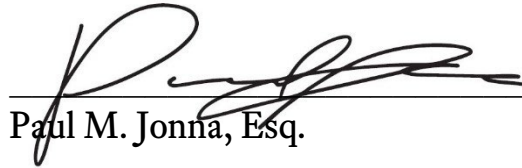
4
5 
6 Paul M. Jonna, Esq.

EXHIBIT 7-2

ACLU of Southern
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PUBLIC SCHOOLS



*For
the*

latest information on students' rights, please visit [My School My Rights](https://www.myschoolmyrights.com/rights/) (<https://www.myschoolmyrights.com/rights/>).

California has some of the strongest laws in the country to protect and support LGBTQ+ youth. Unfortunately, these laws often only apply to public or charter schools, not private or religious schools. But some of these laws protect students in non-religious private schools as well.

Knowing your rights is the first step in making sure you're treated equally, and youth across the state are taking steps to uphold their rights and be themselves. This guide will show you what the law says about your rights in school, allowing you and your classmates to take

the lead in making the future of LGBTQ+ students as bright and fair as possible.

You Have the Right to Be Your Authentic Self at School

Do I have the right to be out at school?

YES. You have the right to be open about your identity and to be yourself at school.

The California Education Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation and/or other protected characteristics in public schools and non-religious private schools. This means that your school must respect student's sexual orientation and the gender identity and/or expression of trans, nonbinary, gender non-confirming, and gender-diverse students. Title IX and the U.S. Constitution also provide similar protections by prohibiting schools from stereotyping based on sex and from reinforcing stereotypical gender norms.

If you feel comfortable, you should talk to your parents, guardians, and/or trusted school staff about how best to support you in being your authentic self while at school. You should not need to show proof of any legal documents, medical diagnosis, or medical treatment to have your identity recognized at school.

Do I have the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that correspond with my gender identity?

YES. You have the right to be addressed by the name and pronouns that match your gender identity at school. This is true even if you have not formally changed your name and gender marker.

For informal school documents, like your student ID, class attendance rosters, and yearbook, you can request to use the name that matches

your gender identity, and your school is required to honor that request. However, your school may ask for legal proof of a name change (or a change to the gender marker on your birth certificate) for a small number of formal school documents, such as standardized testing paperwork and transcripts.

You can learn more about updating your records as a student (or former student) at <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/know-your-rights/updating-your-name-gender-....> (<https://www.aclusocal.org/en/know-your-rights/updating-your-name-gender-school-records>).

Do I have the right to dress in a way that matches my gender identity?

YES. You have the right to dress in a way that you feel reflects your gender identity both at school and at school-sponsored events. If your school has a policy that specifies what boys or girls may wear to school or for special events, then your school must allow you to wear clothing that best corresponds to your gender identity. But also, gender-based dress code policies are outdated, and a dress code may not be legally enforceable if it sets different standards for different genders rather than setting consistent standards for what any student may wear.

You can learn more about your rights around dress codes at <https://www.myschoolmyrights.com/rights/school-dress-codes-uniforms/> (<https://www.myschoolmyrights.com/rights/school-dress-codes-uniforms/>).

Do I have the right to participate in school programs and activities, like sports or P.E., according to my gender identity?

YES. You have the right to participate in all school programs and activities according to your gender identity. For example, your school must allow you to participate in the sports teams and P.E. classes that best match your gender identity.

Do I have the right to use school facilities, like restrooms and locker rooms, according to my gender identity?

YES. Your school must allow you to use the restrooms and locker rooms that best match your gender identity. Your school should never force you to use a private, single-user restroom (such as in the nurse's office) if you don't want to.

Single-User Restrooms or Changing Areas

However, if you want more privacy and prefer to use a more private restroom or changing area, you (or any other student) can ask whether your school can accommodate that. Since 2017, California's Equal Restroom Access Act has required "single-user" restrooms to be marked as "all gender" restrooms, including in schools.

All-Gender Restrooms

As of fall 2023, a new law, [SB 760](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB760) (https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB760), requires most schools teaching any grade 1-12 to provide at least one all-gender restroom on campus for student use by July 1, 2026. While SB 760 provides flexibility to school districts in determining how to provide access to an all-gender restroom, it does require that at least one all-gender restroom be easily accessible to students.

Access to Menstrual Products

Students attending schools teaching any grade 3-12 also have the right to access free menstrual products in a range of school restrooms, including all women's and all-gender restrooms, and at least one men's restroom.

Learn more about your right to access free menstrual products in schools at <https://www.myschoolmyrights.com/rights/student-health-rights/> (<https://www.myschoolmyrights.com/rights/student-health-rights/>).

Harassment and Bullying of LGBTQ+ Students

Do I have the right to be free from bullying and harassment at school?

YES. All students have the right to be treated equally and to be free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Learn more about your right to be free from bullying and harassment at <https://www.myschoolmyrights.com/rights/harassment-bullying/> (<https://www.myschoolmyrights.com/rights/harassment-bullying/>).

Student Privacy

Do I have the right to keep information about my gender identity and/or sexual orientation private?

YES. Generally, school staff cannot share information about your gender identity and sexual orientation without your permission, except under very limited circumstances, such as in case of an emergency.

California law requires that school districts provide a safe and welcoming environment where you can learn and be yourself.

Disclosing a student's gender identity or sexual orientation without their permission may violate California's antidiscrimination laws by

potentially exposing the student to increased harassment.

Additionally, under the California and U.S. Constitutions, you have a protected right to privacy, which includes the right to keep your sexual orientation and your gender identity private (what courts call a “reasonable expectation of privacy”). This means that you have the right to control to what extent and to whom you disclose this information. While your school should support your coming out by supporting you and encouraging parental involvement, your school should also first check with you to ensure they are not accidentally outing you. Being open about your gender identity and sexual orientation at school does not mean you automatically give up your right to privacy outside school, and school staff should not disclose your LGBTQ+ status without your permission.

However, under some limited circumstances, your school can tell your parents about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity—but only if they have a very good reason for doing so, such as a serious concern for your physical safety where your gender or sexual identity is relevant to the concern. For example, if a peer purposefully outed a student to the entire class and the student who was outed expressed feelings of self-harm. It really depends on the circumstances, but they cannot out you just to punish you, harass you, discriminate against you, or retaliate against you. For example, if you complain to the principal about a teacher making or allowing anti-LGBTQ+ comments in class, that does not automatically authorize the principal to call your parents and reveal your actual or perceived LGBTQ+ status. Still, in the event outing you is relevant to a concern and your school is considering outing you, they should still make a good faith effort to tell you first.

Can my school district adopt a policy requiring school staff to out students against their will?

California education law requires that schools provide students with a safe and welcoming environment where they can learn and be themselves. A policy requiring school staff to disclose a student's gender identity or sexual orientation without their permission may violate California's antidiscrimination laws by potentially exposing students to increased harassment. Further, under the California and U.S. Constitutions, you have a protected right to privacy, which includes the right to keep your LGBTQ+ status private. Given this, policies that mandate school staff to out students against their will are unlawful in California.

Your school may try to support your coming out by encouraging parental involvement, but it is ultimately your choice. Because you have a right to privacy regarding personal information, including LGBTQ+ status, your school should first check in with you before disclosing your private information to anyone. If you share that you aren't comfortable sharing your LGBTQ+ status with your family, your school should acknowledge and try to understand your concerns and work with you towards getting your family's support whatever that may look like for you.

Still, some schools are attempting to disregard student rights to privacy by passing coercive outing policies. If your school or school district adopts a policy of outing students against their will, it risks violating students' legal and constitutional rights.

Freedom of Speech and Expression

Do I have the right to express myself and speak out about LGBTQ+ issues while at school?

YES. You have the right to express your opinion, including about LGBTQ+-related topics. This includes wearing LGBTQ+-positive t-shirts, badges, buttons, armbands, stickers, and bracelets, accessing information about LGBTQ+-related topics on school computers,

bulletin boards, printed materials, petitions, and school publications, and bringing same-sex dates to prom.

Under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, student expression is protected both on campus and outside the classroom, and California's Constitution has even stronger freedom of speech protections. California law also protects your right to discuss LGBTQ+ issues and topics in school.[6] In addition, no public school, charter school, or non-religious private high school can discipline you for talking about being LGBTQ+ or for discussing LGBTQ+ issues.

Of course, this doesn't mean that you can say whatever you want at any time—your speech isn't protected if it disrupts class time, if it's intended to encourage other students to break school rules, if it's obscene, or if it's something untrue about another person that could damage their reputation. Your school can also put some limits on where and when certain kinds of speech are allowed, but generally, if other students are allowed to speak at a school event or in class, you should also be allowed to talk about LGBTQ+ issues in those same spaces.

T-shirts. If your school allows other students to wear t-shirts (or other types of clothes) that express their beliefs or political views, then they can't stop you from wearing clothes that express your support for LGBTQ+ issues. For example, in 2015, when Taylor Victor was called into the vice principal's office and told that her "Nobody Knows I'm a Lesbian" t-shirt violated the Manteca Unified School District's dress code policy because it was "disruptive," "sexually suggestive," and "degrades religious values," she sued the school district. She stood up for her right to express her views, and the school district updated its dress code to allow students to wear clothing that expresses their own identity and their support for other students' identities.

To learn more about Taylor's story, click [HERE](https://www.aclunc.org/our-work/legal-docket/tv-v-beukelman-student-)
(<https://www.aclunc.org/our-work/legal-docket/tv-v-beukelman-student->

[censorship](#)).

Class Projects. Your school also can't prevent you from doing a class project about an LGBTQ+ topic or book, so long as it meets the requirements of the assignment. For example, officials in Ramona, CA, tried to prevent sixth grader Natalie Jones from giving a report in class on Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in California. This violated both federal and state freedom of speech protections. After standing up for her rights, Natalie was allowed to give her presentation in class like all the other students.

To learn more about Natalie's story, click [HERE](#) (<https://www.aclu.org/news/free-speech/got-milk-why-yes-we-have-harvey-milk>).

Prom. Freedom of expression includes your right to be “out” about your sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Nobody can censor who you are. This includes the right to bring a date of any gender to your prom or other school dances, to wear gender non-conforming clothing, and to run for “prom king” or “prom queen” (or other “prom royalty”) based on whichever category best matches your gender identity. For example, Constance McMillen bravely stood up for her rights both to bring her girlfriend to her school's prom and to wear a tuxedo. With the ACLU's help, Constance established that students have the right to bring the prom date of their choice and to dress in a way that allows you to freely express your gender, including in gender non-conforming ways.

To learn more about Constance's story, click [HERE](#) (<https://www.aclu.org/cases/fulton-ms-prom-discrimination>).

Senior Portraits and Yearbook Photos. Your right to be yourself and wear clothing that best expresses your gender identity extends to what you wear in your school photos. For example, when Ceara Sturgis chose to wear a tuxedo for her senior yearbook photo, instead of the drape typically provided for girls, her school excluded her

picture from the yearbook. With the ACLU's help, Ceara pushed back and won: Ceara's photo was added to the wall of senior photos at the school and her school improved its senior photo dress and anti-discrimination policies.

To learn more about Ceara's story, click [HERE](https://www.aclu.org/cases/sturgis-v-copiah-county-school-district) (<https://www.aclu.org/cases/sturgis-v-copiah-county-school-district>).

The right to express yourself and speak about LGBTQ+ issues also applies to yearbooks, including senior quotes. For example, when Steven Madrid and Mikayla Garaffa's pro-LGBTQ+ yearbook quotes were rejected by school administrators for being "politically divisive," they stood up for their right to express their views, and with the ACLU's help, their quotes were included in the yearbook.

To learn more about Steven and Mikayla's story, click [HERE](https://www.aclunc.org/our-work/legal-docket/reeder-v-chawanakee-unified-school-district-lgbtq-yearbook-quotes) (<https://www.aclunc.org/our-work/legal-docket/reeder-v-chawanakee-unified-school-district-lgbtq-yearbook-quotes>).

Can I start a Genders & Sexualities Alliance (GSA) or similar club at my school?

YES. If your school has even one other non-curricular club, you have the right to start a GSA or other similar social justice club. Your school cannot treat GSA clubs differently than other non-curricular clubs.

Non-curricular clubs are clubs that are not directly related to classes taught in school. For example, a Math Club or a French Club are curricular clubs, but a Step Club or a Chess Club are non-curricular. GSA clubs must get the same privileges and access to meeting facilities as other non-curricular clubs. So, if your school lets other clubs meet in classrooms and put up posters, then it must let the GSA meet in classrooms and put up posters too.

If you're having difficulty forming a GSA, or feel that your GSA is being treated differently, you should raise your concerns with school officials and explain that the law requires the GSA be treated like other non-curricular clubs. For example, students in Madera, CA, negotiated with administrators who had been blocking the formation of a GSA club for over two years. They explained that the actions of the school violated the law, and the club was finally allowed to start. Student members of a GSA in Hesperia, CA also successfully pushed back against school administrators who were censoring the GSA's announcements and posters and who were not allowing them to screen movies about LGBTQ+ issues.

To learn more about the GSA in Madera, CA, click [HERE](https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/aclu-and-gsa-network-clear-way-gay-straight-alliance-club-madera-california) (<https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/aclu-and-gsa-network-clear-way-gay-straight-alliance-club-madera-california>). To learn more about the GSA in Hesperia, CA, click [HERE](https://www.aclusocal.org/en/press-releases/press-release-hesperia-unified-school-district-sets-example-change-improve-school) (<https://www.aclusocal.org/en/press-releases/press-release-hesperia-unified-school-district-sets-example-change-improve-school>).

Starting a GSA is like starting any other club. Find out what your school's rules are and then follow those rules carefully. You may also want to consider different ways to protect your club members' privacy. But you shouldn't have to complete any additional steps or fulfill any further requirements beyond what students establishing any other non-curricular club have been expected to do.

Unbiased, Accurate, and Inclusive Curricula

Do I have the right to unbiased and LGBTQ+-inclusive instruction?

YES. Your school is required to teach LGBTQ+-inclusive history and sexual health education and should never allow bias in the classroom.

Under California law, public schools cannot provide instruction or sponsor activities that promote or reflect bias or discrimination against any person on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or gender. This means that your school cannot teach biased or discriminatory things about LGBTQ+ people or promote and reinforce gender stereotypes. For example, if your teacher discusses gender, sexual orientation, or families, they should acknowledge, when appropriate, that there are different types of genders, sexual orientations, and families, and they should discuss them even handedly. But your right to LGBTQ+-inclusive instruction does not end there.

The FAIR Education Act (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Education Act) requires that your school teach the role and contributions of LGBT Americans throughout history. For example, this might include discussions of Sylvia Rivera, Bayard Rustin, or Myra Laramée.

Learn more about your right to inclusive sex education at <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/know-your-rights/sex-education> (<https://www.aclusocal.org/en/know-your-rights/sex-education>).

Can my school remove books simply because they relate to LGBTQ+ topics or are written by an LGBTQ+ author?

NO. In California, you have the right to a fair, accurate, and inclusive education. This right includes access to materials that speak to the role, contributions, and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people both historically and in contemporary society. A new law, [AB 1078](#) (https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB1078), further clarified the law in this area and prohibited school boards from banning books, instructional materials, or curricula that includes diverse and inclusive perspectives, including

books and material by and about LGBTQ+ individuals. Still, current state and federal law prohibits your school from discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation, and your school's decision to remove books relating to LGBTQ+ topics or by LGBTQ+ authors may be unlawful discrimination.

Can my school monitor and/or filter “LGBTQ+” and related terms as search terms on my school computer?

NO. Schools should not be automatically filtering for words like “LGBTQ+” or blocking websites providing information and resources on LGBTQ+-related topics or issues, such as GSA Network or the Trevor Project's websites. Websites that use the words “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” “transgender,” and/or “queer” are not inherently obscene or inappropriate for school. A filter that assumes otherwise may be a form of “viewpoint discrimination” that violates students' First Amendment rights, especially if it allows students to access sites critical of LGBTQ+ people and their rights but blocks supportive resources. Filtering programs that alert school staff when a student tries to access LGBTQ+-related content risk outing students and exposing them to bullying and/or harassment.

Additionally, you have the right to a fair, accurate, and inclusive education. As such, your school should not be filtering or monitoring “LGBTQ+,” or any variation of LGBTQ+, as a search term. For example, a student should be able to look up José Sarria, the first openly gay person to run for public office, for a school project on historical figures. Filtering and/or monitoring LGBTQ+-related content may also be a form of unlawful discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Learn more about discriminatory internet filtering and ways to address it [here \(https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/lgbtq-youth/dont-filter-me-web-content-filtering-schools\)](https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbtq-rights/lgbtq-youth/dont-filter-me-web-content-filtering-schools).

Acknowledgements:

The ACLU of Southern California and ACLU of Northern California appreciate support from the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles Foundation for work on this resource!

EXHIBIT 10

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

60% COMPLETE

- ≡ Introduction ☒
- ≡ Module A - Strategies and Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+ Spaces ☒
- ≡ Module B - Impacts of Bias on LGBTQ+ Students ☒
- ≡ Module C - Laws and Policies Supporting LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- ≡ Module D - Strategies and Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐



California's laws and policies provide a strong framework to protect and support LGBTQ+ students. As you move forward, you'll explore how **Gender Support Plans (GSPs)** play a key role in creating a more personalized and supportive experience for gender diverse students.

Gender Support Plans

Creating a safe and affirming learning environment for all students, including transgender and nonbinary students, is a fundamental responsibility of California educators. Gender Support Plans are a proactive communication tool designed to ensure that schools provide individualized support for students as they navigate their gender identity in an educational setting.

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≡ Introduction



≡ Module A - Strategies and
Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+
Spaces



≡ Module B - Impacts of Bias on
LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module C - Laws and Policies
Supporting LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module D - Strategies and
Resources for LGBTQ+ Support



≡

GSPs help schools meet their legal obligation to prevent discrimination under California law (California Education Code § 200-220) and foster a learning environment where students can thrive academically and socially. When implemented effectively, they promote student wellbeing, reduce mental health risks, and strengthen trust between students and educators, (Chicago Public Schools, 2021).

When developing a GSP for a student, it's essential to recognize that every student's experience is unique. Factors such as the student's age, personality, emotional state, the level of family support, the school's environment, and even the time of year can all influence how the student's transition unfolds. With these factors in mind, it's important not to seek a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, focus on identifying specific steps that will create the right conditions for each student's success.

A tailored GSP, developed with input from the student, their family, and school staff, allows for a personalized approach that meets the student's specific needs. By considering these individual factors, you can help ensure that the student feels supported and respected throughout their transition.

The goal is to create a plan that is flexible enough to accommodate changes as the student's needs evolve over time, while also providing a clear framework for how the school community can offer consistent

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The goal is to create a plan that is flexible enough to accommodate changes as the student's needs evolve over time, while also providing a clear framework for how the school community can offer consistent support. A well-crafted plan ensures that the transition process is as positive and affirming as possible for the student, helping them thrive both academically and socially. It outlines the student's needs and preferences related to their gender identity, including:

- **Personalized Plan Development**

- Student-initiated and Collaborative: The plan should be developed with input from the student and their family (if appropriate), ensuring the student's needs and preferences are prioritized.
- Confidentiality: Respect for privacy regarding sensitive information (e.g., gender identity, medical history).
- Name and Pronoun Use: Clear instructions for using a student's preferred name and pronouns across all settings (classrooms, official records, etc.).

- **Safety and Support Measures**

- Physical Safety Considerations: Identify safe spaces within the school (e.g., restrooms, locker rooms, and changing areas) where students can feel comfortable and secure

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- ≡ Introduction ☒
- ≡ Module A - Strategies and Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+ Spaces ☒
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- ≡ Module C - Laws and Policies Supporting LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- ≡ Module D - Strategies and Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐



• Safety and Support Measures

- Physical Safety Considerations: Identify safe spaces within the school (e.g., restrooms, locker rooms, and changing areas) where students can feel comfortable and secure.
- Supportive Staff: Designate staff members who will be trained to support gender-diverse students.
- Peer Support and Awareness: Implement programs to promote inclusivity and raise awareness among peers about gender identity and expression.

• Academic Support

- Creating an environment where the student can engage in academic activities without fear of discrimination or harassment.
- Addressing any academic accommodations, if necessary, for the student's success.

Implementing the Gender Support Plan

While the order of steps may vary from school to school, these are the basic steps one will follow in creating a Gender Support Plan.

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

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≡ Introduction



≡ Module A - Strategies and
Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+
Spaces



≡ Module B - Impacts of Bias on
LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module C - Laws and Policies
Supporting LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module D - Strategies and
Resources for LGBTQ+ Support



Implementing the Gender Support Plan

While the order of steps may vary from school to school, these are the basic steps one will follow in creating a Gender Support Plan.

- Initial Consultation: Meet with the student, family (if applicable), and relevant staff to discuss and create the plan. This meeting should be conducted in a confidential and supportive environment, ensuring that the student feels comfortable sharing their gender identity needs.
- Communication with Staff: After the plan is created, ensure that relevant staff—such as teachers, counselors, and administrators—are informed, but **only with the student's consent**. This may involve offering training on gender inclusivity to help staff better understand how to provide effective support for the student.
- Respect Privacy: Be sure to maintain confidentiality around the student's gender identity and provide the plan in a manner that respects their privacy.
- Review and Update: A GSP is a dynamic document that should be reviewed periodically and adjusted as necessary. Check in with the student and their family, if appropriate, to ensure that the accommodations are still working and that the student feels supported.
- Monitor and Address Issues: Continuously monitor the student's

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≡ Module B - Impacts of Bias on
LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module C - Laws and Policies
Supporting LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module D - Strategies and
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- **Monitor and Address Issues:** Continuously monitor the student's experience and be proactive in addressing any incidents of bullying, harassment, or exclusion. Ensure that the school climate remains supportive by providing ongoing professional development for staff on issues related to gender diversity.

What the Law Says About Confidentiality for LGBTQ+ Students:

Confidential conversations with counselors are protected. If a student (12 years or older) shares personal information—including their sexual orientation or gender identity—with a school counselor, **that information is confidential** under California Education Code § 49602. Counselors are legally and ethically bound to protect it.

Why this matters: Students may feel safer exploring or sharing their identity when they trust that school staff won't "out" them without their consent.

When Can Information Be Shared? Confidentiality can *only* be broken if: The counselor reasonably believes it's necessary to prevent a clear and present danger to the student's health, safety, or welfare.

The Support Academic Futures and Equality for Today's Youth (SAFFETY)

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≡ Module D - Strategies and
Resources for LGBTQ+ Support



The Support Academic Futures and Equality for Today's Youth (SAFETY) Act, strengthens protections for LGBTQ+ students in California schools. Effective January 1, 2025, the bill prohibits schools from requiring staff to disclose a student's gender identity or sexual orientation without the student's consent, unless otherwise required by state or federal law (CA Ed. Code §220.3).

School Board Policies Must Follow the Law

School districts **cannot adopt rules** that contradict California law. LEAs must ensure policies support confidentiality and nondiscrimination. (Ed Code § 35010)

Transgender Student Rights (AB 1266)

Trans students have the **right to participate** in sports, use restrooms, and join activities **based on their gender identity**, regardless of what their school records say. (Ed Code § 221.5(f))

To uphold these protections, the GSPs should be stored in a secure, confidential file. This may be a physical file, which is kept in a locked area (e.g., a counselor's office), or it may be a digital file stored on a secure school district system with restricted access.

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

60% COMPLETE

- ≡ Introduction ☒
- ≡ Module A - Strategies and Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+ Spaces ☒
- ≡ Module B - Impacts of Bias on LGBTQ+ Students ☒
- ≡ Module C - Laws and Policies Supporting LGBTQ+ Students ☐
- ≡ Module D - Strategies and Resources for LGBTQ+ Support ☐



To uphold these protections, the GSPs should be stored in a secure, confidential file. This may be a physical file, which is kept in a locked area (e.g., a counselor's office), or it may be a digital file stored on a secure school district system with restricted access.



Reminders About GSPs:

- The GSP is optional and is not required in order for the student to receive supports at school. This means pronouns, names, bathroom, and locker room usage are still necessary, whether or not a GSP exists.
- The GSP should only be completed in written format with the student's consent.
- Schools should help students think through decisions, consider possible outcomes, and make a plan to address any barriers.
- It is important to consider a student's age and grade level, but these factors should never be used as reasons to delay or deny a student's gender transition.

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

60% COMPLETE

≡ Introduction



≡ Module A - Strategies and
Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+
Spaces



≡ Module B - Impacts of Bias on
LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module C - Laws and Policies
Supporting LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module D - Strategies and
Resources for LGBTQ+ Support



- It is important to consider a student's age and grade level, but these factors should never be used as reasons to delay or deny a student's gender transition.

Consult with your administration team to confirm whether a Gender Support Plan exists within your Local Education Agency (LEA).

Key Components

While not all General Support Plans (GSPs) look the same or follow the exact same process, they do share several essential components. These key elements are outlined below—click the plus icons to explore each one in more detail.

Name Student Uses

Students have the right to be addressed by the name that aligns with their gender identity. This is allowed, even if a student has not formally or legally changed their name. ([Source](#))

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

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Introduction

Module A - Strategies and
Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+
SpacesModule B - Impacts of Bias on
LGBTQ+ StudentsModule C - Laws and Policies
Supporting LGBTQ+ StudentsModule D - Strategies and
Resources for LGBTQ+ Support

Name Student Uses

Students have the right to be addressed by the name that aligns with their gender identity. This is allowed, even if a student has not formally or legally changed their name. ([Source](#))

Pronouns Student Uses

Students have the right to be addressed by the pronouns that align with their gender identity. This is allowed, even if a student has not formally or legally changed their gender marker. ([Source](#))

Name on Birth Certificate

Official records will match the *Name on Birth Certificate*. [AB 711](#) affirms that former students of public K-12 schools have the right to update their name and gender markers on official school records. ([Source](#))

Sex Assigned at Birth

Used to label a person as male, female, and/or intersex, these terms refer to a person's medical factors including hormones, chromosomes, and/or genitals. When a person is assigned a particular sex at birth, it is often mistakenly assumed that this will equate with their gender identity; it might, but it might not. ([Source](#))

Course 3: Preventing Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination for LGBTQ+ Students

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≡ Introduction



≡ Module A - Strategies and
Benefits for Safer LGBTQ+
Spaces



≡ Module B - Impacts of Bias on
LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module C - Laws and Policies
Supporting LGBTQ+ Students



≡ Module D - Strategies and
Resources for LGBTQ+ Support



Used to label a person as male, female, and/or intersex, these terms refer to a person's medical factors including hormones, chromosomes, and/or genitals. When a person is assigned a particular sex at birth, it is often mistakenly assumed that this will equate with their gender identity; it might, but it might not. ([Source](#))

Meeting Participants



Students have the right to decide which school personnel are included in their Gender Support Plan meetings. This ensures that the student's privacy and comfort are prioritized, in alignment with California's laws protecting student autonomy and confidentiality.

Parent/Guardian Involvement



Under **AB 1955**, which reinforces existing protections, educational agencies are prohibited from requiring staff to disclose a student's gender identity without the student's consent, unless otherwise required by state or federal law. AB 1955 does not prohibit staff from voluntarily disclosing a student's gender identity to parents.

As an educator, your role is to create a supportive environment where students feel safe, affirmed, and empowered to be themselves, while also following the law.

EXHIBIT 11

March 2014



FINAL GUIDANCE: AB 1266, TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS, PRIVACY, PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES & FACILITIES

In September 2013, CSBA published its “Interim Guidance Regarding Transgender Students, Privacy & Facilities.” Now that the AB 1266 referendum has failed to qualify for the ballot, CSBA has updated and expanded its guidance to help school districts and county offices of education navigate these issues.

State and federal law and its application require districts¹ to treat all students equally based on their gender identity. AB 1266 makes it clear that this rule applies to gender-segregated facilities, programs, and activities. Although a very simple statement of law, the practical implications are complex.

BACKGROUND

The Role of the Board

A fundamental role of a governing board is governance, including setting direction for the district as it relates to creating a welcoming and nondiscriminatory environment for all students. Districts are required to adopt policies prohibiting discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying based on gender, gender identity, and gender expression and must intervene whenever they witness such an act. (Educ. Code, § 234.1.)

State Law including AB 1266

State law generally prohibits discrimination of students based on gender, gender identity, and gender expression, and specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in enrollment, counseling, physical education, and athletics. (Educ. Code, §§ 220, 221.5.) AB 1266 adds the requirement that a student must be “permitted to participate in sex-segregated school programs and activities . . . and use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil's records.”

California Interscholastic Federation

The CIF has issued revised bylaws that provide that all students should have the opportunity to participate in CIF programs in a manner that is consistent with their gender identity. CIF also published guidelines for an appeals process in a situation where a transgender or gender nonconforming student's request is denied.

Federal Law

Federal law, specifically Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, also prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. These obligations are imposed independently of and in addition to state law. It was federal law

¹ This guidance has been prepared to assist the governance teams at districts and county offices of education.

that the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division followed in investigating a federal civil rights complaint against Arcadia Unified School District by a transgender student. In the end, Arcadia USD agreed to allow the transgender student to use facilities and to participate in school programs and activities consistent with the student's gender identity.

RECOMMENDED GUIDANCE

CSBA's *Interim Guidance Regarding Transgender Students, Privacy & Facilities* provided recommendations on responding to a request from a transgender or gender nonconforming student to use a gender-segregated facility or participate in a gender-segregated program in a manner consistent with the student's gender identity. This final guidance reaffirms those recommendations and provides guidance on related issues.

Requests to Use Facilities or Participate in Programs and Activities

Districts are advised to handle, on a case-by-case basis, a request from a transgender or gender nonconforming student to use a gender-segregated facility or participate in a gender-segregated program or activity in a manner consistent with the student's gender identity. Districts should first attempt to meet with the student and, if appropriate, the student's family to determine the details of how best to accommodate the student. In addition, the following guidance is offered:

- *Upon request*, districts should allow any student wanting privacy to use an alternate facility (e.g., restroom, locker room) not used or occupied by other students.
- *Upon request*, districts should allow a student to use the gender-specific facility consistent with his or her gender identity.
- *Upon request*, districts should ensure that staff uses the name and pronoun preferred by a transgender or gender nonconforming student.
- *Upon request*, districts should prepare data systems to list a transgender or gender nonconforming student by his or her preferred name and gender.
- *Upon request*, districts should allow students to participate in athletics according to their gender identity in a manner that is consistent with the CIF bylaws.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

- ◆ "Gender" refers to a person's sex and includes his/her gender identity and gender expression.
- ◆ "Gender expression" means a person's gender-related appearance and behavior, whether stereotypically associated with the person's assigned sex at birth.
- ◆ "Gender identity" refers to a person's gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's physiology or assigned sex at birth.
- ◆ "Gender nonconforming" describes a person whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls and those who are perceived as androgynous.
- ◆ "Transgender" describes people whose gender identity or gender expression is different from that traditionally associated with their assigned sex at birth.

These definitions are from CSBA's policy brief, "Providing a Safe, Nondiscriminatory School Environment for Transgender and Gender -Nonconforming Students."

Gender Identity Determination

As stated in CSBA's *Interim Guidance*, a district should take seriously any manner or method by which a student chooses to notify staff of his or her new gender identity. Additionally, a district should accept the student's assertion unless staff has a credible basis for believing that a student's gender identity is being asserted for an improper purpose. If district personnel have a credible basis for believing that a student's gender identity is being asserted for an improper purpose, this basis should be documented and a written response should be provided to the student. This protects the district from making an undocumented decision and ensures that the student understands the reason for the denial. CSBA recommends against requiring a medical or mental health diagnosis or treatment in order for a student to have his or her gender identity recognized by the district.

Privacy Rights of Transgender or Gender Nonconforming Student

A student's decision to inform the district that his or her gender identity differs from his or her biological gender is extremely personal and private. In addition, transgender and gender nonconforming students may face bullying and harassment as a result of other students or staff not understanding or tolerating the public representations of their gender identity. At the same time, the decision may potentially involve very public components if, for example, the student starts to go by a different name. Despite this potential for public awareness, districts are still legally responsible to maintain a student's privacy according to the student's wishes. Therefore, as with a request to use facilities or participate in programs or activities, it is recommended that a district address each situation on a case-by-case basis. This will allow the district to understand the student's privacy needs and to identify potential challenges the district may face in meeting those needs. It will also provide the student with an opportunity to understand the implications of his or her request and the impact it may have on the student's privacy.

Privacy and Religious Rights of Other Students

It is not just transgender and gender nonconforming students for whom privacy may be an issue. Other students may feel that their privacy rights are violated if, for example, they were to change in the same locker room as a member of the opposite biological gender because their religious beliefs and/or practices may forbid dressing with students of the opposite biological gender. To address the needs of these students, it is recommended – in addition to the annual notice described below – that the district follow a process similar to the one recommended to meet the needs of transgender and gender nonconforming students. That is, the district should address each situation on a case-by-case basis, which will allow the district the opportunity to determine the needs of these students and to work out the practical details of addressing those needs.

Annual Notice

Because of these privacy and religious rights, CSBA recommends that a district provide an annual notice to all students of the rights of transgender and gender nonconforming students so that students may notify the district/COE in advance if they believe their privacy or religious beliefs and/or practices would be violated if they were to use the same

facilities as a member of the opposite biological gender.

Consider the following scenario: A transgender male student enrolls in a new school district after being bullied and harassed in a prior district. The student requests – and the new district agrees – to permit the student to use facilities, including the boys’ bathrooms, consistent with the student’s gender identity and to not reveal that the student is biologically female. The district is properly fulfilling its legal obligations because it cannot discuss or disclose the fact that a student is transgender or gender nonconforming without that student’s permission (although, as previously noted, a student’s gender identity may become public without district action depending on how open the student is regarding his or her gender identity). At the same time, the district is potentially liable if another student were to feel that his or her privacy or religious rights were being violated.

To address this potential scenario, it is recommended that the district include in its annual notice the following: (i) a statement that it is the law and district policy to allow students to participate in gender-segregated programs, including athletic teams and competitions, and to use gender-segregated facilities consistent with their gender identity, and (ii) a statement that if a student (or the student’s parents or guardians) believes that this presents a possible violation of the student’s right to privacy or religious expression, the student (or parents or guardians) must notify the district in writing to discuss how, in the event this or another scenario arises, to accommodate the student. It is recommended that a district not wait until a transgender or gender nonconforming student enrolls in the district (or identifies themselves to staff) to notify students and parents/guardians, as this may unintentionally identify the student.

Professional Development and Education

Regardless of whether a district knows that it has a transgender or gender nonconforming student or whether it has received requests from such a student, a district should consider providing professional development to teachers and other staff as well as offering educational activities and forums for students, parents, guardians, and the community. The purpose of the professional development and the educational activities is to encourage understanding of gender identity, gender expression, and related issues.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ◆ *Sample BP and AR 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment, updated to reflect AB 1266 and the latest legal requirements, are available to Policy Services clients on Gamut Online.*
- ◆ *CSBA’s recent policy brief entitled, “Providing a Safe, Nondiscriminatory School Environment for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students” is also available on the Gamut Online homepage and www.csba.org/PNB.aspx.*
- ◆ *The CIF bylaws are available at www.cifstate.org/images/PDF/State_Constitution_and_Bylaws/300_Series.pdf.*
- ◆ *The CIF guidelines are available at www.cifstate.org/images/PDF/State_Constitution_and_Bylaws/guidelines_for_gender_identity_participation.pdf.*
- ◆ *The Arcadia USD resolution agreement is available at www.justice.gov/crt/about/edu/documents/arcadiaagree.pdf.*
- ◆ *For additional guidance, contact CSBA’s Office of the General Counsel at 800-266-3382.*

EXHIBIT 12

Queeriosity

An LGBTQ Resource Guide for High School Educators

Laine Schlezinger, Kol Koleinu Teen Feminist Fellowship Class of 2021



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Introduction

An LGBTQ-Friendly Classroom: Why Should You (an Educator) Care?

Being a young LGBTQ person is extremely difficult. Data shows that the attempted suicide rate among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth is almost 5 times higher than that of the heterosexual youth population. Among transgender youth, the rate is around 6 times higher.¹ Besides navigating traditional adolescent stressors, LGBTQ youth often struggle with additional stressors such as coming out, lack of positive representation in media, and the presence of homophobia and transphobia in their families, friend groups, religious circles, schools, etc. As educators, you are who LGBTQ students are spending most of their day with. They learn not only what you literally teach, but what behaviors you model, what issues you advocate for, and what norms you establish in the classroom. During the approximately 7 hours, 180 days a year that high school students spend at school, LGBTQ students are relying on *you* to make sure that they are in a safe space; that they can express themselves freely without fear of bullying or harassment, have the resources to understand and take pride in their identities, and see themselves represented in the things they are learning.

Simply put, educators have an inherent responsibility to support LGBTQ students. And it is my hope that this guide gives you the tools, understanding, and resources to do so.

A Queer Student's Perspective: Why This Matters to Me

As I reflect back on my high school experience, I can't help but notice how homophobia and transphobia have played a role in shaping the high school culture I spent the last four years learning in. As an LGBTQ student living in the San Francisco Bay Area, there is a basic understanding surrounding the needs of LGBTQ youth in my school and community. That being said, I noticed a disconnect between the general air of acceptance my proximity to San Francisco brought my broader community, and the somewhat homophobic attitudes at my high school. There have been multiple instances of homophobic vandalism found on my campus, and I have heard stories of LGBTQ students harassed in its halls. It is impossible to learn, grow, and express yourself when the environment around you stifles and chokes the parts of you that you most want to explore and be proud of.

The worst part is that I know my school, when compared to the rest of the country, is not an exception. If a high school an hour away from one of the cornerstones of the LGBTQ civil rights movement can experience homophobia and transphobia in unprecedented amounts, then truly no school in the country is safe. Though my tall, redwood-studded, Northern California campus affords me certain safeties that I acknowledge other high schools do not have, what does it mean that, even here, I sometimes do not feel safe? It means *everyone* has work to do. Yes, districts across the country have created non-discrimination policies and gender-neutral bathrooms. But past progress does not minimize the need for future change. And the current

¹ "Suicidal ideation and suicide rates are alarmingly high; national estimates have found that 29.4% of

plight of LGBTQ students, such as myself, tells us that a queer-inclusive future has not yet been realized.



Pronouns and Gender-Affirming Language

Language is a powerful tool. In the single utterance of a word, or a few letters on a page, one can invite people into a space, or exclude them. As a gender non-conforming student, I have no choice to be acutely aware of the language used around me. When a teacher splits the class into boys and girls, I notice. I feel uncomfortable, like I don't fit. I know where I'm "supposed to be", but there are parts of my gender that lie outside those rules and bounds. Though every trans, non-binary, or gender non-conforming student's experience is unique, these moments of gendered language isolate me, adding an extra weight on my shoulders. Is it so much to ask that teachers respect the fact that gender is infinitely complex²?

Pronouns

What are pronouns³?

We are all familiar with pronouns. He, she, him, her, they, their, we, us- these are all pronouns. However, in the past several years, efforts to push gender-affirming language into mainstream culture and society have widened the bounds of pronoun use. Use of the singular "they" has become more widespread, as have potentially unfamiliar sets of neo-pronouns. People are introducing themselves with their pronouns, asking other people for their pronouns when meeting for the first time, and putting their pronouns in their social media bios.

Why are pronouns important?

When you want to refer to someone without using their actual name, you use their pronouns. In that respect, pronouns become a part of one's name, a part of their identity. Therefore, pronouns are an important step in recognizing any person's identity, regardless if they use the pronouns assigned to them at birth, if they've changed their pronouns, or if they use pronouns you don't understand.

Pronouns to Familiarize Yourself With

Part A: He, she, and they

he	him	his	himself
she	her	hers	herself

² Even cisgender (people whose gender aligns with their birth sex) people can have a complex understanding of their own gender! If you are interested in exploring your own gender, check out the gender unicorn ([x](#)), and see what you learn about yourself and your identity!

³ "Maybe you've heard the term 'preferred pronouns'. As LGBTQ inclusion became somewhat mainstream in the last several years, 'preferred pronouns' has become a dominant phrase. However, many trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming activists have raised concerns with the language. After all, their pronouns are not simply a preference, they are something to be respected.

they	them	their	themselves
------	------	-------	------------

*Note: Some people across genders use multiple sets of pronouns, such as she/they, he/they, or he/she/they. Usually, this means they are comfortable with both sets of pronouns, and would be preferred to be addressed using both sets, interchangeably. Often, the order of the pronoun notes which pronoun they prefer, however, this is not always the case.

EX: Alex uses he/they pronouns. They are a great artist. He's also an excellent chef.

Part B: Neopronouns

Sometimes people who identify outside of the gender binary will choose to use a gender-neutral pronoun besides "they", such as "ze", "sie", or "ey". These pronoun variants are called neopronouns. Though they are less common, it's important to know how to use them when the situation arises. And of course, this is a non-exhaustive list. If you encounter a pronoun you are unfamiliar with, Google is your friend!

he/she	him/her	his/hers	him/herself
sie	sie	hirs	hirsself
zie	zim	zirs	zirsself
ey	em	eir	emself

Asking for Pronouns

In my experience, asking students for their pronouns is an excellent way to establish that your classroom is a safe space for LGBTQ students. It shows an understanding of gender beyond the binary, and a willingness to accommodate trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students. Of course, your work in creating an inclusive classroom goes beyond asking for pronouns, but it's a good place to start.

But How Do You Ask for Someone's Pronouns?

When meeting people for the first time, asking for pronouns is a relatively new and unfamiliar practice. It can seem awkward to ask if you think you know the answer (Reminder: you might not! Gender expression, or how one chooses to dress, doesn't necessarily equal gender identity), and some people might not be familiar with the practice. Luckily, the easiest way to ask someone their pronouns is to **share your own**. That way, it sets a precedent in the social interaction, and everyone else will feel motivated to also share their pronouns.

The Academic Value of they/them

I've had countless experiences talking about pronouns with adults, only for them to say,

"They? As a pronoun? But what about grammar? They is a plural pronoun, it can't be used for one person!"

Even throughout my high school experience, I remember lessons on academic writing that said the same thing, emphasizing that one should use "him/her" instead of "they". Though unintentional, these outdated grammar conventions uphold the gender binary in academic spaces, suggesting that non-binary genders aren't compatible with education. This suggestion has powerful repercussions; by eliminating the non-binary voice in academics, it maintains the idea that trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people are a trend or invalid. By isolating the non-binary voice from its rightful place among gender studies, literature, history, etc., academia erases the proof, history, and studies of non-binary identities. However, things have changed!

The Ninth Edition MLA Style Guide and Seventh Edition APA Style Guide both endorse the use of the singular they.

As a teacher, encourage the use of "they" in the classroom. Not only for people who use they/them pronouns, but as an term for discussing a group of people. The more practice you and your students have with navigating the various uses of "they" in today's lexicon, the more comfortable everyone will become with using they/them pronouns, and using language that includes people of all genders.

Gender-Affirming Language

Why Use Gender-Affirming Language?

As I discuss in the opening of this section, gendered language can be isolating to those outside the binary. Therefore, the best way to avoid those feelings among trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students is to avoid gendered language all together! With the absence of gendered language, people of all genders can see themselves in the content discussed. If you think about it, modern language has been slowly rewriting itself to be more gender inclusive. Instead of fireman or policeman, we now use the terms firefighter or police officer. Gender-affirming language pushes that idea one step further, eliminating gender as a factor to respect the multitudes of gender identities.

Common gender-neutral classroom greetings

- Students
- Class
- Folks
- Y'all
- Everybody
- Friends

Approaching Sex and Gender in a Gender-Affirming Context

Throughout education and the high school experience, there are spaces where sex, as a concept different from gender, is established. Whether it be standards in physical education differing by sex, discussion of sexual anatomy in health and biology classes, or analyzing reproductive rights in government, there are times and places where sex will share a space with gender identity.

Sex vs. Gender

Sex is biological. It's dependent on criteria such as chromosomes and reproductive anatomy.

People are either biologically female (ovaries, a uterus, etc.), biological male (penis, testes, etc.), or intersex (a combination of female and male anatomy).

Gender is social. It's dependent on an individual's perception of themselves and how that relates to norms in their community.

The concept of gender was established in the 1950s by psychoendocrinologist John Money, while doing research with intersex people. It functioned as a tool to understand his patients identity in lieu of the sexual anatomy that defined whether someone was male or female at the time. The concept was then co-opted by feminist scholars, bringing forth the idea that **gender is a social construct** and revolutionizing our understanding of the body in society. If you really want to get into it, theorists like Judith Butler and Anne Fausto-Sterling also claim that *sex* is a social construct. It's the sort of theory that melts your brain, so for the purpose of this section, I won't go into it.

How to Navigate Sex in a Gender-Affirming Space

Step back. Does the conversation/activity need to be sexed?

The gender binary is pervasive, and has infiltrated almost every part of our life. This includes educational structure. Think about times you have split the class into boys and girls, said things like "girls do/are _____" and "boys do/are _____". Was isolating gender pertinent to teaching your students? Did you *really* need to partner people of the opposite gender for an assignment? No shame if the answer is no, we are all learning! Next time, think about other ways to organize a partnership or subdivide a classroom (alphabetical, birthdays, etc.). But if the answer is yes, let's continue...

Clarity is key.

There will be moments in a classroom where sex needs to be established separate from gender. Anatomy, childbirth, and safe sex are all discussions that require an understanding of the body beyond a gender identity context. When you approach a concept or lesson that involves discussion of sex as opposed to gender, make sure to establish that. Telling your students that "This refers to sex, not gender" not only sets their expectations accordingly, but also makes space to demonstrate an understanding of sex and gender as separate entities, and opens up an opportunity for students to clarify their understandings of such.

Language that Discusses Sex in a Gender-Affirming Way:

- AFAB (Assigned Female at Birth) and AMAB (Assigned Male at Birth): I find these phrases extremely useful in talking about the sexed body in a gender inclusive way. In the place of “man” or “woman”, these terms allow you to be specific while remaining gender inclusive. After all, not everyone who is assigned female/male at birth still identifies as such.
 - Example: if you were talking about reproductive rights in government class, you might say “Roe v. Wade expanded access to reproductive health services for those assigned female at birth.”
- Physiology over gender: As a way to differentiate between sex and gender, use descriptions of physiology instead of gender (this is especially relevant to discussions of reproduction and sexual health). Though it might be uncomfortable at first, referring to what you might consider to be women as “people with a vulva” and what you might consider to be men as “people with a penis” includes varied configurations of sexual anatomy and gender identity.

Use Your Resources

It’s hard for me to anticipate every potential scenario where discussions of sexed bodies occur in the classroom. It is up to teachers to examine and change their language, and while I have some of the answers, I certainly don’t have them all. If you are teaching a subject that deals with sexed bodies (or any topic), and are unsure how to approach classroom language in a gender-affirming language, the internet is your friend. From biology to marching band, there are countless resources that examine gender-affirming language in any given field.

The internet is an overwhelmingly vast pool of information. Unsure where you want to start? Try these sentence frames:

- “Gender-affirming ways of talking about _____”
- Trans/non-binary inclusion in _____”
- Gender-neutral terms in _____”

Next Steps

1. Ask students for their pronouns!
Whether you have them fill out a Google form or create a name-tag for their desk, make sure pronouns are a part of that process. *Tip: When creating any form that asks for pronouns, make sure to provide options for students to write their own, in case their specific pronouns aren’t listed.*
2. Examine your use of gendered language in the classroom.
How can you make that language more inclusive? I’ve provided lots of suggestions, but ultimately, it is up to **you** to make sure that gender-affirming language makes its way into your classroom.

Social-Emotional Support of LGBTQ Students

When I look at the landscape of LGBTQ inclusion and acceptance over the past several years, I am acutely aware of the incredible change that has been made over the course of my lifetime. I was born in 2002, which means that homosexuality was still criminalized under sodomy laws (this changed in the 2003 Supreme Court case, *Lawrence v. Texas*). However, by the time I made it to high school, a cultural and political metamorphosis of LGBTQ rights occurred and continues to occur. Gen Z is the first generation to experience a queer coming-of-age in an America where same-sex marriage is legal in all fifty states. Media is slowly, but surely, starting to represent our stories. And though I have not been around to experience it, education has experienced a similar transformation. All the teachers I interviewed for this project expressed that things had changed; they were teaching in less homophobic and transphobic environments. However, the students I interviewed still expressed fears of being targetted due to their gender and/or sexuality. Though the needle on LGBTQ issues has shifted, this is evidence that there is always more to do and more to learn.

Coming Out

Teachers are important mentors and support systems for all students, and being part of one's coming out journey⁴ fits comfortably under that job description. However, when the time comes for a student to come out to you, it is completely understandable if you feel lost or unsure of what to say next. Every student's coming out will look different, and it is impossible for me to anticipate every poential scenario or question. Therefore, I'm referring to a trusted soruce, and heavily adapting this section from GLSEN's blog post for National Coming Out Day.

What Not To Do/Say

It's easiest to approach responses to a student's coming out by starting with some boundaries. Here are some phrases you should avoid when a student comes out to you:

- "I knew it"- Being told that you are easily identifiable as LGBTQ is an uncomfortable experience for several reasons. First of all, "knowing" when someone is LGBTQ (often referred to as "gaydar") is ultimately a skill surrounding practices of othering and stereotyping. Being told you fit into a mold, and that straight/cisgender people can visibly spot your queerness implies that you are a target, that you are clearly different, and otherwise do not fit in with the rest of society. As a young queer person, being told you are visbily different is scary, especially considering that bullying and harassment towards LGBTQ youth is still present in high school cultures. Additionally, when one's queerness is a newfound realization, being told someone else "knew" before you did is off-putting,

⁴ And coming out is 100% a journey! You have to come out to every new person you meet (only if you want to, of course), and all the people who already know you. Haven't seen your great aunt in five years and she missed the whole "I'm gay" conversation at family dinner? Go to your high school reunion with a new name and set of pronouns? These are all hypotheticals, but they reinforce that coming out is a **continuous process**.

to say the least. It's hard to articulate, but it's very uncomfortable. Even if the student coming out to you is every stereotype of an LGBTQ person, it's best to keep it quiet.

- "It's just a phase"- This phrase is commonly heard among LGBTQ youth, as adults in their life misinterpret coming out as LGBTQ as "trendy" or another phase in their adolescent life. However, it's important to understand that LGBTQ identity isn't a phase or trend, and people have experienced same-sex attraction and gender non-conformity since the beginning of time. And even if the student, after exploring their identity, comes to the conclusion that they are straight or cisgender, that time learning about themselves and how to express themselves still is a valuable part of growing up.
- "You can't be _____, you've _____"- The primary example being "You can't be gay, you've dated someone of the opposite gender", any statement expressing conditions to one's sexuality and gender is insensitive and inappropriate. There are plenty of reasons why a closeted queer person would date someone of the opposite gender, from compulsory heterosexuality (the idea that a heterosexual relationship is necessary for a fulfilling life), not being aware of one's identity, or they are attracted to more than one gender.

What You Can Do

Ultimately, each coming out is an experience unique to the student. It's impossible to give specific advice that will apply to every coming out that you, as a teacher, will encounter. That being said, there are some general suggestions that can apply to all sorts of coming out situations.

- **Listen:** Every student will approach coming out differently, and you will be best suited to respond by matching the tone and energy they bring to the encounter. If the student seems especially nervous or scared, making an effort to respond with care and compassion could go a long way. However, if the student seems more nonchalant about the whole affair, they might not want you to make a big deal out of it.
- **Confidentiality is key:** Any student who is coming out to you trusts you as a teacher and mentor. In order to cement that trust, it is imperative that you keep the student's identity confidential unless the student states otherwise. One's sexuality and gender identity is sensitive information (especially in a high school setting) and one of the best things you can do to support a student is to understand that their identity is not your information to share. Of course, teachers are mandated reporters. If during the student's coming out conversation, they express that they are a danger to themselves or others, then it is crucial to their safety that you get other people involved.
- **Appreciate the courage it takes to come out:** Even if a student is certain that you will respond positively, coming out is still an incredibly scary and vulnerable experience. Acknowledging this is one way to support the student coming out to you.
- **Remember that the student has not changed:** Keep in mind that underneath the student's newfound sense of identity, they are still the same person they were before coming out to you.

- **Offer support, but don't assume the student needs help:** Asking if a student needs any help from you, or if they have come out to anyone else they are close to, is a good way to show you can sympathize with the challenges surrounding coming out and exploring one's identity. However, not every student will take you up on that offer. As I've said many times before, every student's coming out is different.
- **Be ready to offer resources:** If a student does express interest in your help, be ready to direct them to places they can find information and support. Information about your school's GSA or a local LGBTQ Resource Center (if you have one nearby) are great places to start. If none of these groups are readily available at your high school, the Trevor Project has 24/7 support for LGBTQ youth in crisis, as well as other resources to help students through understanding their identity, coming out, sexual health, and much more.

Supporting a student's gender transition

If/when a student comes out to you as transgender or non-binary, you might have more questions than a student coming out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. Here are some things to check-in with your student about as it relates to transitioning.

- **Ask for a new name/pronouns:** If a student is coming out to you as trans, it is likely that they will have a set of pronouns that they now use or want to use, or a new chosen name. Asking for that new name or pronouns is one way to help affirm their gender in an educational context.
- **Ask if they want other people to know:** If a student has chosen a new name or a new set of pronouns, they might want your help in correcting other staff members. After all, coming out to one teacher is scary. Coming out to six or seven is an inconceivable amount of pressure. However, don't be surprised if a student wants their new name or pronouns to stay confidential, for now. This includes talking to a student's parents/guardians.
- **Understand that any change requires adjustment:** If a student wants you to use a new name or pronouns, it's completely reasonable that you slip up and use their deadname⁵ instead. When you do slip up, quickly apologize and correct yourself, then move on! It's an understandable mistake, but apologizing profusely can only bring discomfort to the student in question.

Harassment and Discrimination

According to GLSEN's 2019 National School Climate Survey, 98.8% of LGBTQ students heard the word "gay" used in a negative context, 95.2% of LGBTQ students heard slurs used, 68.7% of LGBTQ students experienced verbal harassment based on their sexuality, and 56.9% of LGBTQ students experienced verbal harassment based on their gender expression. These statistics show a clear picture of national school climate; one where, despite all the change

⁵ A deadname is a trans person's name before they came out or transitioned.

that has been made in the last several decades, LGBTQ students are still threatened on their school campuses.

Microaggressions

Most of the verbal harassment described in the 2019 National School Climate Survey data falls under the category of a **microaggression**.

Microaggressions are (often brief) verbal or behavioral encounters that, whether intentionally or not, communicate hostile, derogatory, or insulting views towards a group. They can be divided into three subcategories:

1. Microassaults
2. Microinsults
3. Microinvalidations

Microassaults

Microassaults are “conscious, deliberate forms of discriminatory practice that are intended to harm” (American Psychological Association of Graduate Students’ Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity). Slurs (“dyke”, “faggot”, “tranny”, etc.) and other abusive language fall under the category of microassaults, as well as any restrictive action (such as restricting a trans person’s access to the bathroom of their gender).

Microinsults

Microinsults are more subtle forms of microaggressions, referring to offensive offhand comments and gestures. Examples of microinsults are using gay as an insult, asking a trans person what their deadname (name before transitioning) or whether they have “gotten the surgery”, asking a same-sex couple “who is the man/woman” in their relationship, or referring to sexuality as “a choice”.

Microinvalidations

Microinvalidations seek to exclude or negate someone’s lived experience. Though rarely ill-intentioned, assumptions, such as asking someone who presents as female if they have a male partner (and vice versa), and tokenism⁶ are considered microinvalidations. Microinvalidations, essentially, attempt to erase an individual’s experience by substituting with a perception of the collective’s.

Note on Intersectionality

When researching data to highlight for this project, I came across a study on LGBTQ health in schools that discussed how GSAs are less likely to be considered protective to students of color, as opposed to white students⁷. It is important to point out that each part of our identity does not exist in a vacuum, they are all central to who we are and how we are perceived by others. In that respect, understanding how to support all LGBTQ students means you must

⁶ See section 5 for more information on tokenism

⁷ “LGBTQ students of color, however, attend GSAs significantly less frequently than White youth,⁷⁰ and when they do attend, GSAs appear to be less protective for LGBTQ students of color than for those who identify as White.” (Johns, Poteat, Horns, and Kosciw)

understand the interlocking nature of oppressions. As the data above (and a rich history of BIPOC⁸ LGBTQ existence) suggests, there is valuable work to be done in supporting LGBTQ students of color. Thus, understanding intersectionality, white privilege, and systemic racism is an important part in creating a safe classroom environment for all LGBTQ students, as sexuality and gender identity does not negate the lived experience of students of color.

LGBTQ Students in Physical Education and Athletics

Physical education and athletics provide an especially difficult landscape for LGBTQ students to navigate; the hyper-masculinity of men's athletics, locker rooms, and the gendered nature of most sports creates a breeding ground for homophobia and transphobia. As part of my research for this guide, I interviewed several LGBTQ students about their experience; discussions of PE and sports came up somewhat frequently. One student mentioned how slurs, unwanted sexual advances, and forms of verbal harassment often came from boy's sports teams members. Another student mentioned her fear of coming out as a lesbian to her teammates because she didn't want them to feel uncomfortable around her in the locker room. Furthermore, athletics has become the backdrop for severe anti-trans sentiment and legislation, with cisgender elected officials fearing the presence of transgender girls and women in sports. On March 30th, 2021, Arkansas state legislature passed a bill that banned trans youth from participating in sports that align with their gender identity, as well as making access to trans-affirming healthcare illegal for minors under 18. Keeping both legislative action and the lived experiences of LGBTQ students in mind, it is pivotal that I address ways to make physical education and athletics accessible and inclusive for all students. Here are some recommendations from GLSEN's Guide to Gender Affirming and Inclusive Athletics Participation:

- Students have the right to participate in athletics consistent to their gender identity, regardless of whether that matches the sex listed on their birth certificate
- School administration/athletics department will work with trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students to ensure an affirming athletics experience.
- Trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students can use the locker rooms and restrooms that align with their gender identity or expression, or wherever they feel most safe. Private spaces will be made available for any LGBTQ student who feels unsafe in a locker room.

Next Steps

1. **Be prepared to call out homophobia and transphobia when you hear it.** A common thread in student narratives I heard was that teachers and administration do not take proper action when homophobic/transphobia sentiment is expressed. Even if the situation is isolated or a one-off occurrence, proper disciplinary action will make LGBTQ students feel safer and educate the student who expressed harmful views.

⁸ BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

2. **Reflect on your role as a supportive educator.** What did you learn in this section? How does it apply to your classroom? What might you want to learn more about?
3. **Take Action!** As of April 2021, anti-trans bills have been introduced in at least 20 states. TransAthlete has compiled all bills currently moving through state legislatures and ways (email writing, phone calls, etc.) to fight back. Go to <https://www.transathlete.com/take-action> for more information.

LGBTQ Inclusion in Academics

As an LGBTQ student, there is nothing more empowering than seeing yourself reflected in the faces of history. My personal favorite example of this is when I stumbled across Sappho. Though I was a sixteen-year-old with little knowledge of the classics, and Sappho was an archaic Greek poet whose work today consists of several dozen fragments of poems lost to time, her work resonated with me. As I read Sappho's descriptions of finding another woman so beautiful it feels like she is dying, I saw my sexuality reflected in a way it had never been approached in the classroom, if it had been discussed at all. It was fully ingrained in the words and culture of the past, undeniable proof that LGBTQ existence is far from the phase some make it out to be. After this experience, I began to seek out books, histories, podcasts, anything that chronicled the rich LGBTQ history that was mostly absent from my high school experience. That is the extent of my knowledge on LGBTQ history, literature, and theory; it is entirely self-taught. I find that important to mention because, in the next section, I will make suggestions on ways, as a student, I see LGBTQ experiences fitting in with existing curricula. I do not have the breadth of knowledge an LGBTQ studies professor has to offer, nor do I have the expertise to write countless lesson plans. To supplement that knowledge, I provide more resources than in previous sections, demonstrating and utilizing the vast collections of existing materials for educators.

English

Queer/Gender Theory in the High School Classroom?

Queer/gender theory is a critical lens and body of thought that seeks to explore sexuality, gender, relationships, power structures, and marginalized groups. It has its ties in feminist studies, as well as post-structuralism. Gender studies, in particular, presents the idea that gender is socially constructed, as opposed to being predetermined and/or based on physical anatomy. In all honesty, queer theory and gender theory are very confusing. As a high school senior whose senior project is all about gender and gender theory, I can confidently say that I struggle through it, not without the help of SparkNotes and Wikipedia. It is a vague lens, and intentionally so, as queer/gender theory's emphasis on deconstructing sex/gender/sexuality binaries yields a body of thought that is fluid and broad by nature and design. So why am I suggesting educators attempt to bring queer/gender theory into the classroom? As a gender non-conforming student, I have found a certain comfort in a body of work that explores gender variance as a valid part of the human experience. By bringing queer theory and gender theory into the classroom, I believe it demonstrates the validity of gender non-conformity and self-expression.

How to incorporate queer/gender theory into the classroom?

It is unreasonable to assign Foucault or Leslie Feinberg as reading in your average high school English class. However, there are ways to lay the groundwork to an understanding of gender theory through classroom discussion. In most high school literature, issues surrounding gender and the treatment of women are present, and are often discussed in the classroom.

Encourage students to expand on those ideas, considering what various characters and their interactions with others demonstrate about femininity, masculinity, and/or gender as a whole. Other things to discuss are:

- How does a character's understanding of gender reveal itself? How might that be different from other characters' understandings of gender? What does it mean that different people can have different understandings of gender?
- How do characters of different genders interact with each other? What, if anything, do characters assume about each other based on their genders?
- How does a character's gender manifest itself in society? How does the society they operate in define different genders? How is that the same/different from the way your community understands gender?

For an example of this questioning in action, let's take the classic high school novel *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding. After all, an island full of young boys provides an excellent case study in examining ideas of masculinity. Applying the lens of gender theory would perhaps yield a class discussion on how ideas of manliness inform the ways the boys interact with each other, how gender influences violence, or the relationship between masculinity and power in society.

By discussing gender theory and examining the way society informs our views on gender, it opens an avenue for students and educators to deconstruct gender and gender roles. And for students questioning their gender identity or expression, it allows them to see their evolving identity and questions about gender roles, masculinity, and femininity fit into the academic discussion.

LGBTQ-Inclusive Literature

Another pivotal way LGBTQ youth have always seen themselves represented is in novels. I, and many other LGBTQ youth, can remember the first books with queer content they ever read. However, getting books changed and circulated out of high school curriculums is a difficult feat, and often one that varies by school, district, and state. If your school is considering changing titles to create a more inclusive curriculum, consider this booklist curated by Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching for Tolerance):

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/best-practices-for-serving-lgbtq-students/appendix-a-lgbtq-books-characters#high-school>

Most of the books on that list are YA, coming-of-age, or otherwise recent titles. If you are looking for more historical LGBTQ literature to replace a dated text, there is no shortage of booklists of famous LGBTQ literature, such as this one from the National Writing Project:

<https://lead.nwp.org/knowledgebase/an-lgbt-bibliography-for-high-school-teachers/>

Though not on that specific list, I would also personally recommend Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Following the life of a wealthy man who turns into a woman, it explores the difference and similarities between genders in an entertaining and thought provoking way.

Additionally, as I did my research, I stumbled across a student's doctorate dissertation where she successfully leads a LGBTQ literature class at a local high school. It includes the

content of the course, as well as lesson materials and guidance for educators on teaching LGBTQ issues and social justice as a whole. Scrolling through the table of context and subsequent chapters of interest, I found it supplemented my rethinking of English curricula to be more with knowledge that, as a student, I am unable to offer.

https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1369&context=dissertations_2

United States History

Teaching the Road to LGBTQ Civil Rights

When did the LGBTQ rights movement start?

Over the past several years, the Stonewall Riots have risen to fame as the start of the LGBTQ civil rights movement. However, LGBTQ activism had been present in the United States decades before Stonewall. One of the earliest pre-Stonewall activism groups was the Mattachine Society, a social, educational, and eventually, activist group for gay men founded by Henry Hay in 1950. A few years later, the Daughters of Bilitis, a similar group for lesbians, was founded in 1955. Both of these early groups had the goal of assimilating LGBTQ individuals into mainstream society, working to destigmatize queer relationships and attempting to aschew the narrative that same-sex desire was an illness. This lesson plan, from UCLA's History Geography project, explores the goals of pre-Stonewall activist (often referred to as the homophile movement) vs. post-Stonewall gay liberation activists: <http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/how-did-the-movement-for-lgbt-equality-go-from-assimilation-to-coming-out-in-the-1950s-1970s/>

Two years before the Stonewall Riots, as the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve 1967, police raided the Black Cat Tavern in Los Angeles. The Black Cat was a gay bar, and as same-sex couples kissed to ring in the new year, plainclothes officers revealed themselves and attempted to arrest those who committed "indecent behavior" (same-sex affection was still criminalized). Similarly to the events at the Stonewall, patrons of the bar fought back. Protests and demonstrations against police brutality were held at the Black Cat Tavern in the weeks following the riot, and they would become one of the earliest examples of LGBTQ activism and demonstration. A sample lesson plan examining the causes of the Black Cat Riots can be found here: <http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/what-caused-the-black-cat-tavern-riots/>

The Stonewall Riots: An Inflection Point

The riots at Stonewall on June 28th, 1969 were the catalyst for the gay liberation movement, which would become the LGBTQ rights movement we are familiar with today. Police raids, such as the one at the Black Cat Tavern two years prior, were a common occurrence as homosexual behavior and cross-dressing were both crimes. But unlike the average police raid, patrons at the Stonewall Inn fought against the police, starting a riot that would last at least two nights. In the months following the riots, prominent early LGBTQ rights group, the Gay Liberation Front, was born. On the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, the first pride parade (named "Christopher Street Liberation Day") was held.

Out of any of the early moments in the LGBTQ civil rights movement, the Stonewall Riots are likely the ones most mentioned in textbooks. If you are a US History teacher that

discusses LGBTQ history in the classroom, you are likely already familiar with Stonewall as the beginning of the LGBTQ civil rights movement. For teachers who want to learn more about the Stonewall Riots, or are interested in incorporating discussions of such into their classrooms, there are a few lesson materials available; the Stanford History Education Group has a curated list of materials (requires creation of a free account)

<http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/stonewall-riots/> and the Center on Colfax's Colorado LGBTQ History Project created a free lesson plan that celebrates Stonewall's 50th anniversary by examining its legacy in the movement <http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/stonewall-50/>. Additionally, non-profit History Unerased provides a collection of primary sources about the Stonewall Riots as a part of their *Intersections and Connections* curriculum (there is an option to schedule a virtual demo of the curriculum, though I assume that the full curriculum costs money) <https://unerased.org/resource/curriculum>.

Black LGBTQ Identity in American History

With the idea of intersectionality in mind, it is important to diversify the narrative of LGBTQ civil rights and activism by discussing the contributions of Black LGBTQ activists, writers, artists, etc.

The Harlem Renaissance

Besides being an influential moment in Black culture in America, the Harlem Renaissance had an LGBTQ subculture as well. Many big names in the movement, such as Langston Huges and Zora Neale Hurston, were LGBTQ, and quite a few of the women involved in the blues scene (namely Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Gladys Bentley, and Ethel Waters) were lesbian and bisexual. Dr. Rob Darrow and members of the Safe Schools Project created an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum for 11th grade US History teachers, which includes a unit titled "Harlem Renaissance: As Gay as it was Black". The full guide (available here <http://queerhistory.pbworks.com/w/page/111419680/bookinfo>) costs \$40, though there is a free draft guide with talking points, lesson plans, and resources for the Harlem Renaissance unit (and many other topics!) under the "Sample 11th" heading.

Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement

As LGBTQ history is becoming more and more celebrated, Bayard Rustin's life and legacy have been unerased. Though he helped Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. plan the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and was the chief organizer of the March on Washington, he was later isolated from the movement due to the potential blackmail threat he posed as a gay man, communist, and pacifist. Recent attempts to repopularize and understand Rustin's contributions to the movement have led to the creation of many classroom materials about his legacy. Some useful sample materials (among dozens results for a Google search of "Bayard Rustin lesson plans") include a discussion of how Bayard Rustin's identity and values informed his work (<http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/how-did-bayard-rustins-identity-shape-his-beliefs-and-actions/>), a Learning for Justice lesson plan on his contributions to his civil rights movement <https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/bayard-rustin-the-fight-for-civil->

[and-gay-rights](#) , and at least two discussions of Rustin and his work in the History Unerased curriculum (<https://unerased.org/resource/intersections-and-connections-instructional-resources>).

Audre Lorde and Intersectionality

Audre Lorde, Black lesbian poet and feminist writer, published *Sister Outsider: Essays and Writings* in 1984. This collection of Lorde's writings explores the intersection of race, sexuality, gender, class, and politics. Specifically, her speech "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" examines intersectional identity. A sample lesson using "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" can be found here: <http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/through-analyzing-audre-lordes-essay-on-multiple-identities-and-systems-of-oppression-how-do-power-and-privilege-impact-the-relationships-people-have-with-each-other-as-well-as-with-institut-2/>. Though a less obvious integration in American history, discussion of Lorde's work also provides a critique of the majority white, heterosexual, and middle class leaders of second wave feminism in the 60s and 70s.

The Lavender Scare

The Lavender Scare of the 1950s barred any "suspected homosexual" from working in a position for the federal government, out of fear that their sexuality led them to be a more susceptible target of Soviet blackmailing. It saw LGBTQ people fired from their jobs and proliferation of the idea that LGTBQ people were "sick" and/or "perverted". Discussion of the Lavender Scare is an important angle to consider when examining McCarthyism, the Red Scare, and anti-Communist sentiment in the United States, as it explores the struggle for LGBTQ civil rights in a side of history not known to most students. It exposes the beginning of prevailing sentiment that LGBTQ identity is a "sickness" and that same-sex relationships are innately perverse, two sentiments that still cling to society today. UC Berkeley's History-Social Science Project created a lesson plan that contextualizes the Lavender Scare and McCarthyism with an emphasis on attitudes towards the LGBTQ community (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cH58S0hMuKseK3rm2jVyhobdvavDo1dl/view>). It won the 2019 Don Romesburg Prize for a K-12 Lesson Plan on LGBT History. Additionally, UCLA's History Geography Project put together a document-based lesson plan examining to what extent the 1950s were a dark age for LGBTQ Americans. (<http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/were-the-1950s-truly-the-dark-ages-for-gay-americans-as-some-historians-have-claimed/>), and a different lesson plan examining the treatment of LGBTQ federal employees under McCarthyism <http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/how-were-gays-and-lesbians-viewed-and-treated-by-the-u-s-government/>.

The AIDS Crisis

The AIDS crisis is a key event in modern LGBTQ history in the United States. It shaped a generation of young queer people; restigmatizing same-sex male relationships while sowing death and illness. The AIDs crisis is a big topic. It's charged with stigma and assumptions around HIV/AIDS and it deals with the tragic loss of life of countless young people. It's old enough to

be considered history as opposed to current events, but recent enough to be sidelined in most history classes as the chronology of a history curriculum collides with the end of the school year. That being said, I think it is important to learn about. The AIDS crisis is a critical part of the LGBTQ community's collective consciousness- a generation of queer elders lost to government negligence. That being said, there is a lot of material to cover.

Sample material discussing the government response to AIDS can be found here (<http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/aids-crisis-government-role-part-i/>) and as a part of the History Un erased curriculum. Sample material discussing activists' response to AIDS can be found here (<http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/aids-activism-part-ii/>) and here (<http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/why-and-how-did-activists-respond-to-the-aids-crisis-of-the-1980s-2/>). There are additional narratives on the AIDS crisis in Dr. Rob Darrow's queer history curriculum for 11th grade (though they are only in the full, \$40 version found here <http://queerhistory.pbworks.com/w/page/111419680/bookinfo>).

One aspect of the AIDS crisis left unexplored in many of these resources is its connection to culture today, especially in media. As a student, most of my knowledge of the lived experiences of those impacted by the AIDS epidemic doesn't come from the classroom, but rather from the critically acclaimed FX series "Pose". If you are a teacher who enjoys supplementing classroom material with outside media, I would highly recommend pairing lessons on the AIDS crisis with Season 2, Episode 1 of "Pose", as it navigates the lived experience, as well as the historic ACT/UP die-ins, with honesty.

World History

Colonialism as an Importer of Cisheteronormativity

Though the category of world history is very broad, one theme in respect to LGBTQ inclusion in the subject is how colonialism and empire served as an importer of homophobia and transphobia in pre-existing cultures that contained diverse sexualities and genders. Whether it be the mistreatment of those of Two-Spirit identity in the Americas or the criminalization of cross-dressing across the world, the juxtaposition of colonial and indigenous understandings of gender and sexuality demonstrate how Euro-centric ideals of such have erased a global gender and sexuality variance that has existed far longer than the constructs that attempted to eradicate it.

The "berdache" in the Spanish Americas

When Spanish colonial forces arrived in the Americas, they encountered a diverse range of genders and gender roles that were incompatible with the Western framework of binary sex. "Sexual behaviors that they perceived as homosexual were labeled sinful; cross-gender dress and work were criticized as inferior and evidence of weakness as well as decadence." (McNabb 35). To label these supposedly sinful and inferior behaviors and identities, colonial writers coined the term "berdache". Coming from the Arabic word *bardag* and the Persian word *bardaj*, both meaning prisoner, the word came to refer to the passive role in homosexual sex, a role widely considered inferior and immoral by the heavily Catholic and patriarchal Spanish culture.

“In the colonial imagination, the berdache was a male who dressed a woman, performed women’s labor, and served a prostitutional role to preserve young girls’ chastity and marriageability....Shocked missionaries claimed that these poor souls were ‘selected’ (in other words, coerced) as children to be raised as girls and then prostituted.” (McNabb 35).

With this view of indigenous people as primitive, colonial powers sought to convert them both to Christianity and the “correct” cisheteronormative binary system.

If discussing enforcement of colonial gender roles on indigenous people in the classroom, remember to emphasize the following:

1. Though “berdache” is the term used by colonial powers, it is considered offensive, inappropriate, and rooted in masculinity.
2. The colonial interpretation of the berdache is incorrect. The berdache is actually an alternative gender role that both men and women could occupy; “it was widespread... a person became a berdache either due to childhood interests or a vision experience... and berdaches were respected and held a special social and often religious role in their communities.” (McNabb 37).

The Hijra in Colonial India

The *hijra* is a third gender in India that has been present in written records since the 8th century BCE. It can be roughly translated in English as “eunuch” or “intersex”. Though *hijra* go through ritual castration to “rid the hijra of her maleness and allow her to become a vehicle for the goddess” (McNabb 46), their role and identity transcends that described in the English translation. “Hijras are assigned male at birth (or, rarely, intersex), and dress and behave as women do. However, despite using female names, kinship terms, and pronouns, hijra do not identify as women. They are culturally recognized as neither man nor woman but a third gender” (McNabb 46). They have special culture, social, and spiritual roles in India and the Hindu religion. However, when British colonial forces arrived in India, they sought to eradicate the hijra and other sexual and gender identities unique to Indian culture and the Hindu religion. When the 1864 “Buggery Act” was enacted in India, its ban of non-procreative sexualities implicated the hijra (and criminalized homosexuality), while the 1871 Criminal Tribes Act criminalized “eunuchs”, which the British believed the hijra were. These laws had a significant impact on hijras and other gender and sexual minorities in India, as the “Buggery Act” was not repealed in India until 2018, demonstrating the hold that Euro-centric standards of heterosexuality and binary gender had on colonized nations.

Lasting Impacts of Colonialism on Gender and Sexuality

As mentioned above, Euro-centric values of purity and cisheteronormative structures of identity and relationships had impacts on places of colonial rule far after the Western forces have vacated. Notably, over half of the countries that criminalize homosexuality today were former British colonies (A.L.). Many of those places have thriving examples of LGBTQ existence in traditional folklore and/or religion, which have been suppressed. When examining colonialism and its impacts on world culture, consider discussing how colonial forces have left a legacy of suppressing LGBTQ identity.

NOTE: When discussing the prevalence anti-LGBTQ legislation in formerly colonized nations, be careful to not employ ideas of white saviorism. Avoid implicating that Western countries are more “civilized” for their treatment of LGBTQ issues, or that non-Western countries are somehow innately lesser than for their homophobic legislation. Understanding that homophobic laws are a product of empire and colonialism exposes how Western countries are partially responsible for the anti-LGBTQ outlook in these places.

Culturally Specific Genders by Region⁹

First Nations (Canada) and Native Americans (United States)

- *Mixu’ga* (“moon-instructed”): third gender identity in the Osage nation
- *Winkte* (“would-be women”): third gender in the Lakota language
- *Lila witkowin* (“crazy woman”): fourth gender in the Lakota language
- *Keknatsa’nxwix* (“part woman”): third gender in the Quinault nation
- *Tawkxwa’nsix* (“man-acting”): fourth gender in the Quinault nation

Mexico, Central, and South America

- *Muxe*: an identity pertaining to biological males in Juchitán de Zaragoza, Mexico. Muxe have both masculine and feminine characteristics, and can marry women or partner with men. They are categorized as neither male nor female, nor are they considered homosexual men.
- *Biza’ah*: an identity similar to muxe found in Teotitlán de Valle, Mexico. Biza’ah are assigned male at birth, but have both masculine and feminine aspects.
- *Travesti*: a gender variant for “passive” gay men found in Brazil. They dress femininely and receive hormones and plastic surgery, and occupy a female sexual role. Despite having feminine names and pronouns, they do not identify as women. Nor are they men, because manhood in post-colonial Brazilian culture is largely defined by sexual roles.

Polynesia and the Pacific Islands

- *Māhū*: A gender identity available for both biological males and females found in Tahiti and Hawaii. Māhū blend traditional masculine and feminine dress, often serve as adoptive parents to young relatives, and are prominent in the arts.
- *Fa’afafine* (“like a woman”): similar to māhū, biological males who identify as fa’afafine serve a caretaker role to children and aging relatives. They can dress in masculine or feminine clothing, as well as a combination of the two. Fa’afafine are heavily involved in the performing arts, and traditionally, they live together in a tight-knit community.

India

- *Hijra*: A gender identity for those assigned male at birth who dress and behave femininely, as well as having feminine names and pronouns. They undergo ritual castration to gain favor with their goddess, the Bahuchara Mata, and bless the family in

⁹ This is by no means a comprehensive list! Countless cultures across the globe have third gender and sex variants. Check out this interactive map of gender diverse cultures ([x](#)) for more examples!

the name of their goddess in important rituals at weddings and after childbirth. Despite their feminine appearance, the hijra are recognized as a third gender.

- *Sādhin*: A voluntary gender role that those assigned female at birth enter during puberty. The sādhin dresses in men's clothing, cuts her hair masculinely, and renounces sexuality. Despite the retention of a female name and pronouns, a sādhin is viewed to be free of gender, and may work in male or female occupations and take part in male or female ritual behaviors.
- *Devadasi*: A gender role given to biological females whose parents dedicate her to the goddess Yellamma. Once a child is given, she is dedicated to Yellamma via ritual marriage and is trained as a priest. Devadasis perform rituals for their communities and communicate between devotees and Yellamma. Additionally, their spiritual marriage grants them privileges such as land ownership and inheritance.

Southeast Asia

- *Waria*: A combination of the Indonesian words for woman (*wanita*) and man (*pria*), waria are a third gender that wear makeup, feminine clothing, and have traditional feminine mannerisms. However, they do not identify as women, and are said to be even stronger than men. Waria are visible in Indonesian culture, and well-represented in television and film.
- *Bayot/bantut/bakla*: A third gender identity found in the Philippines. Though gender diversity is prominent in this region (third gender deities and figures are prevalent in traditional narratives), the multiple colonial presences in the Philippines have impacted these traditional understandings of gender variance.
- *Kathoey*: The third gender in Thai oral tradition. Kathoey could be biologically male, female, or intersex, and occupied roles separate from men or women. Today, the kathoey identity seems to only apply to those assigned male at birth, who often self-identify as *ying prophet sorng* ("a second type of woman") or *nang-fa jam-laeng* ("a transformed goddess"). They usually dress feminine, sometimes pursue hormone therapy or plastic surgery, and partner with masculine, heterosexual men.

Weimar Germany and the LGBTQ Community

Compared to the viciously repressive era that succeeded it, Weimar Germany had incredibly tolerant and progressive views on sexuality. Berlin was especially known for its thriving gay subculture, with gay bars, activism, and arts. At the head of that movement was Magnus Hirschfeld, a gay Jewish socialist whose work on sexuality was a progressive look into sexuality and gender. He formed the Institute of Sexual Sciences, which provided resources (birth control, gender-affirming surgeries, etc.) and research for people of every imaginable sexuality and gender. He co-wrote the film *Anders Als die Andern* (Different From the Others), which featured a same-sex relationship, and was an advocate for gay civil rights. However, most of his work, and the Institute of Sexual Sciences was burned by the Nazis. Discussing Magnus Hirschfeld's work, as well as the accepting climate of Weimar Berlin, illustrate the vast amount

of change enacted by the Nazi regime. It demonstrates a tolerance some might find surprising in any era except the present, and Hirschfeld's work exposes the power of education as a mode of acceptance for the LGBTQ community. Sample classroom materials discussing Hirschfeld's advocacy can be found here: <http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson/how-did-magnus-hirschfeld-support-and-advocate-for-lgbt-people/>

Health

Emphasizing LGBTQ Identity

I remember the day my health class talked about LGBTQ identity. My teacher walked us through some terminology surrounding sexuality and gender, and we watched a short documentary about third gender identities in Hawaii. As a closeted queer person, I found it somewhat useful to talk about my burgeoning sexual and gender identity. However, I don't remember LGBTQ people or identities being discussed in places besides that one lesson. It felt isolating to see my identity confined to a specific class period. After all, I'm queer every single day, not just the one day where it's part of the lesson. When approaching health and sex education, consider places where LGBTQ voices can be addressed beyond the context of identity. Is there a place to dispel myths about trans athletes in an exercise and nutrition unit?¹⁰ Could you incorporate learning about the AIDS crisis¹¹ into a diseases unit? LGBTQ identity exists in every corner of our lives, and seeing ourselves represented beyond the one day we are discussed reinforces that notion.

LGBTQ-Inclusive Sex Education

Many of the students I interviewed for this project mentioned that they did not feel themselves represented in the sex education curriculum. Though there were lessons on identity, LGBTQ voices and experiences were not present in discussions of healthy relationships and safe sex. It's **vital** that LGBTQ-inclusive sex education is available for all students. Here's what I think that might look like:

1. **Remember that abuse is not a gendered concept:** People of all genders can experience relationship abuse. I remember my health class reinforcing the notion that men were more likely to be abusive towards their female partners than vice versa. Though that *is* true, think about what it tells young LGBTQ students about queer relationships. The heteronormative nature of the conversation leaves queer relationships out of the discussion surrounding relationship abuse. By leaving out discussion of same-sex relationships, it stigmatizes the idea of relationship abuse and unhealthy relationships in non-heterosexual partnerships. The conversation is only addressing and spreading awareness to those in heterosexual relationships, when in reality, everyone (regardless of gender or sexuality) could find themselves in an unhealthy or abusive relationship. When

¹⁰ See the section on Gender and Sexuality in Athletics for resources surrounding trans athletes

¹¹ See the previous section for historical background about the AIDS crisis

giving hypothetical scenarios around unhealthy traits in a relationship, make sure to include partnerships of all sorts of gender and sexuality configurations. (This could also be a chance to expose students to different sets of pronouns¹²). However, also make sure to demonstrate loving and supportive queer relationships. After all, despite countless media depictions of queer love as fraught with drama and emotional turmoil (*Love, Simon*, *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, *Brokeback Mountain*, etc.) LGBTQ relationships can also be healthy and positive partnerships!

2. **Talk about safe queer sex:** Most of the sex education I've recieved has come from a heterosexual lens. Though perhaps more uncomfortable to talk about than heterosexual sex, young LGBTQ people deserve to be educated about the types of sex that are most pertinent to them. This means discussing types of sex beyond procreative vaginal sex, and how people can safely partake in them. If you feel uncomfortable or unqualified to teach about safe queer sex (or LGBTQ identity), consider outsourcing! Many places have local LGBTQ resource centers who might be willing to come in and talk to your students about safe queer sex and LGBTQ identity. Additional resources for LGBTQ-inclusive sex eduaction can be found here: <https://www.glsen.org/sexed>
3. **Give updated and safe information about HIV/AIDS:** There is a specific stigma surrounding discussion of HIV/AIDS. Whether it be the loss of life often associated with the disease, or its association with substance use and sexual intercourse, HIV/AIDS treatment is often not discussed in sex education curricula. Two important things to emphasize when talking about HIV/AIDS are:
 - a. **It is treatable!** Though there is no cure, medication such as Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) can prevent contracting HIV up to 72 hours after potential exposure, and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) can prevent the risk of contracting HIV by up to 99% (The Trevor Project).
 - b. **HIV/AIDS can impact anyone:** Despite stereotypes of HIV/AIDS being the "gay disease", anyone can contract it if safe sex measures aren't taken. However, communities such as gay and bisexual people assigned male at birth and trans women are more at risk.

¹² See Section 2

Teaching Gender Transitions

Currently, there are countless myths in circulation regarding gender transitions. There are rumors that people have died from hormone therapy, or that children are regretting their gender transition. These rumors harm trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people, as gender transitions are a critical part of trans-inclusive healthcare and overall well-being. Personally, I see the health classroom as a potential place to combat those myths.

Transition Basics

Transitioning is the process by which trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people make change the way they look, and how people treat them, in order to better reflect their gender identity. There are two types of transitions: social and medication transitions, and every trans person chooses to transition differently. Some might only choose to socially transition, while others might choose to fully transition medically, while others might choose any combination of the two. Most importantly, every trans person is deserving of respect, regardless of what types of transition they choose.

Social transition includes:

- Coming out as transgender
- Changing your name and pronouns
- Presenting in ways that match your gender identity
- Changing the gender marker on identification

Medical Transition includes:

- **Hormone therapy:** taking estrogen/testosterone to create desired body characteristics
- **Puberty blockers:** Puberty blockers block the release of hormones- either estrogen or testosterone- that lead to puberty-related changes (growing of facial hair, breasts, or starting a period) from occurring. Young trans, non-binary, or gender non-conforming people who have not started puberty can go on blockers after parental consent and consent from a nurse or doctor. They also often require a certain amount of time spent with a therapist discussing gender identity.
- **“Top” surgery:** Breast augmentation (implants) or male chest reconstruction
- **“Bottom” surgery:** orchiectomy (removal of testes), hysterectomy (removal of internal female reproductive organs such as the ovaries and uterus), phalloplasty (construction of a penis using skin from other parts of your body), metoidioplasty (causes your clitoris to work more like a penis, along with hormone treatment to make your clitoris grow larger), penile inversion vaginoplasty (creation of a vagina by inverting penile skin) (Planned Parenthood).
- Various other aesthetic surgeries such as facial feminization surgery or laser hair removal.



How to Teach LGBTQ Content

Despite what the title may suggest, there is no one way to teach LGBTQ topics or incorporate them into the classroom. There are countless ways to talk about identity or history, depending on the subject, learning outcomes, and teaching style. That being said, there are ways to teach LGBTQ content that implicitly harm or make LGBTQ students uncomfortable. I can't chronicle every pitfall a teacher might experience, but these are some common themes inspired by my, and other students', experiences.

Tokenism

Tokenism is the practice of creating face-value diversity, often to avoid criticism. Common forms of tokenism include:

- Forcing a person of marginalized identity to speak on behalf of their community
- Creating symbolic gestures of solidarity
- Treating marginalized identities as checklist items

Though tokenism is a practice that can apply to any marginalized group, here are examples of what LGBTQ-specific acts of tokenism might look like in the classroom:

- Only speaking about LGBTQ issues once in the classroom, in order to "check the box"
- Assuming that all LGBTQ people have the same coming out or relationship experience
- Asking out LGBTQ students to talk on behalf of the community

The line between tokenism and genuine representation can be blurry. Often, those with the best possible intentions end up harming marginalized communities through tokenism. The main way to avoid taking part in tokenism is to examine your intentions. If you include mention of LGBTQ voices and experiences in the classroom to check a box, or in states such as California, to follow guidelines surrounding inclusive education, then it is likely that your inclusion could come off as tokenism. Instead of coming from a place of following a rule, guideline, or social norm, come from a place of support. Seeing LGBTQ people in the classroom validates queer youths' sense of identity and creates a safer classroom environment. Come from a place of wanting to do that for your LGBTQ students, as opposed to simply checking off a box, and it is likely that your LGBTQ inclusion will avoid falling into traditional tokenistic troupes.

Tone

The tone you use when talking about LGBTQ people and identity has the potential to shape your students' thoughts on the subject. The way you, personally, approach teaching LGBTQ material is often exposed through your tone. If you are unsure, apprehensive, or uncomfortable with teaching LGBTQ content, it becomes apparent through your tone. With that in mind, here are some common scenarios you should try to avoid in your teaching.

1. **A tone that displays discomfort with the subject material:** When you bring up the sexuality of a historical figure or character, does your voice get quieter? Do you feel

uncomfortable? A tone that displays discomfort with LGBTQ identity and experiences suggests that these subjects are, by their nature, uncomfortable to talk about. Though that might be true for some people, it sends the message that LGBTQ identity is an awkward, taboo topic. Most likely stemming from an understanding of LGBTQ identity as one primarily focused in sexual deviancy (think of age-old stereotypes claiming that LGBTQ people are perverted, and still-present sentiment claiming that LGBTQ people are “corrupting the children”), treating LGBTQ people and identity as a taboo topic reinforces negative perception. Furthermore, the idea that LGBTQ identity is mainly applicable to one’s sex life erases the nuance of queer identity. When there are laws across the world the criminalize same-sex relationships and people are kicked out of their homes because of their identity, it is not simply a “preference” or a portion of one’s self that is only relevant to sex and dating. It is part of who you are.

2. **A tone that is hesitant to bring up LGBTQ material:** I heard an experience from a student I interviewed where their teacher complained about California’s FAIR Act (the piece of legislation that requires schools to teach about LGBTQ history) before discussing the sexuality of figures they were learning about in class. This attitude, suggesting that LGBTQ history is a burden to teach, has the potential to rub off on students. It makes LGBTQ students feel as if seeing themselves in the curriculum is a cumbersome task as opposed to a powerful moment every student is deserving of. It also suggests that LGBTQ topics are being forced on teachers, which echoes partisan homophobic and transphobic sentiment claiming the existence of a dangerous “gay agenda”.
3. **A tone that suggests no LGBTQ people are present in the space:** Encouraging all of your students to be allies might not be the scenario you expect to be attributed with this statement. After all, teachers and administration want students to be supportive of the LGBTQ community. However, by proclaiming your students or space to be one of allies, it erases the actual queer people found within space. Not all students are allies, some are members of LGBTQ community, and that is important to recognize. Instead, try using phrases like “My classroom is a safe space” or “This school stands with the LGBTQ community”.
4. **A classroom environment that allows for homophobic/transphobic attitudes:** Whether it be through your own approach to teaching LGBTQ content, or letting insensitive remarks go unaddressed, a class environment that hosts homophobia and transphobia is most dangerous to LGBTQ students. After all, it is remarkably difficult to learn when you fear judgement and vitriol from your peers. This means calling out offensive remarks when you hear them, no matter how small or insignificant they seem. I can’t count the number of times I heard a peer say something insensitive within the teacher’s earshot, and the teacher just let it happen. In my peer interviews, the consensus among students was that, most of the time, teachers don’t do anything when confronted with homophobia and transphobia in their classrooms. As a student, I don’t necessarily

have the authority to say how teachers should confront students after they have said something insensitive or offensive. However, I can say that teachers who make an effort to call out homophobia and transphobia have created classroom environments that made me feel safe and supported.

Resources

- Learning for Justice Gender and Sexuality Resources ([x](#))
- “Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ Students” ([x](#))
- “The Role of Gay Men and Lesbians in the Civil Rights Movement” (lesson plan series) ([x](#))
- “Untold Voices: Stories and Lessons for Grades 6-12” (LGBTQ history resources) ([x](#))
- GLSEN Sex Education resources ([x](#))
- GLSEN Inclusive Education Resources ([x](#))
- GLSEN Inclusive Athletics Resources ([x](#))
- Santa Cruz Safe Schools Project LGBTQ History Curriculum (under paywall) ([x](#))
- History Unerased “Intersections and Connections” Curriculum ([x](#))
- “An Educator’s Guide to Teaching LGBTQ History” ([x](#))
- Teaching LGBTQ History: Instructional Resources for California Students, Educators, and Families ([x](#))
- “Making Gay History” Podcast: ([x](#))
- “Queer America” Podcast: ([x](#))
- One Archives (LGBTQ history archives and resources) ([x](#))
- The Trevor Project ([x](#))
- TransAthlete “Take Action” Page ([x](#))
- “Reading Queerly in the High School Classroom: Exploring a Gay and Lesbian Literature Course” ([x](#))

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About the Author

Laine Schlezinger (she/they) is a Jewish, queer, and hard-of-hearing writer, artist and activist. They are part of the Senior Class of 2021 at Burlingame High School in Burlingame, CA, and will be attending George Washington University for a combined BA/MA in Psychology and Art Therapy in the fall. Laine is an active member of the BHS Gender and Sexuality Alliance, a Kol Koleinu Teen Feminist Fellow, and an alum of the StarVista Health Ambassador Program for Youth. Her writing and art can be found in various other Kol Koleinu projects, local events, and in The Forward as part of the 2020 Youth Writers’ Contest.

Outside of their activism and creative work, Laine can be found playing flute and piccolo for the BHS Wind Ensemble (and just for fun!), baking for her friends and family, and exploring various artistic endeavors.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

Elizabeth Mirabelli v. Mark Olson, President of the EUSD Board of Education, et al.

USDC Court Case No.: 3:23-cv-00768-BEN-VET

I, the undersigned, declare under penalty of perjury that I am over the age of eighteen years and not a party to this action; my business address is P.O. Box 9120, Rancho Santa Fe, California 92067, and that I served the following document(s):

- **Supplemental Declaration of Paul M. Jonna, Esq., in Support of Plaintiffs' Ex Parte Application for an Order to Show Cause re: Sanctions.**

on the interested parties in this action by placing a true copy in a sealed envelope, addressed as follows:

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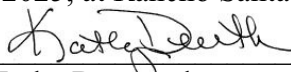
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I declare under penalty of perjury, under the laws of the State of California, that the above is true and correct. Executed on December 4, 2025, at Rancho Santa Fe, California.


Kathy Denworth