LGBTQ+ Part 1 Take a Stand: Creating Safe Schools for LGBTQ+ Students

Competency

Educators will learn about LGBTQ+ people and how to create safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students.

Key Method

Educators will learn and expand their awareness about school safety issues for LGBTQ+ students, analyze the factors that affect their safety, and develop an action plan to create safe spaces for this student population in learning communities.

Method Components

Factors Contributing to a Safe/Unsafe Environment

LGBTQ+ Terminology

The language used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people has evolved over the years. Gender identity and sexual orientation are the first terms to understand.

LGBTQ
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- **Sexual orientation** is an inherent or immutable, enduring, emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. Sexual orientations:
    - Lesbian
    - Gay
    - Bisexual/Bi+
    - Asexual
- **Gender identity** is one's concept of themselves as male, female, a blend of both, or neither. This is how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. Gender identities:
    - Non-binary
    - Binary
    - Male
    - Female
    - Cisgender
    - Transgender/Trans

Gender-nonconforming

The impact of School Safety on LGBTQ+ Students

Safety is foundational to every student's success. Abraham Maslow sought to explain human motivation through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It starts with meeting the basic needs of food, water, and safety. Then it moves to higher levels, such as supportive friendships, feelings of accomplishment, and achieving potential.

Three types of safety are critically important to success in school and many other areas of life: emotional, mental, and physical safety.

- **Emotional Safety** is when someone feels safe expressing emotions, feels secure, and has the confidence to take risks, be challenged, and try something new.
- **Mental/Psychological Safety** is the belief that one will not be humiliated or teased for ideas offered, for asking questions, or for admitting mistakes.
- **Physical Safety** is the protection from violence, theft, and exposure to weapons and threats to establish a secure learning environment.

Creating a Safe School Environment

Creating a safe school for LGBTQ+ students requires a comprehensive approach involving multiple stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, students, and families. These are steps to consider in preparing a safe school for LGBTQ+ students:

- Welcome all children, families, and staff
- Promote gender equity and support transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive students
- Work to prevent bullying of all students
- Foster understanding and respect
- Implement inclusive policies & practices
- Use Inclusive curricular resources
- Create a safe space where LGBTQ+ students can seek refuge if needed
- Provide gender-neutral bathrooms
- Train educators and staff
- Support LGBTQ+ student organizations
- Provide access to mental health services for all students

Address Bullying and Harassment

Students who feel safe, supported, and included at school have better educational outcomes. LGBTQ+ students who have access to resources to support them at school have better school experiences and academic success.

Inclusive policies and practices like these can work to create more inclusive and safer schools for LGBTQ+ students:

- GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES/GENDER AND SEXUALITY ALLIANCES (GSAs) are one such resource. These extracurricular clubs create safe, welcoming, and supportive environments for all students regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Among GSAs, reported benefits:
    - LGBTQ+ students were less likely to hear homophobic remarks or other negative remarks about gender expression or transgender people
- There was increased awareness, support, and acceptance among school staff and student peers for LGBTQ+ people
- LGBTQ+ students were less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe
- LGBTQ+ students felt a greater sense of belonging to their school community

Additionally, GSAs and their members are also involved in a range of activities where they can lead and educate school officials and their peers about education, safety, interpersonal support, leadership development, and other issues that matter to them. As of 2014, just 37% of high schools had

GSAs, 17% of middle schools, and 5% of elementary schools.

Wraparound supports are necessary to support and keep LGBTQ+ students safe while at school. Educators should make themselves aware of various school and community services. They also need to know how to connect with them when needed to support a student in crisis. Those services may include:

- In GSAs, LGBTQ+ students and their peer allies work together to promote social inclusion and a positive school climate for all students.
- Access to social services, legal counsel, and physical and mental health service providers experienced in serving LGBTQ+ youth
- Suicide hotline numbers
- Access to The Trevor Project, which provides crisis intervention and help with suicide prevention, mental health issues, homelessness/housing insecurity, HIV/AIDS diagnosis, and more.

Laws and Policies

Laws and policies can play a crucial role in making schools safe environments for LGBTQ+ students. Here are some ways in which laws and policies can help students:

- Anti-Discrimination Policies:
  - Laws and policies that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression help ensure LGBTQ+ students are protected in schools.
- Trans-Inclusive Policies:
  - Policies that recognize and affirm the gender identity of transgender and non-binary students can create a more inclusive environment for these students. These policies can include allowing students to use restrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity, use their preferred names and pronouns, and participate in sports teams and other activities that align with their gender identity.
- Safe Schools Legislation:
  - Safe schools legislation can fund and support programs and initiatives that promote inclusivity, diversity, and acceptance in schools. These programs can include staff training on issues affecting LGBTQ+ students, how to support them, and how to create safe spaces.
- Title IX Protections:

- Title IX is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. Schools should follow current federal requirements, applicable state law, and school or district policy.

Supporting Rationale and Research

American Psychological Association (2023). *Sexual orientation and gender identity*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved February 22, 2023, from https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/sexual-orientation

American Psychological Association (2023). *Understanding Transgender People, Gender Identity and Gender Expression*. Retrieved March 25, 2023. https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/transgender-people-gender-identity-gender-expression

GLSEN (n.d.). *Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network*. Retrieved February 25, 2023. https://www.glsen.org/

Marx, Robert A. (2016). "Gay-Straight Alliances Are Associated with Lower Levels of School-Based Victimization of LGBTQ+ Youth: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis." – The Journal of Youth Adolescence." *News.vanderbilt.edu/*, Vanderbilt Edu. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0501-7

Sawchuk, S. (2021). 'It's So Hard': As Trans Bans Spread, Experts Weigh How to Balance Fairness and Inclusion in High School Sports. The 74 Million. https://www.the74million.org/article/its-so-hard-as-trans-bans-spread-experts-weigh-how-to-balance-fairness-and-inclusion-in-high-school-sports/

Wichita State University. (n.d.). *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. Hierarchy of needs. Retrieved February 22, 2023. https://www.wichita.edu/services/mrc/OIR/Pedagogy/Theories/maslow.php#:~:text=Maslow's%20Hierarchy%20of%20Needs&text=From%20the%20bottom%20up%2C%20the,esteem%2C%20and%20self%2Dactualization

Resources

Creating Safe Spaces

Educator, Staff, and Administrator Advocacy Guide | Glisten

Human Rights Campaign

Inclusive Policy Recommendations - Glisten

LGBTQ Students Thanking their Educators

LGBTQ+ - Welcoming Schools

Public Policy Recommendations - Glisten

Resources for Grassroots and State-Level Advocacy on LGBTQ+ Issues

Responding to Questions - Welcoming Schools

Safe Schools Laws

Sample State Inclusive Curricular Standards

The Trevor Project

Transgender Exclusion in Sports

Universal Design All-Gender Restrooms

What Educators Should Know About LGBTQ+ Rights | NEA

Surveys

2021 National School Climate Survey

Terminology and Statistics

Glossary of Terms - Human Rights Campaign

NEA LGBTQ+ Terms (BL)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient in all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions

(200-400 word count)

Please answer the following contextual questions to help our assessor understand your current situation.
Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

1. What challenges have you faced in your learning culture in creating a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students in your school?
2. Have you received any training or support from your school administration on how to support LGBTQ+ students, and if so, what did that training entail?
3. In your experience, how have you developed a learning culture in your classroom?

Passing: Response provides specific examples from the educator's experience to justify the reason for choosing this micro-credential, which addresses the needs of both the teacher and the student. The educator includes a learning goal that describes what they hope to gain from earning this micro-credential.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following 3 artifacts as evidence of your learning. See the Rubric for the passing score.

Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.

Artifact 1: Research and Summary

Research policies and/or laws that protect LGBTQ+ students in your school, district, or state. Consider including anti-discrimination, bullying prevention, and transgender-inclusive policies.

Submit a summary of at least three and no more than ten policies or laws. You may use a table or another easy-to-read format.

For each policy or law, include:

- the source and a link;
- a brief overview of the policy or law; and
- notes explaining why the policy or law resonates with your learning in this micro-credential.

Your research should be accurate, up to date, and from reputable sources.

Artifact 2: Analyze Research (250-300 words)

Write a 2–3 paragraph analysis about the impact of the policies and/or laws you researched on LGBTQ+ students in your school, district, or state.

Your analysis may include:

- the effectiveness of policies in reducing discrimination;
- recommendations for improving academic outcomes;
- ways to promote inclusivity;
- gaps in policies or laws in your area; and
- internal or external factors that may make school spaces unsafe because of gaps in these policies or laws.
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Artifact 3: Action Plan
Based on your learning, create an action plan using a list, chart, or diagram.

Include:
- The key stakeholders that need to be involved to create safer schools for all learners
- What you will do to make the learning environment safe The information and resources you will share with others

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Research and Summary	Includes 3–10 policies or laws from reputable sources. For each, provides a source/link, brief overview, and notes explaining why it resonates with the educator's learning. Research is accurate and up-to-date.	Includes the required research but one or more required elements are incomplete, unclear, or missing for one or more policies or laws.	Does not include the required number of policies or laws, or multiple required elements are missing, making the research and summary incomplete.
Artifact 2: Analyze Research	Provides a 250–300 word, 2–3 paragraph analysis explaining the impact of the researched policies and/or laws on LGBTQ+ students in the educator's school, district, or state.	Provides an analysis of the researched policies and/or laws, but the explanation of their impact on LGBTQ+ students is incomplete or unclear, or the submission does not fully meet the stated format.	Provides little or no analysis of how the researched policies and/or laws impact LGBTQ+ students, or the response does not address the required analysis.
Artifact 3: Action Plan	Provides an action plan in a list, chart, or diagram that identifies (1) key stakeholders, (2) what the educator will do to make the learning environment safe	Provides an action plan that addresses two of the three required elements.	Provides an action plan that addresses fewer than two of the three required elements.

	for all students, and (3) information and resources the educator will share with others.		

Part 3 Reflection

(200-400 words)
For tips on writing a strong reflection, review the following resource:
How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?

Please do not include any information that could identify you to your reviewers.

1. What new information surprised you? What would you like to learn more about?
2. What advice would you offer others who are learning this material?
3. What learning was missing from this course?

Passing: Reflection provides evidence that this activity has positively impacted the educator's learning and interactions with colleagues on this topic.