

Position Statement on Supporting Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students and Educators

The U.S. Department of Education’s decision to stop investigating complaints regarding gender identity discrimination denies the basic human rights of youth, educators, and families.

Background:

Since 2014, transgender and gender non-conforming students and their families were able to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education when they faced discrimination by their school based on their gender identity—such as the lack of access to bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity.

Title IX, which the U.S. Department of Education is responsible for upholding, makes sex discrimination illegal. Most courts have ruled that transgender and gender non-conforming students are protected under this law. However, on February 12, 2018, the U.S. Department of Education confirmed that it is no longer investigating or responding to complaints from transgender students regarding Title IX (NPR).

The Educator Collaborative resists hate and discrimination of all kinds. We care for and support transgender and gender non-conforming students and educators.

As educators it is our fundamental responsibility to protect and serve each and every child and ensure their right to grow and learn in a culture free from fear, hate, and bias. We urge you to contact the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and your Congressional representatives to demand they do the same. Equally, we urge you to discuss with your local district administrators how your schools will support all students and colleagues.

We believe the U.S. Department of Education’s change in course leaves an already vulnerable population of children even more vulnerable.

In school, 85.7% of LGBTQ students have heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people and 40.5% heard them frequently or often (GLSEN, 2015). In one study, 30% of transgender youth report at least one suicide attempt and 42% report a history of self-injury (Peterson et. al., 2016). As educators, we are the caretakers of childhood and young adulthood, if we do not stand for every child, we are complicit in their pain and struggle.

We know students, families, colleagues, and communities flourish when schools support their transgender and gender non-conforming members.

For instance, in schools with an active “Gay Straight Alliance” program, students face lower levels of victimization, hear less negative remarks, and felt more connected to their school community (GLSEN, 2015). The time has come to decide, who will you be for children in this world? We urge you to join us in being the advocate, support & mentor that all children need—to be the voice when they feel silenced, to learn when they feel like sharing, to celebrate when they feel strong.

Resources

In the midst of policies that deem these lives as dispensable, we must advocate for our transgender and gender non-conforming students by engaging in ongoing research and action. Please use the resources listed below, as well as others you find, to develop inclusive, caring spaces for transgender and gender non-conforming students and educators. Additionally, we request you contact U.S. Government officials to demand policies are reinstated that protect our children and colleagues.

Why support transgender and gender non-conforming students?

- [Understanding the Trans Community](#) by the Human Rights Campaign
- [Separation and Stigma: Transgender Youth & School Facilities](#) by GLSEN
- [Post-Election Survey of Youth](#) by the Human Rights Campaign

How can I better understand the complexity of gender identity?

- [Understanding the Basics](#) by the Human Rights Campaign
- [Gender Terminology Chart](#) and the [Gender Terminology: Discussion Guide](#) by GLSEN

What can our school do to create a more inclusive environment?

- [Developing a Gender-Inclusive School](#) by Welcoming Schools
- [Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools](#) by The Gender Spectrum
- [Working with Transgender Students of Color](#) by GLSEN
- [Apoyo y atención para niños\(as\) transgénero](#) by Welcoming Schools

Where can I find books to include in our classrooms and teaching?

- [Gender-Expansive and Transgender Children: Books for Students](#) by Welcoming Schools
- [Picture Book List](#) by The Journey Project
- [Transgender YA Booklist](#) from gayYA.org

CONTACT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

- **U.S. DOE Office of Civil Rights:**
 - Telephone: 800-421-3481
 - Email: OCR@ed.gov
 - FAX: 202-453-6012
- **Congress**
 - Congressional Switchboard (use your zip code): (202) 224-3121
 - "Resist Bot" (send faxes via text messaging) text "Resist" to 50409

References

Corey, T. & Kamenetz, A. (2018, February 12). The Education Department Says It Won't Act on Transgender Student Bathroom Access. NPR Ed. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/02/12/585181704/the-education-department-says-it-wont-act-on-transgender-student-bathroom-access>

Dooley, E. (2016, May 13). Obama to public schools: Allow transgender students access to bathrooms. ABC News. Retrieved from: <http://abcnews.go.com/US/obama-administration-public-schools-transgender-students-access-bathrooms/story?id=39081956>

GLSEN (2015). National school climate survey: LGBTQ students experience pervasive harassment and discrimination, but school-based supports can make a difference. Retrieved from: <https://www.glsen.org/article/2015-national-school-climate-survey>

Peterson, C.M., Matthews, A., Cops-Smith, & Conrad, L. (2016). Suicidality, self-harm, and body dissatisfaction in transgender adolescents and emerging adults with gender dysphoria. *The Official Journal of the American Association of Suicidology*, 47(4), 475-482.