OSSCC
Oregon Safe Schools & Communities Coalition

# 2017 ▪ SIXTH ANNUAL STATE OF SAFE SCHOOLS REPORT

## Sticks and Stones: Persistent Unsafe Conditions for LGBT Youth in Oregon Schools


**Abstract:**

Thanks to a decade of national research, educators and youth advocates now know that **inclusive anti-bullying policies, inclusive curriculum, and student community building organizations like gay-straight alliances (GSA's)**[i] improve school climate, reduce bullying, and reduce risk of suicide attempts in **sexual orientation and gender identity minority (SOGI) youth**[ii].

The Oregon Safe Schools and Community Coalition (OSSCC) *2017 State of Safe Schools in Oregon* report analyzed results from the 2017 Oregon Healthy Teens (OHT) survey[iii] in relation to results from the US Center for Disease Control's (CDC) 2015 *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)*[iv] and the GLSEN's *2015 National School Climate Survey*[v]. The goal of the annual OSSCC report is to help Oregon educators, advocates and community leaders identify school safety, risks, and resiliency factors for SOGI minority youth.

This report indicates SOGI minority Oregon students are at a significantly high risk for **bullying, school-based violence, sexual assault, absences from school, and suicidal ideation**. Our analysis of the 2017 Oregon Healthy Teens survey is consistent with the national findings in each of these high-risk areas. Each of these national reports along with this new Oregon report, highlight that SOGI minority (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) youth continue to experience pervasive verbal, physical, psychological, and sexual violence at more than **double the rate of their peers**. The 2017 Annual Safe Schools Report alerts Oregon educators to this crisis in school safety and adolescent wellbeing for our youth and maps a way forward for advocates and educators.


### Key Findings for the 2017 Safe Schools Report

**Positive Youth Development (PYD)**

Positive youth development is on the decline for all Oregon youth, with only one half of all Oregon youth showing the indicators for PYD in 2017.

Current Positive youth development is further reduced among the population of sexual orientation and gender identity minority youth. Less than one third of LGBT youth show PYD.

**Bullying, intimidation, harassment, and threats of violence**

- LGBT youth were twice as likely to experience bullying and harassment at school.
- LGBT youth were twice as likely to have been threatened with a weapon.

**Fear-based absences and chronic absences**

- LGBT youth were three times as likely to have stayed home from school because they were afraid for their safety at school.
- LGBT youth were chronically absent at higher rates than their peers during middle school.

**Suicidal ideation and suicide attempts**

- One half of LGBT youth expressed they considered suicide during 2017.
- One quarter of LGBT youth expressed they attempted suicide during 2017.

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

- LGBT youth were two to three times as likely as their peers to report having been sexually assaulted.
- LGBT youth were two times as likely as their peers to report having been coerced into sex.

**Key Recommendations**

- Trained and supportive educators
- Trauma-informed classrooms
- Inclusive curriculum across content areas
- Supportive student affinity clubs like Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)
- Enumerated Anti-Bullying Policies (those that identify areas of pervasive bias)

## 2017 Data for the Safe Schools Report

In 1991, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) began conducting school-based health surveys of Oregon youth with the goal of reducing and preventing health risks for Oregon youth. The OHT survey is administered every two years to eighth and eleventh graders across the state. This age split allows consideration of both middle and high school student experiences and environments across Oregon.

The data used for this 2017 Oregon Safe Schools report was taken from the 2017 OHT survey results from 600 schools and 27,000 students in Oregon. The OHT survey results were compared to national statistics collected by the Center for Disease Control in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey 2015. (Results from the 2017 YRBSS is not yet available.)

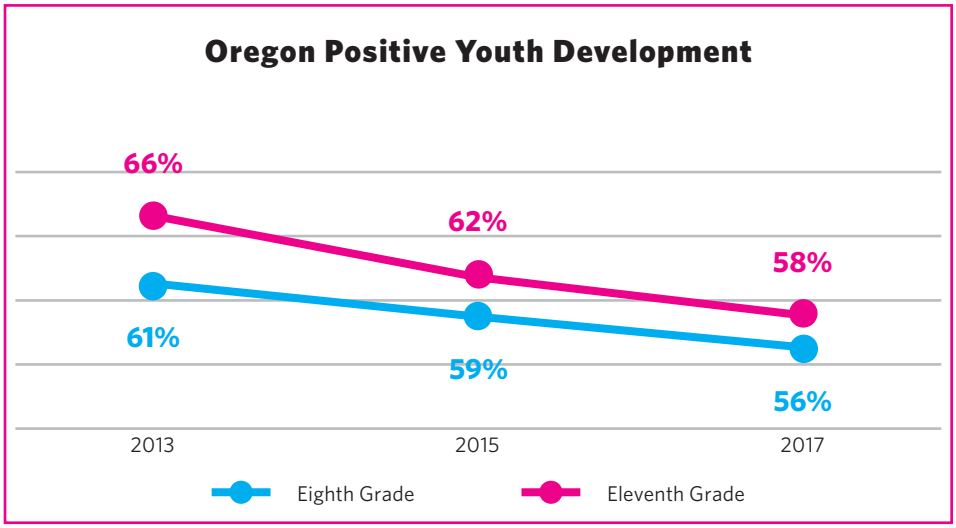
The Oregon report focused on questions related to **positive youth development, targeted bullying, being threatened with a weapon, sexual aggression, student fears, student absences, and suicidal ideation.** There is a body of research related to these key areas of school and community impacts indicating that sexual orientation and gender identity minority youth experience disproportional school-based harassment and targeted violence. As a result, they have lower rates of school attendance and higher mental health risks.

### The 2017 School Climate Context: Turbulent Times and Youth Development

2017 was a transformative year for our society. The national discourse of the two major political parties remained amplified throughout the year following the 2016 presidential election and the transference of governing power from one governing ideology to the other. The inauguration of a new president promised a national shift in the discourse from the past 8 years of the previous administration.

This transformation came on the heels of a very divisive 2016 election year. Throughout 2017 polarizing beliefs about the rights of majority and minority populations continued to perpetuate the legislative cycles as well as mainstream news. Debates ranging from revoking transgender civil rights to establishing religious exclusion laws have been occurring at the federal and state level over the course of the year.

Public attacks on civil rights occurred for many minority groups throughout 2017 and resulted in a resurgence of open threats to minority groups. During this same year, there have been consistent social and political responses to this marginalization. Online and in-person minority advocacy and resistance movements continued to increase visibility throughout the year, advocating against transgender exclusion, sexual violence, racial marginalization, and immigrant rights.




### Oregon Positive Youth Development from 2013-2017

When considering the national trends in education, it is important to look at student resilience and well-being as well as to highlight where there are negative impacts on Oregon youth development. We therefore first explored outcomes related to positive youth development in Oregon. According to the Oregon Public Health Division,

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

In examining the results from the past three cycles of the OHT survey data, it is clear that the healthy development of Oregon youth is on a gradual decline at this time for both middle and high school students.

### Positive Youth Development

Approximately 6 of every 10 straight and cisgender identifying 8th grade Oregonians had a strong PYD indicator in 2017.

Only 3 of every 10 lesbian, gay, or bisexual youth and 2 of every 10 transgender and gender non-conforming youth had a strong PYD indicator in 2017.

Among eighth and eleventh graders who self-identify as SOGI minorities, the population who have positive youth development indicators is severely low. While just over half the general population are bolstered by the PYD indicators, fewer than one third of SOGI youth have the physical, mental and emotional health status, and protective individual and environmental factors we know are necessary for developing healthy children.

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

### Bullying, intimidation, harassment, and threats of violence in 2017

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

1. **During the past 30 days, have you ever been bullied at school in relation to any of the following issues? This includes in person and cyber bullying. (race, gender, sexual orientation, body shaming)**
2. **During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened you with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property (at least one day)?**

### Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

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

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

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

**Sexual Orientation**

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

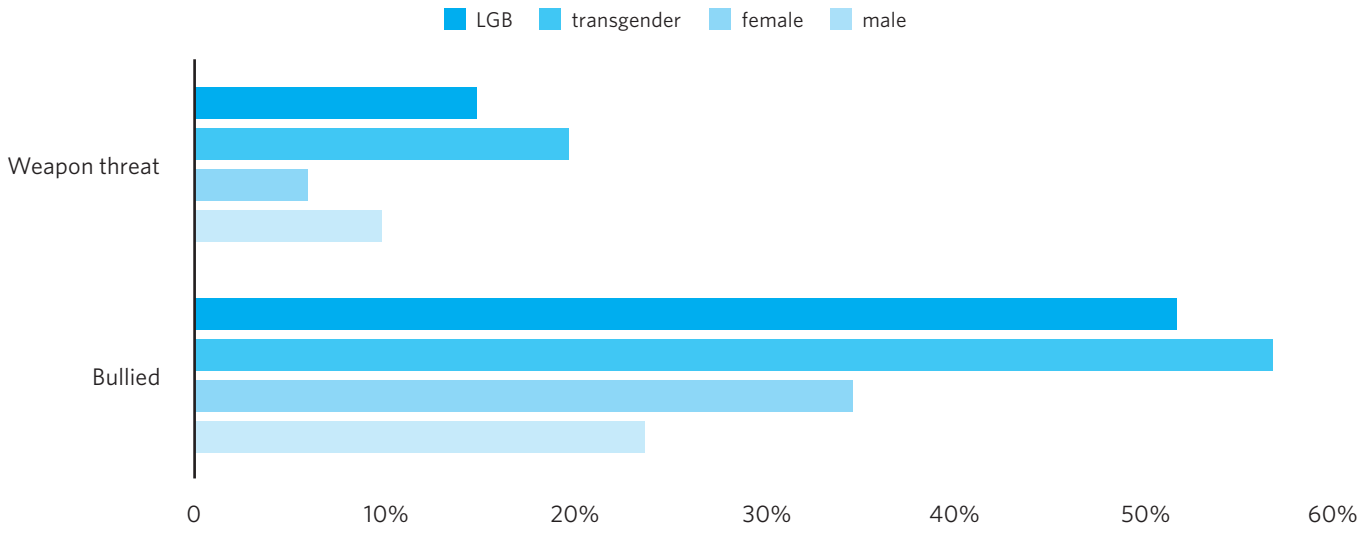
**Gender Identity**

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

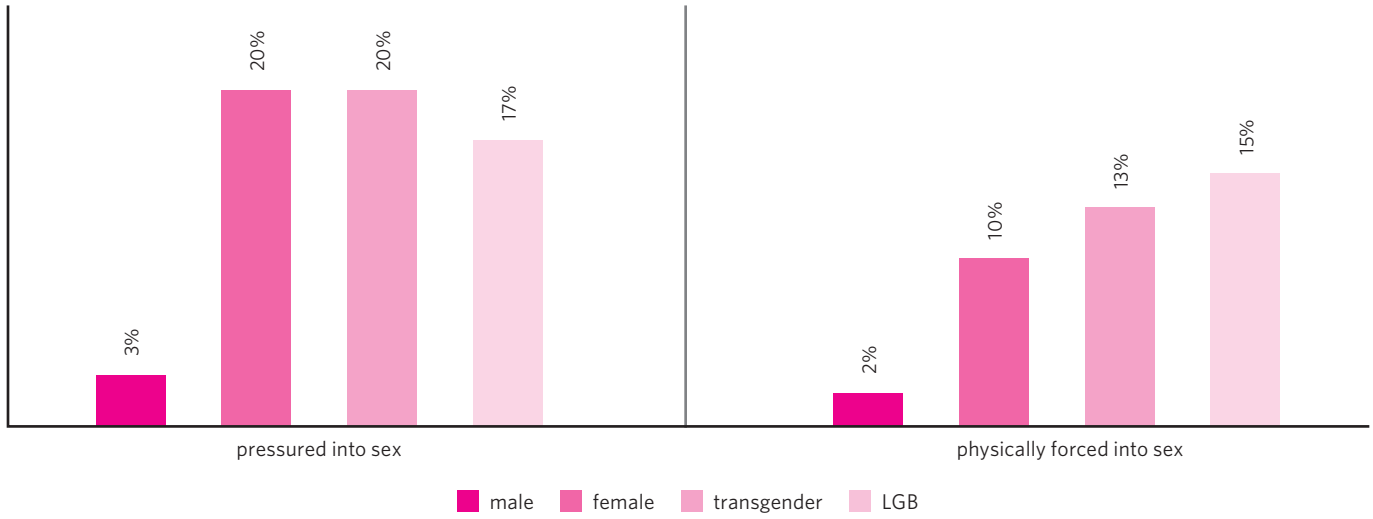
For the 2017 Annual Report, we use the above specific sexual orientation and gender identity categories which students selected in the OHA Oregon Healthy Teens survey. While there are many other terms in common use within our society for these identity categories, the above terms were consistently used by eighth and eleventh grade students when responding to this survey of Oregon teen wellbeing.

Oregon is one of 19 states in the US which requires school districts to have enumerated anti-bullying policies, procedures, and trainings in place. An enumerated anti-bullying policy refers to any specific listing of traits or

**Middle School Students Reporting Any Form of Identity Based Bullying and Threats 2017**



## Eleventh grade Students Reporting Sexual Coercion or Sexual Assault 2017




characteristics of students that have been found to be a more frequent basis for bullying. These two questions help us to look at how both a culture of hostility and an educational setting where students are threatened with weapons may be impacting the lives of LGBT youth.

SOGI minority youth experienced a much greater risk of both bullying and weapons exposure than their peers during 2017. At the middle school level, SOGI minority youth were doubly impacted by both bullying and weapon threats at school. The disproportional impacts of bullying and violence are consistent with both the CDC and the GLSEN national findings on LGBT youth experiences in school.

It is clear that an enumerated anti-bullying policy is not sufficient to address the pervasive hostile climate toward these differences among children. At the high school level 35% of transgender and gender non-conforming youth experience bullying and 41% of sexual minority youth report identity-based bullying. Taking into consideration the OHT high school data set is from eleventh grade, we need to also recognize a significant portion of youth are no longer in school (Oregon has a 25% high school dropout/pushout rate).

### PUSH OUT: Fear-based absences and chronic absences

In considering the impacts of pervasive hostility and threats of violence, we look at the decisions students make to attend school or to

**3X**
**more fear based absenses**

### What makes Oregon schools unsafe in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity?

**Targeted Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying**
ORS 339.51: Oregon Safe Schools Act
**Harassment, intimidation or bullying** means any act that:

- Substantially interferes with a student's educational benefits, opportunities or performance;
- Takes place on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation or at any official school bus stop;
- Has the effect of:
  - Physically harming a student or damaging a student's property;
  - Knowingly placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm to the student or damage to the student's property; or
  - Creating a hostile educational environment, including interfering with the psychological well-being of a student; and
  - May be based on, but not be limited to, the protected class status of a person.

**Protected class** means a group of persons distinguished, or perceived to be distinguished, by race, color, religion, **sex (gender identity), sexual orientation**, national origin, marital status, familial status, source of income or disability. [2001 c.617 §2; 2007 c.647 §1; 2009 c.249 §1]

stay home from school. In the eighth and eleventh grade, LGBT youth were two to three times more likely than their peers to report staying home from school at least one time in the last 30 days because they felt unsafe.

In addition, both students who identify as gender non-conforming or transgender and students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual have a higher rate of chronic absences. Among these LGBT student groups, 2 of every 10 students reported that they have missed more than 16 days of school during the past school year. In the 2016 GLSEN report, Educational Exclusion, the authors note that LGBT youth experience peer hostility, disproportional discipline, structural barriers, and discriminatory practices throughout high school[vi].

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

Only eleventh grade students were asked to report on their experiences with intimate violence and responding to pressures to engage in sexual activity. Given the disproportional peer violence LGBT students experience at school, we wanted to know if they were also subject to disproportional intimate violence.

When asked, "have you ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?" LGBT youth were two to three times as likely as their peers to report having been forced into sex.

In addition, 2 of every 10 LGBT youth in the eleventh-grade report having been coerced into sex. The LGB findings are consistent with the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2015) which found:

- 23% of LGB students who had dated or gone out with someone during the 12 months before the survey had experienced sexual dating violence in the prior year.
- 18% of LGB students had experienced physical dating violence
- 18% of LGB students had been forced to have sexual intercourse at some point in their lives.

It must be said that across gender far too many students are experiencing unwanted pressure to have sex and far too many students are experiencing sexual assault. Not only are LGBT youth disproportionally the targets of unwanted sex or sexual assault, female students also report having been pressured into sex or assaulted at an alarming rate by the eleventh grade.

While intimate partner violence is not typically a school-based event, it is similar to cyber bullying in that youth who experience intimate violence are most often victimized by their school peers. This in turn means they are forced into an education setting alongside the very person or people who have victimized or are victimizing them.

### Gender identity is not a feature of sexual orientation

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

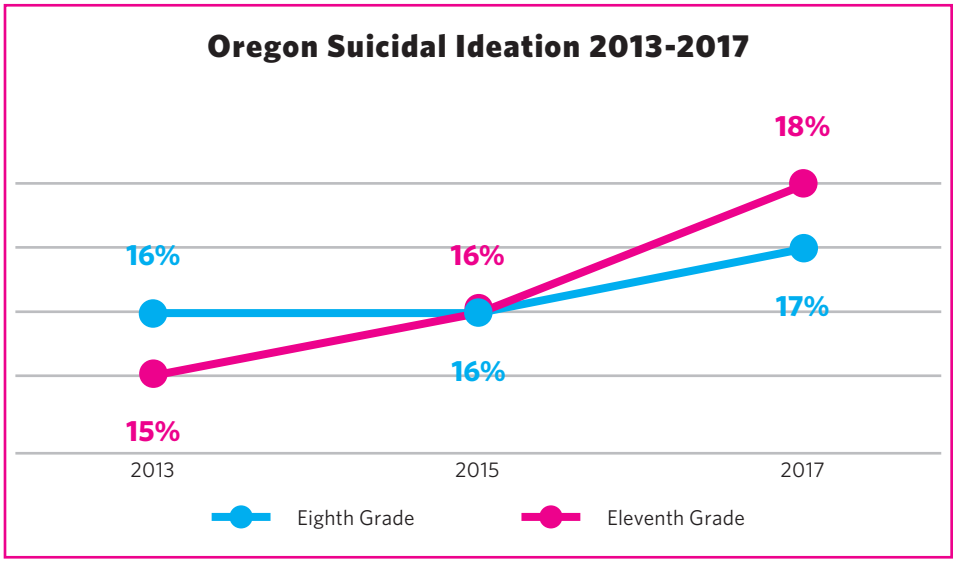
We report on both of these identity categories together for three reasons.

1. The forms of harassment related to transgender and gender non-conforming youth are often homophobic/anti-gay harassment. This happens because people commonly mistakes gender identity or gender expression for sexual orientation and thereby use anti-gay harassment tactics.
2. The forms of harassment directed at gay, lesbian, and bisexual (LGB) youth are often different types of gender harassment. This happens because sexual orientation is often associated with being inadequate at normative gender expression which results in gendered slurs and harassment.
3. Finally, we cluster sexual orientation and gender identity results because the impacts and outcomes of gender identity and sexual orientation hostility in Oregon schools result in similar negative impacts for children who fall into either minority group.

### MENTAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH: Suicidal ideation and suicide attempts

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

The Oregon 2017 Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan annual report noted that suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10-24 year old Oregonians.



When you take into account gender-identity bullying and marginalization as it relates to mental health and wellbeing, the suicide outcomes are considerably worse for our LGBT youth[vii]. Almost half of those students who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming expressed having seriously considered suicide in 2017.

And in response to the follow up question, over one quarter of LGBT youth stated that they had actually attempted suicide in the past year.

Transgender and non-conforming students' responses:

**Grade 8:**
ideation 47% | attempted 29%
**Grade 11:**
ideation 42% | attempted 17%

In looking at the impacts of pervasive anti-gay social hostility there is an increase in suicidal ideation and attempts by sexual minority youth as well. Among sexual orientation minority youth nearly half of all eighth and eleventh graders seriously considered suicide in 2017.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual students' responses:

**Grade 8:**
ideation 46% | attempted 25%
**Grade 11:**
ideation 47% | attempted 19%

This alarming jump in suicidal ideation from 18% for Oregon eleventh graders to 47% among LGBT youth is consistent with national statistics on the increased vulnerability of these students. The CDC found that 40% of high school students who identify as a sexual minority* have seriously considered suicide (2015).

** The CDC did not include transgender or gender non-conforming identity in the 2015 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey.*

## Non-school-related concerns for LGBT youth

In 2017, the Oregon Youth Development Council released a policy brief on LGBT youth in Oregon. In that policy brief, they highlight that Oregon LGBT youth experience higher rates of abuse from biological and foster families; higher rates of physical, psychological, and emotional abuse; higher rates of victimization of violent crimes; and higher rates of homelessness.

It would appear that schools are not only fostering a climate that is hostile to LGBT youth, but are in fact transmitting and perpetuating a homophobic and transphobic culture for Oregon youth.

While that policy brief provides recommendations for an array of social systems, this report maintains a central focus on what can be done to make Oregon schools among the safest and most inclusive in the nation.

## Recommendations for committing to creating safe and inclusive schools

2017 was a difficult year for all Oregon youth. The decrease in positive youth development and the increase in suicidal ideation are a call to action to educators and child advocates across the state. We must deeply consider the culture and climate of our schools and the preparation of school staff to adequately support the wellbeing of youth.

With harassment and bullying policies in place to address identity-based bullying, it is now time for schools to become affirming and sustaining places for all of our youth.

The following school-related resources and deliberate supports in the research bring about improved school climate for all youth:

- Trained and Supportive Educators
- Trauma Informed Classrooms
- Inclusive Curriculum
- Supportive Affinity Groups like Gay-Straight Alliances
- Enumerated Anti-Bullying Policies (policies that identify areas of pervasive bias)

The remainder of this report will provide recommendations for these five deliberate educational practices that can increase school safety, improve the school climate, and lead to improved outcomes for Oregon youth.

## Trained and Supportive Educators

When Oregon youth were asked about supportive educators, LGBQ youth were less likely than their peers to be able to identify a teacher or adult in their life that really cared about them. Advocates for LGBTQ and other underserved youth have identified some critical professional development first steps toward becoming a **visible supportive educator** for vulnerable youth.

- *Develop your knowledge*
  Read about these issues and learn about LGBT youth. Take on this new learning just like you would with any other professional growth area in your teaching.
- *Teach*
  Include LGBT and other underrepresented stories, examples, and facts in your teaching.
- *Words matter*
  Speak respectfully about diversity and diverse communities on a regular basis.
- *Listen*
  Make space for students to speak and name their own experiences and needs.
- *Respond*
  When approached about conflict or bias listen to students' experiences and needs. Help them determine what will improve the situation and guide them in ways to reconcile or restore relationships. The work of becoming a supportive educator is ever evolving.

## Trauma Informed Classrooms

Trauma Informed Oregon provides resources on trauma informed practices and organizations across the state. Given the overall decline in positive youth development and increase in suicidal ideation it would benefit all students in Oregon to be in trauma-informed resiliency-building classrooms. A particularly useful resource for this work can be found online in a set of web resources entitled Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools to Improve Learning[viii].

## Inclusive Curricular Resources

Educators need to use **teaching as the core tool** for improving school climate and **reducing bias-based** bullying, harassment, and intimidation. Studies continue to confirm that cultural

knowledge and inclusive education are highly effective at reducing bias-based bullying and harassment. Inclusive curriculum resources can be found at the end of this report.

### Supportive Affinity Groups Including Gay-Straight Alliances

Unfortunately, Oregon school climate is greatly damaged by bias-based bullying, harassment, and intimidation. The need for supportive affinity groups is greater during these times for LGBTQ youth, religious minority youth, racial minority youth, and immigrant youth who have all been targeted in the most recent cultural and political divide[ix].

For affinity groups and clubs to improve school climate they must be institutionally supported, resourced, and readily available to students. You can read much more about establishing and maintaining GSAs at the GLSEN website: GLSEN.org.

### Enumerated anti-bullying policies

Oregon is ahead of many other states in addressing identity-based bullying through the Safe Schools Act. Oregon districts are required to have enumerated anti-bullying policies. However, the 2017 data make clear that Oregon students still regularly engage in bias language, harassment, and bullying regarding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity.

It is clear that next steps are necessary to educate and enforce these anti-bullying policies. This is why in 2012 the statue was expanded to require professional training and oversight of a district's anti-bullying policy.

Find out what is happening in your district. How does professional training take place? How are bullying and harassment incidents reported? How are they recorded? And what is the follow-up for students on all sides of the scenario?

### Conclusion to the Safe Schools Report for 2017

Oregon has come a long way in our commitment to have safe and inclusive schools for all youth. And we still have a long way to go. Laws and policies are lifeless on paper until you decide to put them into action. Now is the time to learn and lead in making schools safer for our youth.

It is time to make your own Safe Schools Action Plan

- **What steps will your district take to improve the climate for LGBT and other minority youth?**
- **What steps will your school community take to improve the climate and reduce bias-based bullying and harassment in your school?**
- **What steps will you take to become a supportive and inclusive educator or advocate?**

**Julie Heffernan, PhD.**
Co-Chair, Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition
Graduate Director of Curriculum and Teaching
University of Oregon
Co-Director, UOTeachOUT

**Tina Gutierez-Schmich, PhD.**
Equity Director
Bethel School District
Co-Director, UOTeachOUT

### Inclusive curriculum and additional resources can be found at:

**Faireducationact.com**
Curriculum from a California public education project

**Genderspectrum.org**
An education non-profit to support gender inclusive environments

**GLSEN.org**
An education non-profit to support LGBTQ education issues

**GSAnetwork.org**
Provides support for GSAs

**Rethinkingschools.org**
Both a magazine and publications addressing these topics

**Teachingforchange.org**
A social justice oriented 501c-3 for educating teachers

**Tolerance.org**
Curriculum as a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center

**Welcomingschools.org**
A project of the HRC Foundation

---

[i] Sadowski M. *Safe Is Not Enough: Better Schools for LGBTQ Students.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016.
[ii] Throughout this report, we will use multiple sets of terminologies to identify this population of students. The sets of terminologies include SOGI minority youth, LGB youth, and LGBT youth. We do so because each study we utilize uses different terminology depending upon the choices youth were offered for self-identification in each study.
[iii] The OHT Survey is an anonymous and voluntary survey sponsored by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). In 2017 26,747 students in grades 8 and 11 participated in OHT survey.
[iv] Kann L, Olsen EO, McManus T, et al. Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9–12 — United States and Selected Sites, 2015. MMWR Surveill Summ 2016;65(No. SS-9):1-202.
[v] Kosciw, J.G., Greytak, E.A., Palmer N.A., & Boesen, M.J. (2015). The 2015 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools. New York, N.Y.: GLSEN.
[vi] GLSEN (2016). Educational exclusion: Drop out, push out, and school-to-prison pipeline among LGBTQ youth. New York: GLSEN.
[vii] Ybarra, M.L., Mitchell, K.J., Kosciw, J.G. et al. Understanding Linkages Between Bullying and Suicidal Ideation in a National Sample of LGB and Heterosexual Youth in the United States Prev Sci (2015) 16: 451.
[viii] Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools to Improve Learning, (2018) Retrieved from: https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma
[ix] Poteat, V. P., Sinclair, K. O., DiGiovanni, C. D., Koenig, B. W. and Russell, S. T. (2013), Gay–Straight Alliances Are Associated With Student Health: A Multischool Comparison of LGBTQ and Heterosexual Youth. J Res Adolesc, 23: 319–330.

# Oregon's Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Making Schools Safer with New Health Education Standards

Education is one of the most effective prevention tools we have in our toolbox to stop violence. With Oregon's new Health Education Standards, the state is working towards ensuring that schools are healthy, safe, and violence-free for all students. By the Fall of 2018, all school districts in Oregon will be required to implement comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) instruction, every year from kindergarten through grade 12, that is aligned with these new standards—strengthening support for student safety, health and academic achievement.

As mandated by Oregon's Human Sexuality Law (ORS 336.455, 2009), the Healthy Teen Relationship Act (ORS 339.366, 2013), and Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Law (ORS 336.059, 2015), CSE curricula include many components that work to keep students safe from sexual violence and bullying. These standards ensure that CSE teaches students positive attitudes and behaviors related to healthy relationships and sexuality by using medically accurate, age-appropriate, and culturally-inclusive materials, language, and strategies. Additionally, the law requires that instruction recognizes the diversity of sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expression, as well as focuses on affirmative consent.

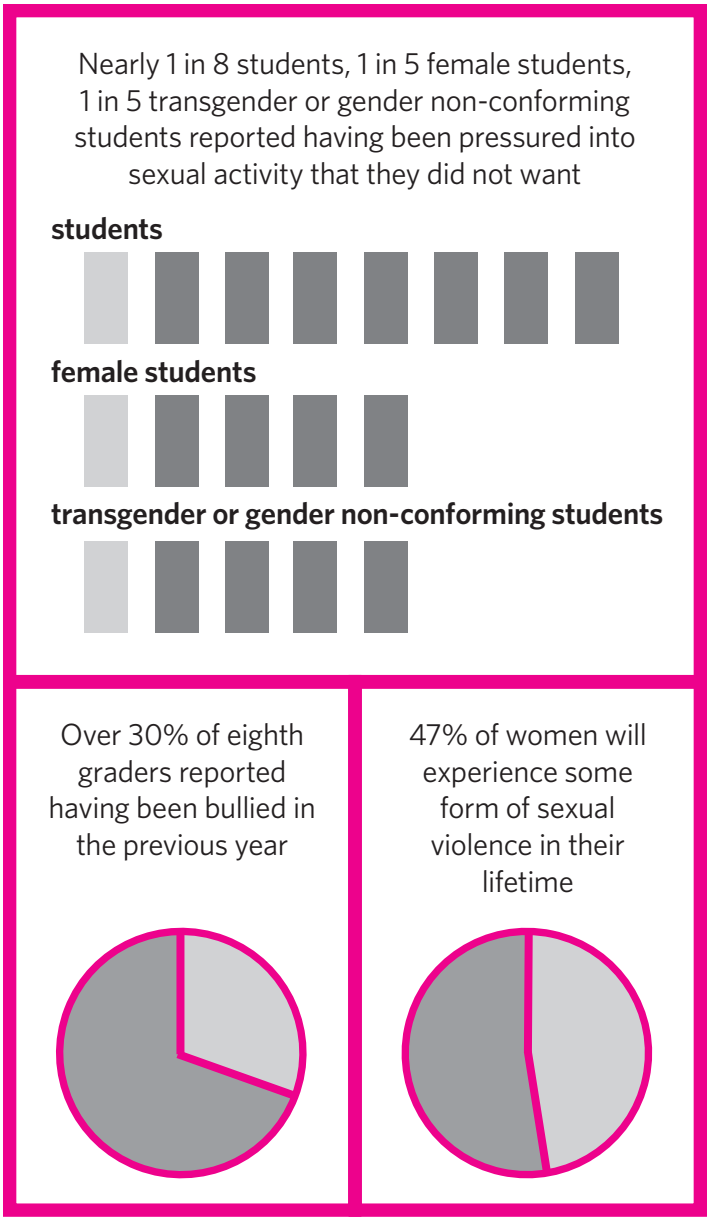
Too often, students in Oregon face bullying and relationship violence that leads to mental, emotional, and physical health burdens, as well as negative impacts on academic success. According to the 2017 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, over 30% of 8th graders reported having been bullied in the previous year.

Oregonians also experience some of the highest rates of sexual violence in the country: almost half of all women (47%), and one out of every six men (16%) in Oregon will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime; and one out of every four women (26%) in Oregon will experience rape[x]. Additionally, in 2017, nearly one in eight students, one in five female students, and one in five transgender or non-conforming students reported having been pressured into sexual activity that they did not want[xi].

Nationally, over ten percent of all teens experience dating violence in a given year[xii]. Two-thirds of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students reported feeling unsafe and nearly one-third skipped at least one day of school because of concerns about their personal safety. LGBTQ students who reported frequent harassment also suffered from lower grade point averages[xiii].

According to research done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), CSE works to stop violence by teaching healthy, safe dating and intimate relationship skills, healthy sexuality, social-emotional learning, affirmative consent, and bystander approaches[xiv]. Reflecting this latest research, Oregon's new Health Standards include requirements for teaching students assertive communication skills and how to take action if they or someone they know experiences violence, harassment, discrimination, or feels unsafe.

It is important to acknowledge the influence of schools in creating the social and physical environment that improves safety, social connections, and awareness of violence and bullying. Building communities that are caring and responsive to the needs of all students is essential to ensuring that all students are nurtured, safe, and engaged in school.




**Sasha Grenier, MPH, CHES**
Sexual Health Education and School Health Specialist
Oregon Department of Education,
Office of Student Services

[x] (Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017)
[xi] Oregon Healthy Teens Survey, 2017
[xii] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance – United States, 2009. MMWR 2010; 59 (No.SS-5)
[xiii] Kosciw, J.G. et al. The 2009 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN, 2010).
[xiv] (Niolon, P. H., Kearns, M., Dills, J., Rambo, K., Irving, S., Armstead, T., & Gilbert, L. (2017). Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan: A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.)

# Oregon Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Gender

Oregon's Health Education Standards are designed to promote healthy, safe, violence-free communities for all people. This includes promoting concepts and fostering skills for healthy individuals and healthy relationships in age-appropriate ways. By aligning the standards with best-practice and the unique policy infrastructure in Oregon (including OAR Rule 581-0221440, SB 856, and HB 4077) our state is working to address and end violence in our schools and communities.

| | K | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th | 5th | 6th | 7th | 8th | HS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Describe and practice ways to communicate respectfully with and about people of all gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Recognize and explain that there are many ways to express gender. | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | | |
| Recognize differences and similarities of how individuals identify regarding gender. | | | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Recognize the importance of treating others with respect including their gender expression. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | |
| Describe differences and similarities of how individuals identify regarding gender or sexual orientation. | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| Describe the importance of treating others with respect including their gender expression and sexual orientation. | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| Describe how friends, family, media, society and culture influence how people think they should act on the basis of their gender. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| Discuss ways of expressing gender. | | | | | | ✓ | | | | |
| Describe and demonstrate ways to treat yourself and others with dignity and respect, with regard to gender, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Identify and describe sources of support such as parents or other trusted adults they can tell if they are being teased, harassed or bullied based on gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender expression. | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Identify resources, including people at home, school or in the community who can provide medically accurate information and/or support about healthy sexuality, including sexual orientation and gender identity. | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Explain the differences between biological sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression. | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Recognize diversity among people, including age, disability, national origin, race, ethnicity, color, marital status, biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Investigate external influences that have an impact on one's attitudes about gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Describe and access accurate information about healthy sexuality, including sexual orientation and gender identity. | | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Differentiate between biological sex, sexual orientation, sexual identity and sexual behavior, gender identity and gender expression. | | | | | | | | | | ✓ |
| Describe the intersections of varied identities, including gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, etc. | | | | | | | | | | ✓ |
| Analyze the influence of friends, family, media, society, and culture on the intersections of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and other identities. | | | | | | | | | | ✓ |

*Created and rights reserved by the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force. No part of this document can be reproduced, adapted, or redistributed without permission. For questions and permissions, please contact SATF.*

3625 River Rd N, Suite 275, Keizer, OR 97303-5985 I Phone: (503) 990-6541
I Email: taskforce@oregonsatf.org I Web: www.oregonsatf.org

Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force. *(Printed with permission, December 2017)*

# Steps to a Safer School

Hopefully you are an advocate of safe schools and are reading this report to learn what is being done to improve school climate so all students feel safe. Here are steps for you to take to help your school become a safer place. If you are a parent, teacher, administrator, student, or community person, you can help increase a nurturing atmosphere in your local school.

1. Look up your District's policies on harassment and bullying. How easy is this to find? Best practice is to be able to find these policies with one or two clicks on the District website. If it takes more than that, talk to the District Office about making this revision.
2. Look up your District's procedure for making a complaint about bullying or harassment. Once again, best practice is to have the complaint procedure quickly available. If not, talk to the District Office about making a revision.
3. Interview teachers in your school. Do they know the procedure for making a complaint about harassment or bullying? Best practice is that all teachers know this procedure so they can advise students or parents when there is a complaint.
4. Interview principals in your district to see if they know the procedure for making a complaint about harassment or bullying. Best practice is that all principals know the complaint procedure.
5. Ask parents if they know the procedure for making a complaint about harassment or bullying. Best practice is that parents know the complaint procedure.
6. Ask students, teachers and/or parents if they can name your district's Title IX coordinator and what the Title IX coordinator does. This is the person in your district who is responsible for making sure all students are treated fairly.
7. Encourage parents, teachers, and students to use the complaint procedure by filing a complaint.
8. If the district complaint process is unsatisfactory to the complainant, file a civil rights complaint using the process described in Karin Moscon's article below.

**Joy Wallace**
OSSCC Board Chair

# Trans Guidelines and Complaint Procedures

During this last year I was privileged to meet students and adults who are making a difference in Oregon schools by demanding that dignity and respect are given to every person. Thank you for the impact you are having during what can be considered difficult times. Many have asked if our Oregon Transgender Guidelines are still valid after federal documents were rescinded. The answer is YES. The *Guidance to School Districts: Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment for Transgender Students* are not dependent on the federal guidance, and are still in effect. In 2007, the Oregon Equality Act was passed, providing protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Discrimination is also prohibited in schools based on race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, age, disability, sex, or sexual orientation. Under Oregon law, gender identity is included in the definition of sexual orientation. Gender identity protection also encompasses any behavior that differs from what may be traditionally associated with the person's sex at birth. The law protects people who identify as transgender as well as people who do not fit into stereotypical gender roles.

Several people have also contacted our agency to understand how the complaint process works. Each school is required to have complaint procedures that are readily accessible to students, staff, and third parties. These should be easy to locate if you search for discrimination. Another place that they can be located will be in the School Board Policies. Most districts will have something similar to the following:

Notify the school, this can be through a trusted school employee, or by contacting the administrator. The school is required to investigate all complaints of discrimination based on sex or sexual orientation that they receive, and to prohibit retaliation. If the school-level process did not provide a safe environment, then there should be an appeal process available, usually at the district level. Nevertheless, what happens if the school/district does not respond according to the law?

Alternatively, what recourse is there if a person feels that the schools are discriminating against them? The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) can provide assistance in a couple of different ways. One option is to email or call ODE to receive technical assistance and ask for help to resolve the issue with the school or district in an informal way. A formal appeal process is also available. Appeals may be presented to the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), after exhausting local (Oregon school district) grievance procedures or 90 days from the date that you first notified them of the discrimination, whichever comes first. **Because there is a 90-day time period, it may be important for you to keep a record of the conversations, emails, or other communications you have had with the school and/or district.** Once ODE accepts the appeal, ODE can then conduct an impartial investigation of the school/district response to the complaint. The finding will be either (a) the evidence suggests that discrimination did not occur, or (b) the evidence suggests that discrimination may have occurred. If the finding is the second option, (b) then the complaining party and the district have 30 days to work to achieve reconciliation. If this is not possible, then at the end of this time, the case will go to an administrative hearing at ODE. Complaints can also be filed with the Teachers Standards and Practices Commission, or with the Office for Civil Rights Regional office in Seattle. If you have any questions about the process or options, please do not hesitate to contact us at ODE for assistance. Please know that you will be heard and taken seriously. Thank you for all that you contribute to a safe environment in our schools.

**Karin Moscon**
Civil Rights Education Specialist
karin.moscon@state.or.us



**2017 Safe Schools Award Winners.** Standing, from left: Jim Garcia, Janice Gonzalez and Jesus Narvaez, Lane Community College MEChA; Aryn Zanca, The Living Room; Anne Thom, West Village Magnet School; Jill Torres, Howard Elementary School. Kneeling: Manuel Mejia,University of Oregon MEChA; Sarah Cole, Hillsboro High School; Adriana Alvarez, UO MEChA. Not pictured: Brianna Stiller, 4J School District ESD; Brian Anderson, Cottage Grove High School.

## OSSCC Board Members

Daniel Adams
Kelly Austin
Brett Bigham
Ben Bowman
Julie Heffernan
Julie Houston
Minna Kim
Eric Overby
Lindsay Ray
Sally Stevens
Joy Wallace
Larry Williams

PO Box 80604
Portland, OR 97280
info@oregonsafeschools.org
www.oregonsafeschools.org

## 2017 Report Working Group

Julie Heffernan, *University of Oregon, Education Dept.,OSSCC Co-chair*
Tina Gutierez-Schmich, *Equity Director, Bethel School District*
Karin Moscon, *Title IX Coordinator, Oregon Dept. of Education*
Sasha Grenier, *Sexual Health Education and School Health Specialist, ODE*
Minna Kim, *Graphic Designer*
Joy Wallace, *OSSCC Co-chair*



**OSSCC Board Members.** Standing, from left: Julie Heffernan, Daniel Adams, Brett Bigham, Minna Kim, Lindsay Ray. Kneeling: Joy Wallace, Julie Houston, Kelly Austin.

## OSSCC Mission

The Mission of Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition (OSSCC) is to create schools and communities where every family can belong, every educator can teach, and every child can learn. OSSCC believes that all students deserve to feel safe and welcome in school and their communities. We seek to achieve this mission in three ways: 1. Education; 2. Data collection; and 3. Support services.

# A Brief History of This Report

Founded in 2003, the Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition is a 501c3 comprised of educators and advocates for Oregon public education. Our work supports community efforts to reduce school based violence and harassment as well as youth suicide and other adverse outcomes in the often hidden and historically underserved gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth population. Although the primary focus of OSSCC is sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, we recognize the harm caused by harassment, violence, and discrimination of any kind.

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

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

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

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

---

[xv] Russell and Joyner (2001). Adolescent Sexual Orientation and Suicide Risk: Evidence from a national study. American Journal of Public Health, 91(8).

[xvi] Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2011). The social environment and suicide attempts in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Pediatrics, 127*(5), 896-903.
Hatzenbuehler, M. L., & Keyes, K. M. (2013). Inclusive anti-bullying policies and reduced risk of suicide attempts in lesbian and gay youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 53*(1), S21-S26.
Hatzenbuehler, M.L., Hirsch, J., Parker, R., Nathanson, C., & Fairchild, A. (2014). The mental health consequences of anti-bullying policies. *Youth Suicide and Bullying: Challenges and Strategies for Prevention and Intervention*, 288.

[xvii] Oregon Department of Education, (2016) *Guidance to School Districts: Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment for Transgender Students.* Retrieved from: http://www.ode.state.or.us/policy/federal/civilrights/transgender-student-guidance-5-5-16.pdf

[xviii] U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education, *Joint Guidance to Help Schools Ensure Civil Rights*, (2016). Retrieved From: https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/us-departments-justice-and-education-release-joint-guidance-help-schools-ensure-civil-rights

## News

### Task Force Project

OSSCC is continuing the Task Force Project this year, has been back working with Lotus Rising in Ashland to help with a GSA Summit, and attended a meeting in Redmond of educators and non-profit advocates of LGBTQ+ students. We look forward to going to Klamath Falls and Eastern Oregon this summer to promote conversations about how to make local schools safe. Contact us if you live in Klamath Falls, LaGrande, Baker, or Enterprise if you want to be involved.

### Evaluation Project:

OSSCC is working with the evaluation team from Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) to design methods for collecting data and tracking the impact of our work. So far this relationship has been very beneficial. This project is funded by a Meyer Memorial Trust grant to OHSU.

### Workshop for GSA Advisors:

Lindsay Ray, OSSCC Board member, Beaverton teacher and GSA advisor, is organizing a day in May for Portland Metro Gay Straight Alliance advisors. GSA Advisors requested this event to support one another and get new ideas for making their GSAs more effective.

GSAs in schools are a beneficial way for all students to feel safer in school. Their presence goes beyond support for LGBTQ+ youth.