EQUALITY FLORIDA

INSTITUTE

Safe Schools
EQUALITY INDEX

Safe Schools Equality Index Advisory Group Members

North Florida:

Michelle Salzman, PTA President, Escambia County Public Schools

Kathleen Rodgers, Director of Equity and Assistant Superintendent, Leon County Public Schools

Cindy Watson, Executive Director, JASMYN LGBTQ Youth Organization, Duval County

Brooks Rumenik, Director of Safe Schools, Department of Education, Tallahassee

John Roberts, Program Director, Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, Tallahassee

South and South Central Florida:

Alvin Gainey, PTA President, Miami-Dade Schools

Jennifer Solomon, President, PFLAG Miami

Mickey Pope, Executive Director, Student Support Initiatives, Broward County Public Schools

Brad Koogler, Executive Director, Safe Schools South Florida, Miami and Broward

Patricia McCoy, Associate Superintendent, Okeechobee County Public Schools

Denise Sagerholm, District Attorney, Palm Beach Public Schools

Dr. Ashley Austin, Director, Center for Human Rights and Social Justice, Barry University, Miami

West Coast of Florida:

Karen Stelmacki, Executive Director, Exceptional Student Education and Student Services, Collier County Public Schools

Bob Dodig, District General Counsel, Lee County Public Schools

East Coast and Central Florida:

Heather Wilkie, E.D. Zebra Coalition

Billy Townsend, School Board Member, Polk County Public Schools

Christopher Cuevas, Executive Director, QLatinx, Central Florida

Gulf Coast Florida:

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Minerva Spanner-Morrow, Chief Diversity Officer, Hillsborough County Public Schools

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Stephen Koch, President, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa Bay and Gulf Region

Jane Goodwin, School Board Member, Sarasota County Public Schools

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Equality Florida:

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Introducing Equality Florida's "Safe Schools Equality Index"

What?

Equality Florida is proud to introduce a "Safe School Equality Index," a contemporary, essential and comprehensive tool designed to assist Florida's Department of Education, District Superintendents , School Board Members, PTA Leaders, District staff and partnering youth centered organizations to meet the rising needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-binary and questioning students in our K-12 schools.

As young people come out more often, younger and with more diversity, this Index serves as a critical navigating tool to ensure students are safe, stay in school and graduate successfully.

This index serves as a critical guidepost and contains a series of twenty-four carefully selected questions pertaining to gold star LGBTQ+ school-centered best practices. This Index serves as a tool to assist districts as they systematize and operationalize policies, programs, guidelines and practices for young people who identify as LGBTQ+.

This LGBTQ Statewide Equality Index was created after launching direct, collaborative and ongoing LGBTQ+ best practices work with almost every school district in Florida. It is the first tool in our nation where districts are working side by side with each other and with Equality Florida to ensure every single student who is LGBTQ learns, thrives, matriculates and graduates successful in K-12 schools.

Why?

According to the 2017 Center for Disease Control (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 15.7% of high school students in Florida identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or are unsure of their sexual orientation, with many individual districts finding higher percentages of LGB identifying students. Moreover, close to 4% of students in Broward County identify as transgender. Across the state these students outwardly identify negative situations that speak to the anti-LGBTQ+ culture common in many schools. As a result we have seen unprecedented findings that speak to the trauma and health concerns that disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ youth.

- 27.5% of LGB students in Florida were bullied on school property compared to 12% of their heterosexual peers.
- 22.8% of LGB students in Florida have attempted suicide compared to 4.7% of their heterosexual peers.
- 57.8% of LGB students felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities compared to 23.3% of their heterosexual peers.

Who?

The Safe Schools Equality Index was envisioned and designed by Equality Florida. Soon after draft form was developed in spring of 2018, twenty-seven leaders from across the sunshine state formed an Ad Hoc Advisory Group from the field of K-12 education, universities, parent teacher organization (PTA) leadership and child-centered nonprofits. These leaders met, shared feedback and collaborated in order to bring the "Safe Schools Equality Index" to you as you commence the 2018-19 school year.

How?

The Equality Florida "Safe Schools Equality Index" serves as a comprehensive guide outlining nationally recognized LGBTQ policies and best practices. It will serve as a roadmap for all of Florida's districts that are eager to improve programs, and will help to create urgency for districts that may be unaware of the needs of our LGBTQ students and the staggering at risk mental health and substance abuse challenges faced by students in our schools.

A key and hallmark goal of the Safe School Equality Index is the Index serves as an internal and collaborative district measurement tool that gives schools the ability to understand how to achieve success in targeted areas of need, both structurally and at school building levels for LGBTQ+ children.

It is with the intention that District leadership work side by side and in collaboration with culturally competent partners to ensure our LGBTQ+ youth learn, enjoy school, thrive and graduate on time and successfully.

Thank you

Together we will ensure the success and well-being of all students; thank you for your leadership and collaboration!

Safe Schools Equality Index

Anti-Bullying Policies

Has the district adopted a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, and bullying against students that specifically enumerates protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

(YES)

(NO)

Non-Discrimination Policies

Has the district adopted a policy prohibiting harassment and discrimination against students that specifically enumerates protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

(YES)

(NO)

Has the district adopted a policy prohibiting harassment and discrimination against faculty and staff that specifically enumerates protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

(YES)

(NO)

LGBTQ Visibility

Does the district support schools celebrating empowering holidays for LGBTQ youth? Examples include but are not limited to LGBTQ History Month, The National Day of Silence, National Youth HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, or similar events.

(YES)

(NO)

Does the district monitor and categorize reported incidents of bullying and harassment that is a result of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, while still maintaining a student's confidentiality?

(YES)

(NO)

Gay-Straight Alliances

Does the district allow students to form a gay-straight alliance ("GSA") or other similar clubs or organizations, at both the middle and high school level?

(YES)

(NO)

How many middle schools in your district have a GSA or other LGBTQ related club or organization?

0-25%

26-50%

51-75%

76-100%

How many high schools in your district have a GSA or other LGBTQ related club or organization?

0-25%

26-50%

51-75%

76-100%

Professional Development/District Climate

Has the district hired a LGBTQ Point Person at the district level or revised an existing position that ensures implementation of programs that promote safe, healthy, and inclusive schools for LGBTQ youth?

(YES)

(NO)

Does the district at large know there is a LGBTQ point person available to access when needed and has their contact information easily accessible?

(YES)

(NO)

Does the district provide standalone professional development for employees focused on addressing unique needs of LGBTQ students, with the training rooted in best practices, cultural competency, intersectionality and inclusion of LGBTQ students, families, and staff?

(YES)

(NO)

Administrators (Principals, Assistant Principals, District Staff Leadership)

(YES)

(NO)

Counselors/Psychologists/Social Workers/Nurses

(YES)

(NO)

Teachers

(YES)

(NO)

School Resource Officers (SROs)

(YES)

(NO)

Front Office Staff

(YES)

(NO)

Coaches

(YES)
(NO)

Bus Drivers and Cafeteria Staff

(YES)

(NO)

Does the district have a LGBTQ Critical Support and Procedures Guide that includes topics such as ensuring student confidentiality, how to address anti-LGBTQ language, and how to create an inclusive environment, to help faculty and staff understand how to address various LGBTQ issues with consistency?

(YES)

(NO)

Inclusive Curriculum/Materials

Has the district introduced an inclusive curriculum or literature that fairly represents diverse groups of individuals and families, including LGBTQ characters, authors, history, and/or stories?

(YES)

(NO)

Does the health curriculum include discussions of LGBTQ relationships, identities, and families?

(YES)

(NO)

Do all schools have access to "safe space" stickers and/or posters, for faculty members to place in their rooms or throughout the school?

(YES)

(NO)

Have faculty members who post "safe space" stickers received training pertaining to inclusive classrooms for LGBTQ students?

(YES)

(NO)

Do appropriate district personnel within the district connect LGBTQ youth to local and LGBTQ culturally competent mental health services, counseling, and support resources?

(YES)

(NO)

Transgender Students

Has the district created a process for changing a transgender student's name and gender pronoun for purposes of "unofficial" school records (e.g., posted attendance sheets, student IDs, PA announcements, graduation announcements, yearbook photos)?

(YES)

(NO)

Does the district having a "Transgender Support and Procedures Guide" that would include topics such as restroom access, pronoun usage, knowledge of official and unofficial documents and examining other gender-based rules and activities, to help faculty and staff understand how to address various transgender issues with consistency?

(YES)

(NO)

Does the district require faculty and staff to refer to transgender students according to the students' affirmed names and pronouns?

(YES)

(NO)

Does the district have a dress code/appearance policy that is gender neutral, therefore allowing students to wear attire that corresponds with the students' gender identity or gender expression? This applies to events like school dances, graduation attire, school photos and other school events?

(YES)

(NO)

Does every school in the district allow transgender students to use the restrooms requested by the student and that corresponds to their gender identity. Accommodations are often created on a case-by case basis.

(YES)

(NO)

Does every school in the district allow transgender students to use the locker room requested by the student and that corresponds to their gender identity. Accommodations are often created on a case-by case basis.

(YES)

(NO)

Gender Non-Binary Students

Has the district created a process for working with meeting the needs of gender non-binary students in each of the categories above?

(YES)

(NO)