

LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Education

Establishing school-based LGBTIQ+ inclusive student groups



Nobody should ever feel pressured to disclose their gender identity, sexuality or intersex characteristics.

This resource provides an introduction to LGBTIQ+ student groups, why they are important and how to establish them as part of a whole-school approach to creating inclusive and safe environments.

What are school-based LGBTIQ+ student groups?

These are similar to other non-curriculum student groups (for example, a chess club) however the aim of LGBTIQ+ student groups is to create safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ students through inclusion and recognition of diversity. These groups are open to all students, including those who may be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and/or queer. Allies (students who support LGBTIQ+ equality) can also join.

What are the benefits of LGBTIQ+ student groups?

Unfortunately, Australian school students who identify as LGBTIQ+ have an increased risk of experiencing discrimination, including verbal and physical abuse, and non-inclusive school environments. This places LGBTIQ+ student wellbeing at risk and can lead to disengagement with school. School-based LGBTIQ+ student groups can serve as an important protective factor for students, by:

Setting up LGBTIQ+ student groups

There are several steps involved in starting a school-based student group. School staff may identify a need for a group or students may initiate a request for one.

There may be processes that need to be followed to establish a non-curriculum group specific to your school context. Students wanting to establish a group should be supported through the required processes by a staff member.



Sharing LGBTIQ+ identity information is a personal choice.

Attending a LGBTIQ+ school-based group should never require students to disclose these details.

Establishing a group open to all students, including allies, can ensure LGBTIQ+ student identities aren't "outed".

Initial planning and steps

Identify support staff

- Staff to establish and co-facilitate the group could include teachers, school guidance officers, school nurses or teacher aides. Ensure any staff-student ratio requirements are met.

Follow school policies

- Check with your Principal and administration team for any relevant school policies, procedures or guidelines that already exist.
- Include processes that ensure the safety and confidentiality of students attending.

Consider specific logistics

- Identify and obtain any initial resources and space required.
- Ensure the space will be accessible for students of all abilities.

Develop structural guidelines

- Outline the main purpose of the group, the role that staff and students will play, and any requirements for student participation. These can be revised by members once meetings start.

Engage student participation

- Finalise your initial planning and obtain Principal approval before proceeding.
- Once you have Principal approval, set the first meeting date and advertise the time, date and location to students, along with some brief information about the group.

Events to support LGBTIQ+ inclusion

Being part of a student group can be empowering for LGBTIQ+ students and should provide opportunities to have fun socialising with peers in a supportive environment. There are many different activities LGBTIQ+ student groups can engage in to support LGBTIQ+ inclusivity, including organising and participating in events.

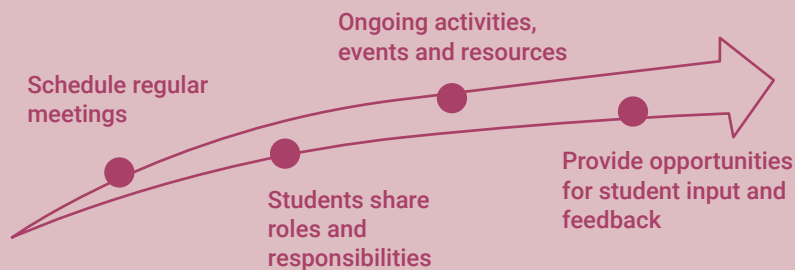
Some examples of events suitable for school contexts include International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), Wear It Purple Day and LGBTIQ+ history month. Celebrating these events also helps to promote inclusive school cultures.

For more information

Further details are available on True's free online course LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Education: Establishing Student Groups at www.true.org.au or please contact diversity@true.org.au.

Running LGBTIQ+ student groups

Once the LGBTIQ+ student group has been established, there are some simple strategies that can help make the group sustainable and an ongoing success with students:



References

- I Robinson, K.H., Bansel, P., Denson, N., Ovenden, G. & Davies, C. (2013). Growing Up Queer: Issues Facing Young Australians Who Are Gender Variant and Sexuality Diverse. Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, Melbourne.
- II Ullman, J. (2015). Free2Be?: Exploring the Schooling Experiences of Australia's Sexuality and Gender Diverse Secondary School Students. <https://doi.org/10.4225/35/5aa0636045a3a>
- III Fetner, T. & Elafras, A. (2015). The GSA Difference: LGBTQ and Ally Experiences in High Schools with and without Gay-Straight Alliances. *Social Sciences*, 4, 563-581.
- IV GLSEN. (2007). *Gay-Straight Alliances: Creating safer schools for LGBT students and their allies.* (GLSEN Research Brief). New York: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.