

Supporting LGBTQ+ Students in Schools

EDUC 201: Identity and Difference in Education

Week 12: November 11, 2025

Homework

- **For this week, be ready to discuss:**
 - English (2019)
 - GLSEN (2021)
 - Hess (2024)
- **For next week (Week 13) read:**
 - Martinez et al. (2018)
 - Flores (2016)



Photo of Dr. Cris Mayo

“LGBTQ students and communities need to be understood beyond the lens of victimization. LGBTQ communities are vibrant and resilient and have long histories of resisting homophobia and transphobia and also histories of doing much more than defensive work.”

- Cris Mayo (2022). *LGBTQ Youth and Education: Practices and Policies*. Teachers College Press.

Think-Pair-Share

Based on what we've learned in EDUC 201, what connections can we make to identity and schooling? Why would someone embrace this perspective?

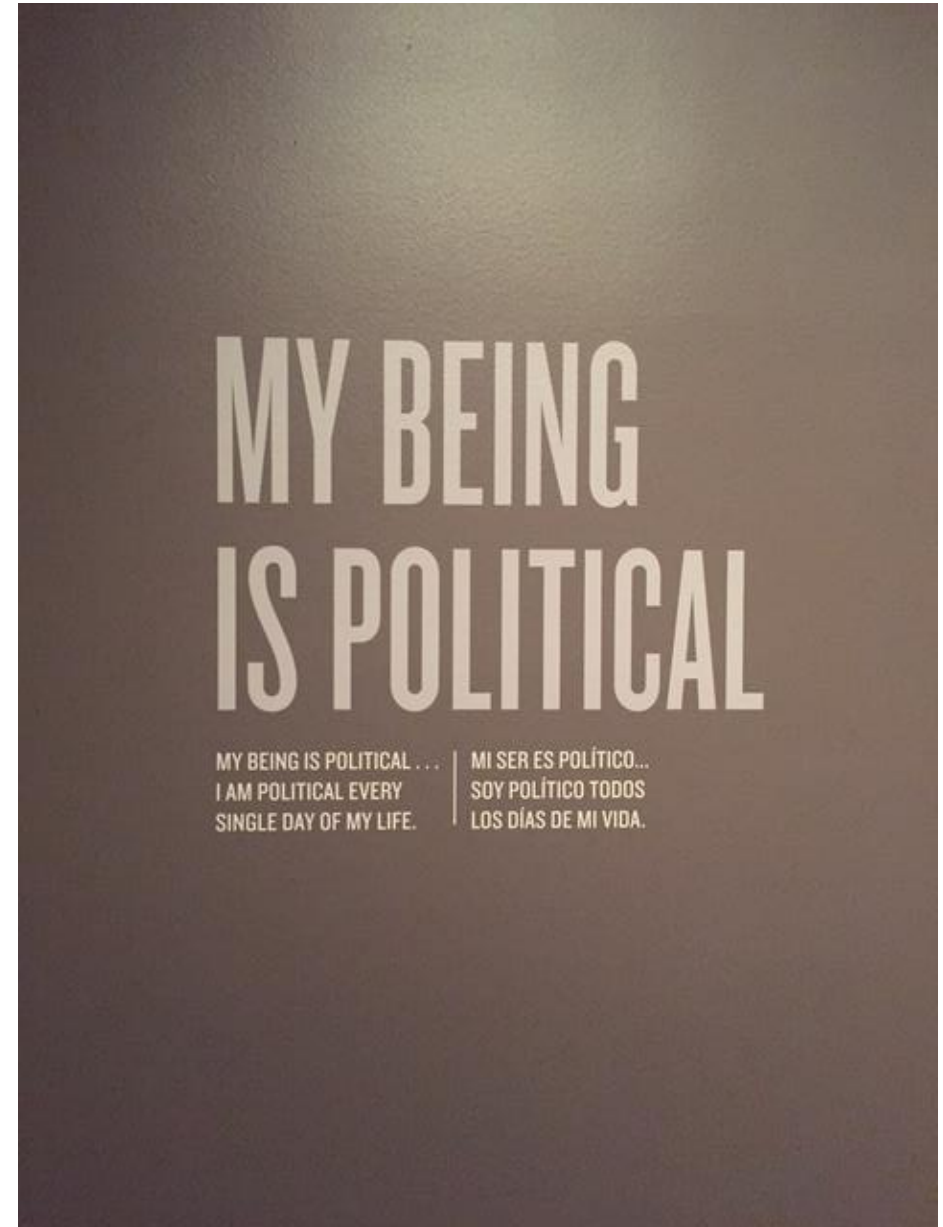


Photo from an Indigenous Art Installation at the Denver Art Museum

Understanding the Current Landscape

- According to the [*National Education Association*](#) LGBTQ+ students are more likely to face bullying and harassment.
- According to the [*Brookings Institute*](#), despite years of hard-fought advocacy, acceptance and support, rhetoric and policy landscape has shifted.
- According to the [*American Civil Liberties Union*](#), 2024 marked a record year for anti-LBGTQ+ legislation – 18 bills passed that curtailed students and/or educators rights.

From book bans to 'Don't Say Gay' bill, LGBTQ kids feel 'erased' in the classroom

Facing limiting legislation, book bans, harassment and more, gay and transgender youth say they are being “erased” from the U.S. education system.

Screenshot of *NBC News* headline

In states with laws targeting LGBTQ issues, school hate crimes quadrupled

By [Laura Meckler](#), [Hannah Natanson](#) and [John D. Harden](#)

March 12, 2024 at 7:00 a.m. EDT

Screenshot of *Washington Post* headline

LGBTQ+ Americans are under attack, Human Rights Campaign declares in state of emergency warning

[Politics](#) Jun 6, 2023 3:53 PM EST

Screenshot of *PBS News* headline

Illinois schools will teach LGBTQ+ history despite federal pushback



Carrie Shepherd

Screenshot of *AXIOS Chicago* headline

Florida's governor signs controversial law opponents dubbed 'Don't Say Gay'

UPDATED MARCH 28, 2022 · 2:33 PM ET ⓘ



Jaclyn Diaz

Screenshot of *NPR* headline

Palatine School District Approves Full Bathroom Rights For Transgender Students

NOVEMBER 15, 2019 · 10:00 AM ET

By [Susie An](#)

FROM **WBEZ**
CHICAGO

Screenshot of *WBEZ* headline

[Local News](#)

Deerfield School District 109 fight over transgender student locker room policy heats up school board meeting

By Jermont Terry

Updated on: April 10, 2025 / 10:39 PM CDT / CBS Chicago

Screenshot of *CBS2 Chicago* headline

Former Palatine transgender student settles discrimination lawsuit after denied unrestricted locker room access

Friday, February 14, 2020



Screenshot of *ABC 7 Chicago* headline

Federal complaints lodged against Chicago, Deerfield for accommodating trans students

A north suburban mom says her teenage daughter was forced to change in front of a transgender classmate. Advocates and the district say it isn't true.

By Michael Puente | Mar 18, 2025, 8:02pm CST

Screenshot of *WBEZ* headline

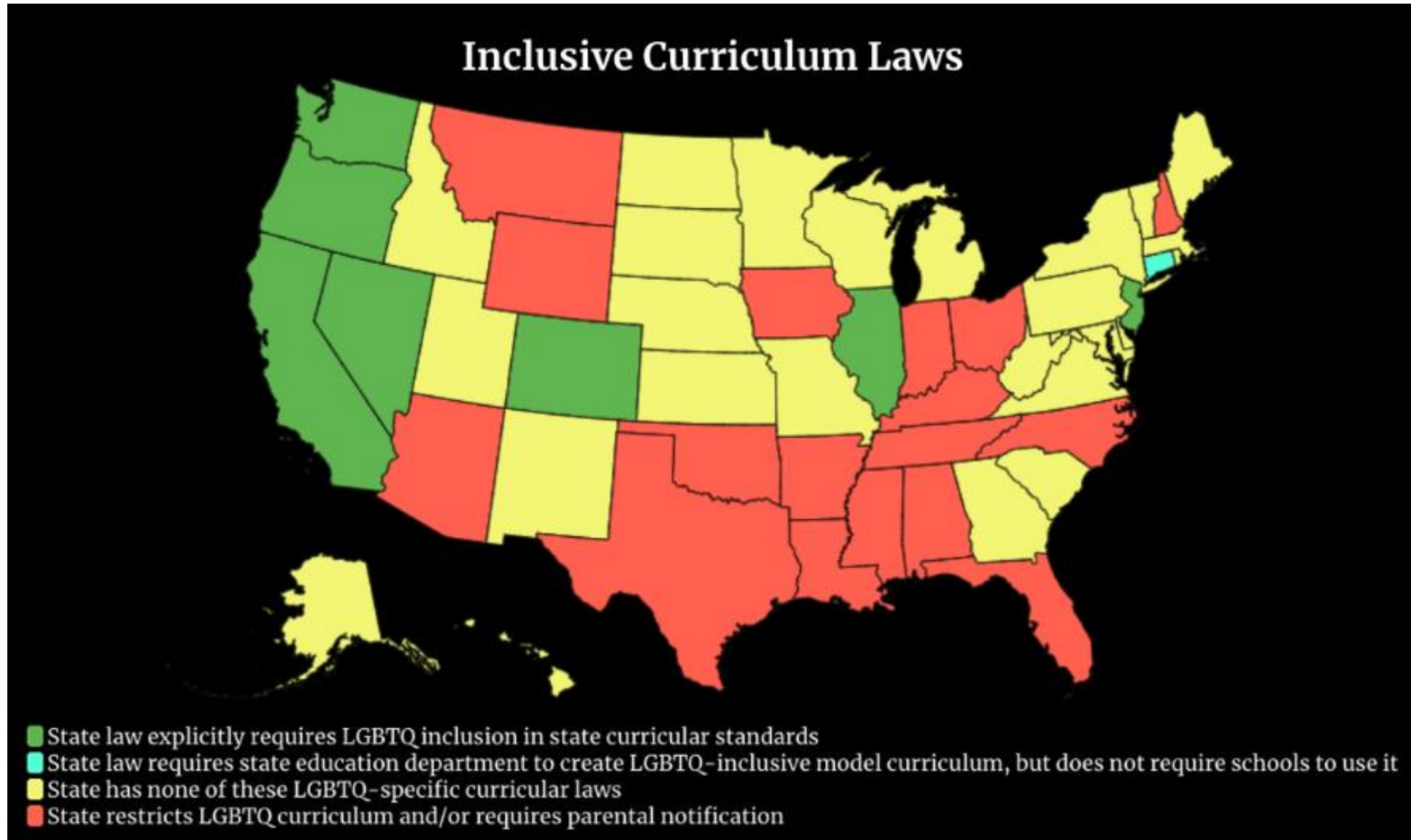


“State and local policymakers have failed to adopt and implement protective policies for LGBTQ+ individuals, especially trans students [...] this failure has been accompanied by increased state-sanctioned discrimination and expanded policy efforts to erase trans existence.”

- McQuillan, Lebovitz, & Harbin (2024). The disruptive power of policy erasure: How state legislators and school boards fail to take up trans-affirming policies while leaning into anti-LGBTQ+ policies. *Educational Policy*, 38(3), 642-699.

Remember: Schools are a part of a larger political system. As such, education, at its core is inherently political.

School is a political place because so many adults (e.g., educators, policymakers, parents) have a vested interest in the future generation.



Source: *The 74*. Map of the U.S. indicating where LGBTQ inclusive curriculum laws exist

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► > Student Care > Supporting Transgender, Nonbinary and Gender Nonconforming Students

STUDENT CARE

Supporting Transgender, Nonbinary and Gender Nonconforming Students

STUDENT CARE

SUPPORTING TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS



Education is a fundamental right of each and every student in Illinois. However, structural, social or implicit barriers may exist for students that are transgender, nonbinary or gender nonconforming. This webpage is designed to provide support to school districts as they, in turn, seek to support ALL students in Illinois schools. Further, this webpage also serves to apprise LGBTQ students of their rights under relevant law.

- [Implementation Guidance for the Inclusive Curriculum Bill \(Public Act 101-0227\)](#) 📄 - October 16, 2020

Source: [Illinois State Board of Education \(ISBE\)](#). Screenshot of ISBE webpage with information on supporting transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students

Understanding the Impact on LGBTQ+ Students

- Current climate of bullying and harassment, alongside policies being passed has impact on students' daily lives in and out of school:
 - Impact on sense of self
 - Lack of sense of belonging
 - Lower academic achievement
 - Higher dropout rates
 - Increase rates of homelessness
 - Increased mental health challenges
 - Physical violence

Understanding the Impact on LGBTQ+ Students

LGBTQ+ Youth Facing Mental-Health Challenges and More

Nearly three-quarters of LGBTQ+ youth report symptoms of anxiety. More than a third say they have been physically threatened or hurt.

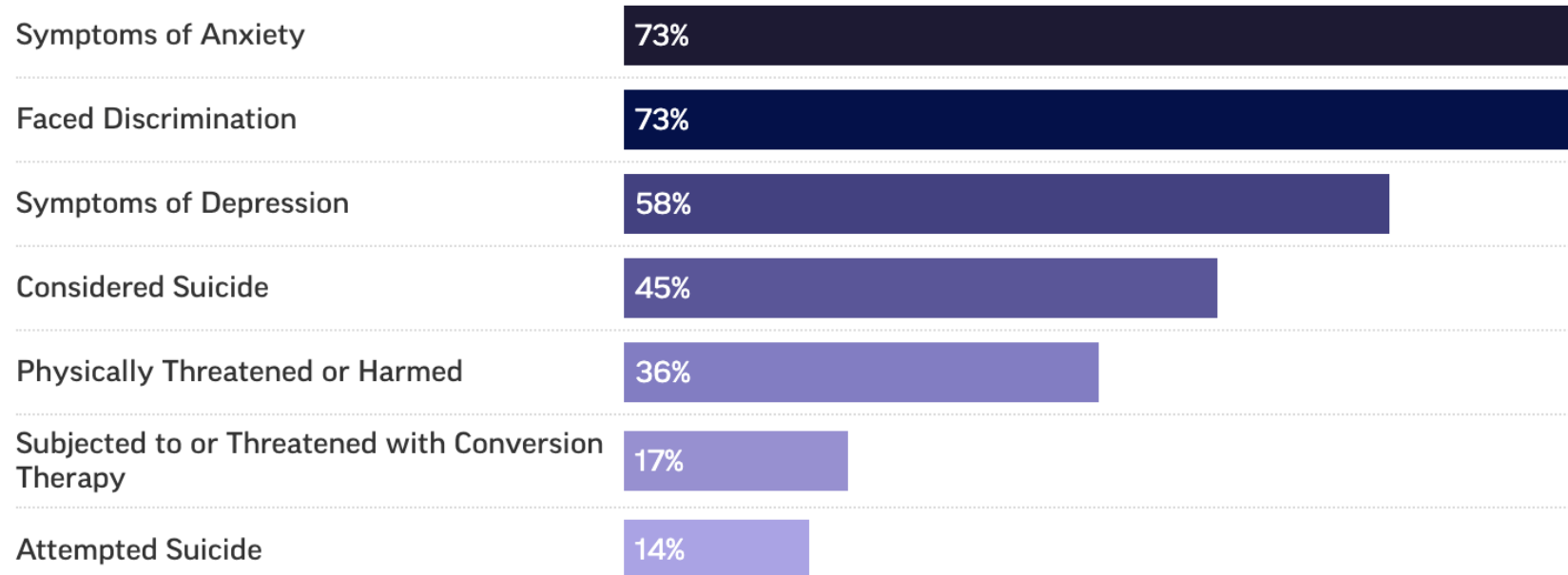


Chart: Abreanna Blose / NEA Center for Communications • Source: [The Trevor Project](#)



Photos of Drs. Harper Keenan & Z Nicolazzo

“When adults frame a group of children as predators, it puts those children at risk. This is a violation of our most fundamental responsibilities as educators and as adults. The demonization of trans girls has serious consequences, especially when combined with racist attitudes. Trans women and girls face extreme disproportionate levels of physical and sexual violence, especially trans women and girls of color.”

- Harper Keenan & Z. Nicolazzo (2021). “Trans youth are under attack. Educators must step up.” [Education Week](#).

Remember: if we say that we want to care for all students, that means *all* students!

LGBTQ+ students are facing unprecedented attacks and educators can play an important role in not just affirming who they are but advocating for and alongside them. How are you demonstrating allyship and solidarity?

Self-Reflection Prompts

- What are the scripts I have internalized about bodies and the world, including my own and my students?
- How can I support my students in analyzing their own scripts?
- How can I support students in imagining something different?

Creating Affirming and Inclusive Spaces

- Think about engaging in these strategies:
 - Interrupt
 - Question
 - Educate
 - Amplify
- Use inclusive language (e.g., gender pronouns)
- Listen to your students
- Embrace diverse and intersectional LGBTQ+ experiences
- Embrace the role of learner and reflect on who you are – it's okay not to have all the answers!

Creating Affirming and Inclusive Spaces

- Symbols & Message are important – students pay attention
- Consider sponsor or being involved in school initiatives in support of LGBTQ+ students
- Incorporate gender and LGBTQ+ inclusive practices and histories in your curriculum – it's the law!

“Those who now call themselves queer and trans people have been teaching the world since before those words even existed – the acceleration of queer language development and reclamation over the last century is but one example. You have important knowledge to bring to the work of education.”

Screenshot of [letter to queer and trans educators from Dr. Harper Keenan](#)

Keep Yourself Alive: Welcoming the Next Generation of Queer and Trans Educators

Harper Keenan

Dear new queer/trans¹ educator,

Welcome to the work of education. I am glad that you are here to take part in the wonderfully challenging task of supporting young people to learn more about how we might *be together*. I often think of classrooms and other educational spaces as something like a dance floor, where people who may not know one another gather together and learn how to interact and relate to one another in shared space.

While the word “educator” might be a new way of orienting yourself, chances are that you have been practicing a kind of education for a long time. Those who now call themselves queer and trans people have been teaching the world since before those words even existed—the acceleration of queer language development and reclamation over the last century is but one example. You have important knowledge to bring to the work of education.

Queer and trans communities have historically embodied ways of being and relating that go beyond the categories written onto our lives. To paraphrase the timeless words of Rihanna (Harris, 2011), we have found love in hopeless places. We have built ambiguous friendships in classrooms, hatched plans in hallways, studied books in library corners, lusted after each other on school trips. To do so, many of us have broken the rules.

People may tell you that your work as a queer/trans educator will be difficult. They’re not wrong. Education is not easy, in part because relationships are not easy. Yet the reasons why your work as a queer/trans educator may be difficult—particularly within schools or other institutions—probably have less to do with you as an individual than with the kind of society that has been built around you and the way you are interpreted within it. Here, I am reminded of Queen’s song, “Keep Yourself Alive” (May, 1973), which I include in the title of this letter:

*I was told a million times of all the troubles in my way
Mind you grow a little wiser, little better every day
But if I crossed a million rivers and I rode a million miles
Then I’d still be where I started, bread and butter for a smile
Well I sold a million mirrors in a shop in Alley Way
But I never saw my face in any window any day
Now they say your folks are telling you to be a superstar
But I tell you just be satisfied and stay right where you are*

What I take from this song is the importance of self-determination. As critical trans scholar and activist Eric Stanley (2014) writes, self-determination has been theorized within a variety of anti-colonial, Black freedom, prison abolition, and queer and trans social movements. Self-determination is portrayed as a

¹ These words are always incomplete in their description of human embodiment and ways of being. I use them as a placeholder for an infinite galaxy. My use of the slash symbol in “queer/trans” does not suggest a separation or a conflation of the two terms (some trans people are queer, others are not). Rather, I use it as a symbol for the complex relational exchange between them.

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Lecture Reflection

In four or more sentences (one paragraph), respond to the following questions:

- What is your biggest takeaway? What pushed your thinking the most?