



Solidarity Week Middle and High School Educator Guide

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about GLSEN's Solidarity Week, formerly Ally Week, and how you, as an educator, can participate.

Launched by GLSEN student organizers in 2005, this program helps educators and students across the country start the school year with positive, affirming messages and actions needed to combat harassment and marginalization of LGBTQ+ people in schools. While we've updated the name, the focus of this week-long event remains the same, to center LGBTQ+ members in the school community - whether students, educators, administrators, or families - and to share what it means to be in solidarity with them.

Solidarity Week is a student-powered campaign dedicated to building collective support for LGBTQ+ students and educators. This week-long program helps people learn about and practice solidarity with different identities.

In this guide you will find:

- Update for Participation in Online Schools
- #Solidarity Selfie Sign
- FAQ about Solidarity Week and GLSEN
- Letter to administrators for participation
- Newsletter or email announcement to families
- How do I prepare for Solidarity Week?
- Ways to participate as an educator

Celebrating Solidarity Week at your school is a great way to start the year by showing positive messages that promote inclusion, affirmation, and respect. The resources and messaging we provide can help any school celebrate visibility, affirmation, and support for their LGBTQ+- families, students, and educators.

Update for Online Schools

Even if you are not meeting with your students in person, you can help them to organize a Solidarity Week for your school, and you can bring Solidarity Week activities into your teaching. Use this resource for **Hosting a Virtual Event** and find more virtual resources **on our website**. You can even use this as an opportunity to collaborate with other GSAs outside of your school, or to invite students from multiple schools to work together to organize solidarity events that any student can attend.



Solidarity Selfie #SolidarityWeek

Do you identify as LGBTQ+ or have students or families who do? Join the conversation about what solidarity look like using our **Solidarity Selfie Sign** and sharing with #SolidarityWeek.

- Take a selfie or photo and add this comment to your post: Solidarity for my identity means_____” and I practice and engage in solidarity by_____”. How are you showing up? #SolidarityWeek @GLSEN.
- We encourage you to add an image description to make sure your post is accessible. For more information about why this is important, check out this list of “**Ways to Create Access**” from the Disability Accessibility Summit.
- Here is a sample image description to post in your caption:
Image description is of a person with short pastel orange hair in a light blue t-shirt and jeans standing on a stage and passing a microphone to another person with long black hair wearing overalls with flower prints on them. Sign in the image reads “Solidarity for my identity means_____ and I practice and engage in solidarity by_____”.

Solidarity Week Frequently Asked Questions

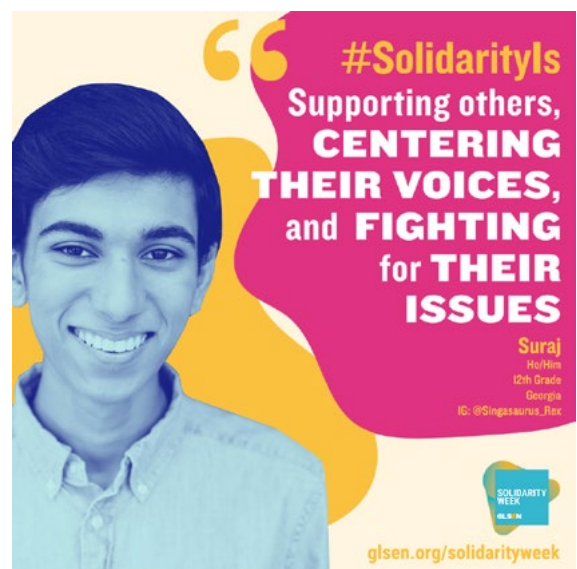
What is Solidarity?

Solidarity is a voluntary collective action by different people based on finding common objectives and solutions. Solidarity work happens when you show up to help and support others experiencing some form of harm by centering their leadership, decisions, needs, requests, and ideas.

Solidarity work happens in many forms and on many different issues. The important part of understanding solidarity work, is that collective action is powerful in enacting change, in fact, solidarity can either be the biggest threat to oppression, or one of the biggest allies in upholding and reinforcing it. How you show up...or don't, makes all the difference.

How do I tell my students about Solidarity?

You can share this **Student Guide** with your students, which speaks directly to them and shares ways to participate. Here is some sample language for telling them about ways they may have already participated in solidarity as a tool for liberation: “You have probably already practiced solidarity in some form, whether using a peer’s correct pronouns or signing a petition. In the days after the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, students organized the largest single day of protest against gun violence in history. In June, protests broke out across the country demanding justice for George Floyd, a Black man who was killed by police in Minneapolis, MN. As more murders of Black people including Black transgender women, young people started organizing their own protests addressing anti-Blackness and racism in their schools. Many of you participated in GLSEN’s Day of Silence, the largest LGBTQ+ student focused and led action to raise awareness around the bullying, harassment and erasure of LGBTQ+ students in schools.”



What is LGBTQ+ Solidarity?

GLSEN's Solidarity Week focuses on advocacy actions for LGBTQ+ youth, who face disproportionate bullying, harassment, and discrimination in K-12 schools. All educators can show up in solidarity with LGBTQ+ youth, and these students can be allies to one another, as well as to members of groups whose identities they do not share. For example, cisgender LGB students can always learn more ways to advocate for the needs of transgender or nonbinary students, and white LGBTQ+ students can always learn about being allies to LGBTQ+ students of color.

What is Solidarity Week?

Solidarity Week is a school-centered GLSEN program to spark a national conversation about the meaning of solidarity and to encourage schools to show solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community. Solidarity Week is for everyone. Straight and cisgender allies, as well as LGBTQ+ people, are encouraged to learn about what actions they can take to support their school's LGBTQ+ families, students, and educators. Educators can use Solidarity Week as an opportunity to teach LGBTQ+ lessons about empathy and equity, and to have conversations about LGBTQ+ issues and identities. And all students can learn about how to support one another's overlapping, intersecting identities, while centering LGBTQ+ peers.

What Happens During Solidarity Week?

During Solidarity week, students and educators organize activities at school that focus on encouraging and enhancing solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community, in their school and beyond. GLSEN recommends holding an Allyship In Action workshop, which outlines ways to show up in solidarity with LGBTQ+ students. Elementary educators are encouraged to read picture books with LGBTQ+-headed families and trans and gender diverse people, and to begin discussions of allyship with the LGBTQ+ community with their students.

Who Started this Week?

In 2005, members of GLSEN's Jump-Start National Student Leadership Team came up with an idea to encourage allies committed to ensuring safe and affirming schools for all to take action to support LGBTQ+ students. The idea turned into the first Ally Week celebrated in schools nationwide in September. In 2020, GLSEN updated the name of this week to Solidarity Week, to better reflect the week's focus on members of the LGBTQ+ community and what they need to feel supported.

What is GLSEN?

GLSEN is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established nationally in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Find our resources and more information at www.glsen.org.

Solidarity Week Letter to Administrators

The following letter can be adapted to send to administrators or other school leaders to let them know about Solidarity week. If you are supporting a GSA or students who want to bring this week to the school, be sure to connect with them first. If you have families or colleagues who would also like to celebrate Solidarity Week, ask if they are willing to have this letter be sent from you all.



Dear [Administrator],

I am writing on behalf of my (students, GSA, LGBTQ+families) who would like to participate in GLSEN's Solidarity Week this fall. **GLSEN** is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students in K-12 schools.

Solidarity Week is a school-centered National GLSEN program about the meaning of solidarity that encourages schools to show solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community and their own LGBTQ+ students, educators, and families. Solidarity Week is for everyone. Launched by GLSEN student organizers in 2005, this program helps educators and students across the country start the school year with positive, affirming messages and actions needed to combat harassment and marginalization of LGBTQ+ people in schools. Solidarity Week supports our students' ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, skills that are of increasing importance in our multicultural, global society. Our solidarity week activities will enable students to see their potential to affect change and will better equip them with the tools to take risks to achieve their goals.

This year, Solidarity Week occurs on (dates for the week). Our GSA would like to [do a presentation at the faculty meeting, host a screening of a Free Film offered by GLSEN for students or families, share about solidarity tips and actions at the morning meeting announcements, facilitate a discussion about what LGBTQ+ students need at our school]. As an educator, I'd like to [teach LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, let my families know about this week, host a screening free film, and/or invite other students to our GSA meeting].

Solidarity Week is most effective as a school-wide initiative to begin the year with LGBTQ+ visibility and affirmation. I am happy to help organize a whole-school assembly for Solidarity Week so that all of our students have a chance to participate in this national program.

Please let me know if you would like to set up a meeting with me [and my students] to discuss these plans more, or if there is any other information you need.

Thank you!

[Name]

Solidarity Week Letter for Families

Dear Families,

This year, we will be participating in Solidarity Week, an annual school-centered National GLSEN program about the meaning of solidarity. This program encourages schools to show solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community and to highlight our own LGBTQ+ students, educators, and families. It is also an opportunity for all students to reflect on their identities and to practice listening to groups of people who are facing discrimination in our country and taking actions to better support them. This program supports our students' ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, skills that are of increasing importance in our multicultural, global society. Our solidarity week activities will enable students to see their potential to affect change and will better equip them with the tools to take risks to achieve their goals. We are thrilled to join students across the country who want to start the school year with positive, affirming messages and actions for LGBTQ+ people in schools.

This year, Solidarity Week occurs on (dates for the week).

During Solidarity week, we will organize activities at school that focus on encouraging and enhancing solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community. We will [share programming ideas and events planned.]

If you have any questions or suggestions for the week, please feel free to reach out to me.



How do I Prepare for Solidarity Week?

- 1 Do the internal work!** As we engage in solidarity work, it is important to understand and acknowledge your own privileges. When you are aware of the privileges you bring into different spaces (it might shift depending on the folks in the room or environment you are in), you will engage with more mindfulness around making space and taking space appropriately. Knowing your privileges also helps you offer ways you can be useful to a demonstration or ask. For example, if you have access to money or food, and know others who can help, you can offer to support resources for mutual aid at your school or in your community. As adult allies to students, you can be mindful of adultism and ensure you are centering your students in solidarity efforts, even when you share identities.
- 2 Show solidarity by centering the folks who are most impacted by oppression.** Often times the people we are advocating for do not actually get to advocate for themselves because they are silenced. Practice listening to what others' need instead of telling them what they need. *For example, it would be inappropriate for a cisgender ally to tell transgender people what they need and deciding their priorities, or for white LGBTQ+ students to say what their Black LGBTQ+ peers need.* Making assumptions about what is best for people and making decisions for them is just another form of oppression, even with good intentions. The first step of showing solidarity is to listen and follow the lead of those who are most system-impacted or oppressed.
- 3 Learn about collective work and leadership.** Solidarity work is not possible from an individualistic practice. It is a collective action involving more than one person. You can demonstrate this in the ways that you facilitate discussions with your students, and how collective decision-making is expected in group work. GSA meetings should start with respectful space agreements so everyone understands the boundaries and expectations of the group. Share our **Guidelines for Respectful Boundaries** with your students and see which guidelines work for them, and call for others they may want to add. Centering the folks who are most impacted by oppression or discrimination is very different than creating oppressive hierarchies within your event or movement. Collective work means coming together to make decisions and contributing to conversations where all points are valued. In collective work, financial contributions, labor and time one gives does not give one member the most power. People should be able to opt in to tasks and committees and should not be assigned. Reflecting on collective work and organizing, and discussing this with your students can better prepare for solidarity week and inform how your GSA or groups run throughout the year.
- 4 Support students' organizing efforts.** If your school has a GSA, attend a meeting to support Solidarity Week organizing. Offer to take on tasks and help students with their efforts, especially regarding advocacy with administration or organizing faculty presentations or whole-school assemblies. Work with other educators to secure space and time for students to share Solidarity Week information. During Solidarity Week, support students in discussing LGBTQ+ Solidarity with their classmates. In some instances, students' peers could respond with disrespect, name-calling, or harassment. Use these as teachable moments to model support for LGBTQ+ people by intervening and insisting that your school be a safe space for all. For more support with intervention techniques, see our **Safe Space Kit**.



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Identify identities you and your students are in solidarity with. Allyship and collaboration is not a one-way street. There are so many ways we can all show up for each other. GLSEN's Solidarity Week highlights different marginalized groups within the LGBTQ+ community each day in order to support educators and students in their Solidarity efforts. For example, our first day of Solidarity Week will focus on our solidarity with Black LGBTQ+ people and in conversation with Black LGBTQ+ leaders.

Here is a day by day list of different identities we will be sharing on our social media outlets this year:

Black LGBTQ+ focus day: Mon, Oct 5

GLSEN Bulletin w/ guest

Dear My Black Bisexual Freshman Self: You Are Enough

Here's What I Need a Black Queer Student

I'm a Black Queer Student, and My School Needs to Recognize My Entire Self

Erasure and Resilience: The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color, Black LGBTQ Youth in U.S. Schools

Webinar: Erasure and Resilience: The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color, Black LGBTQ Youth in U.S. Schools

Condemning Police Brutality, Calling for Greater Support for Black Lives

4 Ways You Can Support Black, Queer, Trans & GNC Educators Today

LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:

Audre Lorde, Blair Imani, #BlackLivesMatter, James Baldwin, Patricio "Pat" Manuel, Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

LGBTQ+ Disability Justice focus day: Tues, Oct 6

GLSEN Bulletin w/ guest

Challenging Ableist Language

I'm a Trans, Disabled Young Person, Not One or the Other

LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:

Frida Kahlo, Chella Man

Intersex Youth focus day: Wed Oct 7

GLSEN Bulletin w/ guest

5 Steps to Being An Intersex Ally

8 Ways You Can Be An Ally to Intersex Students

Gender Triangle

LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:

Caster Semenya

LGBTQ+ Native American and Indigenous focus day: Wed, Oct 8

GLSEN Bulletin w/ guest

Erasure and Resilience: The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color report

Beyond the Gender Binary

LGBTQ Youth Explain Why Schools Should Teach

About These 17 Native Icons

LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:

Ty Defoe, Candi Brings Plenty, Hinalaimoana Wong-Kalu

LGBTQ+ Immigrant Youth focus day: Wed Oct 9

GLSEN Bulletin w/ guest

Together, Our Differences Make a Strong and Beautiful Community in School

LGBTQ+ History Card highlights:

Urooj Arshad, The UndocuQueer Movement, Bamby Salcedo

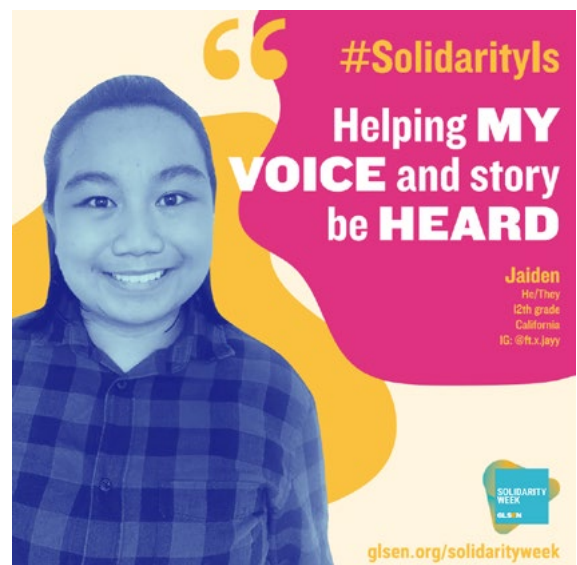


You and your students can follow @GLSEN for these resources and host conversations about solidarity along with us. You can also choose an order that works better for your school, or choose to highlight and focus on other identity groups that are present in your school community. Talk with your students and reflect on your school community and current events to determine the identities you could highlight during this year's Solidarity Week.

- 6 Share Solidarity Week with Colleagues and Administrators.** Solidarity Week is most effective as a school-wide initiative to begin the year with LGBTQ+ visibility and affirmation. As an educator, you have the unique opportunity to engage other school staff and administrators. If possible, invite a student leader or GSA to make a presentation on the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion and support. Provide your colleagues with this Educators' Guide, information about GLSEN's Safe Space Kit and discuss with them the need for LGBTQ+ supports in your school. Use the "Engage School Staff" section of the **Safe Space Kit** for more details on staff presentations. Arrange for a screening of one of our free-streaming films and a discussion to begin the year with LGBTQ+ students, families and educators in mind. Having knowledge of your school's policies and procedures, you can offer suggestions on how your school as a whole can develop effective activities that bring LGBTQ+ visibility into your school in a positive way.
- 7 Connect with GLSEN and other educators like you.** If you are LGBTQ+ or the only supportive advocate in your school, it can feel daunting to bring in days of action like Solidarity Week. Remember that you are not alone! There are thousands of educators across the country who are celebrating Solidarity Week and having these conversations with their administrators. To help plan your week, connect with other educators to ask questions, share ideas, and get support if needed.
- 8 Engage the Family Community.** Solidarity Week is a great time to demonstrate your school's commitment to LGBTQ+ visibility and support for the entire school community. Consider hosting a panel of out LGBTQ+-identified members of the school community in an evening event for families, or hosting an evening screening of one of the free and available films we offer for registrants. Administrators can also send a letter to families to explain why the school is celebrating Solidarity Week and advocating for inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community through the year.

Solidarity Week Actions for Educators

As an educator, you have the opportunity to bring actions of solidarity into your classroom to focus on the LGBTQ+ students, educators, and family members in your school community. Here are some actions you can take to celebrate Solidarity this week, and beyond:



1 Make your support visible. Whether you are LGBTQ+-identified or not, you can advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion and support at your school. One simple way you can show support is to display LGBTQ+ inclusive signs or posters in your classroom or office. This symbol means that you are open to learning about student identities, can affirm any identity shared with you, and that you can direct the student to someone in the school who can support them further. To learn about more ways to show support as an educator, read GLSEN's **Safe Space Kit**, our Elementary Tool Kit, **Ready, Set, Respect!** and download our Safe Space Stickers or Posters.

2 Teach LGBTQ+-Inclusive Lessons. Bringing in positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, issues, and history into your practice is a valuable support for any educator. Reading books with LGBTQ+ and gender diverse characters can encourage students to engage in discussions around respect and advocacy. You can find recommended Book Lists and an Inclusive Curriculum Reflection Guide on our **Inclusive Curriculum** page. Ask students how they could show up in solidarity for the characters in the book: what could you do or say to support? October is also LGBTQ+ History Month. Find lessons and activities to teach during Solidarity Week and beyond at www.glsen.org/lgbtqhistory.

3 Facilitate LGBTQ+ Solidarity Week discussions. Dedicate some time during Solidarity Week to discuss LGBTQ+ people and identities, and the concept of showing solidarity with and advocating for others. Engage your students in discussion using the following prompts:

- What do the letters LGBTQ+ stand for?
- Where do you see LGBTQ+ people in the media? Can you share a time you felt represented in the media and how this impacted you?
- How affirming do you think your school is for LGBTQ+ students? How do you know?
- For those who are LGBTQ+ what other identities do you claim? If you are comfortable with sharing, what do you wish people knew about how you navigate all of your identities?
- When you are navigating a situation and need support, what do you wish more people did to support you?
- What are some issues at your school that can bring people together to create change?

4 Continue the Conversation. Solidarity Week should not be the only time we discuss LGBTQ+ individuals in the classroom, and solidarity work does not stop when Solidarity Week is over. Incorporate LGBTQ+ history, themes, and events into lesson plans you are already teaching. Get started with **GLSEN's LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum Guide** and know that LGBTQ+ History month also begins in October!

Remember, there is not one way to organize and be in solidarity! Be mindful of your capacity and be open to different ways to show up. If there is a march happening and you are unable to join in person, there are still so many ways to participate that do not require your in person participation like making signs and leaving them out front for folks to pick up and use, or offering to help promote the event, fundraise, or create flyers. Disabled folks have been organizing remotely and have built the foundation for accessible actions.

Email us at educators@glSEN.org for questions or if you want to share some ideas for Solidarity Week!

