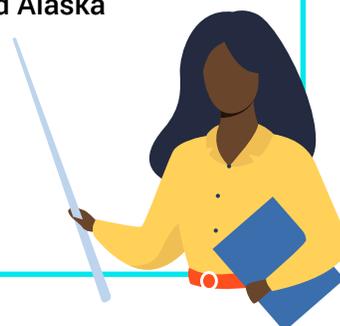


## Overview

The most effective methods for improving school climate engage children and teachers in pro-social activities that build positive relationships, promote cultural competency, confront bias, celebrate diversity, are trauma-informed, and instill a sense of community throughout the school. Practices that aim to “harden schools” through the use of increased police presence, permitting teachers to bear arms, the installation of metal detectors, or other school security and infrastructure changes may be harmful to students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, and BIPOC students.

## FAST FACTS

- A positive school climate is associated with positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes.<sup>1</sup>
- 42% of U.S. public schools reported that they had at least one full-time or part-time school resource officer (SRO) present at least once a week during the 2015–2016 school year.<sup>2</sup>
- Among Black, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native, and multiracial students with disabilities, one in four boys and nearly one in five girls receive an out-of-school suspension.<sup>3</sup>
- 59.1% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, 42.5% because of their gender expression, and 37.4% because of their gender.<sup>4</sup>



## NCLD believes:

1. Schools should be a welcoming, inclusive, and positive environment for all students, and every student should have their identities affirmed and experience belonging, safety, and support in order to learn.
2. Schools should not be a place with metal detectors, security cameras, or police.
3. Seclusion should never be used in schools, and restraining students should only be used in rare circumstances when a student is a threat to themselves or others.
4. It is inappropriate to suspend, expel, or refer students to the justice system for minor offenses.
5. Zero-tolerance policies perpetuate systemic racism and are harmful to many students of color.

## To ensure that all students are safe and affirmed at school, NCLD advocates for:

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- Prohibiting the use of federal funds from being used to place school resource officers (SROs) in schools, i.e., the Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act.
- Prohibiting the use of corporal punishment, seclusion, mechanical and chemical restraint, and exclusionary discipline (except in very rare cases) and severely limiting the use of restraint to ensure child safety, i.e., the Keeping All Students Safe Act.
- Providing grants to states and districts to invest in positive approaches to improving school climate in schools and in all early learning programs receiving federal funding (such as through restorative justice, trauma-informed care, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and mental health counseling) and the creation of a dedicated technical assistance center focused on best practices in the culturally and linguistically responsive implementation of these approaches, i.e., the Safe Schools Improvement Act.
- Prioritizing and awarding grants to conduct research on the connection between learning and attention disorders and potential risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- Increasing the capacity of school counseling and mental health programs to help teachers learn how to create safe learning environments, which might include training on the strategies discussed here.

- 1 Cohen, J., McCabe, L., Michelli, N. M., & Pickeral, T. (2009). *School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education*. *Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 180–213.
- 2 Diliberti, M., Jackson, M., Correa, S., and Padgett, Z. (2019). *Crime, violence, discipline, and safety in U.S. public schools: Findings from the school survey on crime and safety: 2017–18* (NCES 2019-061). U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019061.pdf>
- 3 U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015–16.
- 4 Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., Truong, N. L., & Zongrone, A. D. (2020). *The 2019 national school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation's schools*. GLSEN. [https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/NSCS-2019-Full-Report\\_0.pdf](https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/NSCS-2019-Full-Report_0.pdf)



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