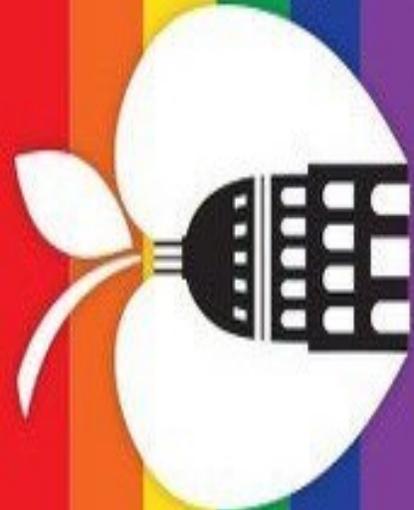


Transgender Students' School Perceptions and Experiences





Executive Summary

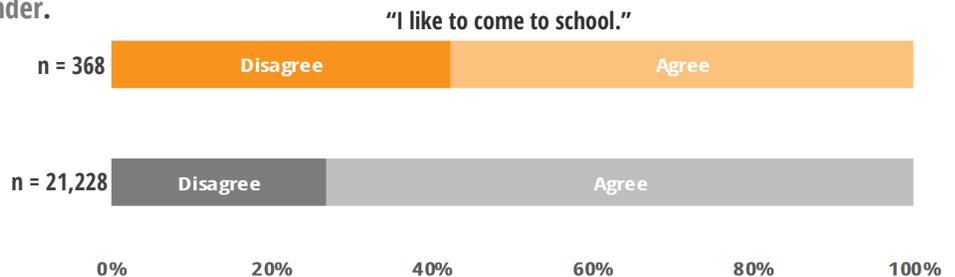
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students experience high levels of victimization at school, and poor school climates, navigate schools in which they frequently experience harassment and discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Previous research and national surveys have found that of LGBT students, transgender students face the highest level of such victimization at their schools, which causes them to miss more days of school, have lower grades, and feel less connected to their school than do their non-transgender peers (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009; Kosciw et al, 2016; Poteat & Espelage, 2007).

In Austin Independent School District’s (AISD) 2016–2017 Student Climate Survey, middle and high school students were able to identify as something other than male or female. When asked their gender, students were able to select “boy,” “girl,” or “I’d prefer to self-identify.” In total, 398 students chose to identify as something other than boy or girl. Because of this, it was possible to specifically study how transgender students responded to the Student Climate Survey. Additionally, student data (e.g., attendance and academic performance) could be linked to these students to explore whether transgender students differed from non-transgender students on any of these measures.

Findings from this report illustrate that schools are not safe or welcoming places for AISD transgender students. Compared with their non-transgender classmates, transgender students missed more school and had lower college intentions. These students felt less safe at school than did their non-transgender peers. Close to half of transgender students reported that they did not like coming to school (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Transgender students liked coming to school less than did students who were not transgender.



Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering “a lot of the time” or “sometimes,” and students who disagreed, answering “a little of the time” or “never.” Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

Additionally, transgender students had more negative perceptions of their classmates and teachers than did students who were not transgender. Overall, transgender AISD students’ experience unsafe and unwelcoming school climates in which they do not feel supported by their peers or teachers.

The report provides multiple recommendations for AISD to improve schools for transgender students, including making sure each middle and high school has an active and supported Gay-Straight Alliance, implementing LGBT-inclusive curriculum, providing professional development opportunities to adults at schools to learn about transgender people and issues, training adults how to intervene in gender identity- and expression-based harassment and victimization, and ensuring that school and district anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies include explicit reference to gender identity and expression.

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What does transgender mean?

In this report, the term transgender is used broadly to describe students who do not identify as the gender they were assigned at birth. This includes students who were assigned male or female at birth and now identify as the opposite gender. It also includes students who identify as something other than the binary male and female (e.g., agender, genderqueer, gender fluid). Some distinguish between transgender to describe the former, and gender-nonconforming to describe the latter, but this report uses the umbrella term transgender to describe all of these gender identities.

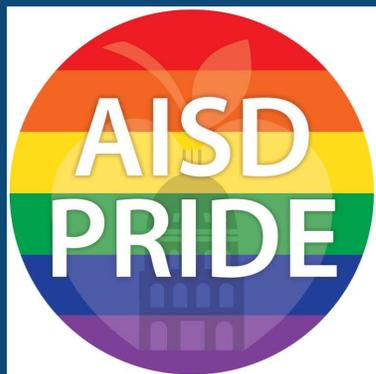
Introduction

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students experience high levels of victimization based on their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in their schools. This victimization occurs in the form of biased language and verbal harassment, physical harassment, and even physical assault (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016). These students experience poor school climates, and they navigate schools in which they frequently experience harassment and discrimination based on their sexual and gender identities. Transgender students experience this kind of victimization at higher rates than their lesbian, gay, and bisexual non-transgender peers (D’Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2006; Grossman, Haney, Edwards, Alessi, Ardon, & Howell, 2009; Kosciw et al, 2016; McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2010; Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, & Russell, 2011). Previous research and national surveys have found that transgender students face high levels of victimization at their schools and that this victimization causes them to miss more days of school, have lower grades, and feel less connected to their school than do their non-transgender peers (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009; Kosciw et al, 2016; Poteat & Espelage, 2007).

LGBT students face high rates of victimization at school, and transgender students experience this victimization at the highest rate.

In addition to gender identity- and expression-based harassment, transgender students also face unique barriers to feeling safe and accepted in schools. These students not only navigate school systems that lack structures to support them, but also a larger cultural system in which their identities and rights are constantly under attack. A perfect example, especially considering the context of a Texas school district, is the [recent failed legislative bill to prevent transgender students from using the bathrooms that match their gender identity](#). Transgender students attend schools in which their basic physical needs are not being met, and they are prevented by schools and by legislation from using the bathrooms and changing facilities that match their gender identity. Previous work has shown that transgender students in the United States do not feel safe or supported in their schools (Greytak et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2016), and it is imperative that we examine transgender students’ experiences at Austin Independent School District (AISD).

Traditionally, AISD’s Student Climate Survey has asked students to identify their gender, and the answer choices were “boy” or “girl.” In 2017, a third option was added to this question on the survey for middle and high school students only, which allowed students to identify as something other than male or female. When asked their gender, students were able to select “boy,” “girl,” or “I’d prefer to self-identify.” If students chose to self-identify, they were provided a space to write in their gender identity. AISD students who chose this option wrote in many different gender identities. A complete list can be found in Appendix A. In total, 398 middle and high school students chose to identify as something other than boy or girl, and of these students, 223 wrote in a gender identity.



It is important to recognize that some transgender students likely were left out of the following analyses. It is possible that some transgender students marked “boy” or “girl,” choosing the gender they identify as, instead of the gender they were assigned at birth. This report, however, only includes students who chose to self-identify, and captures students who explicitly identified as transgender, for example, writing in “trans boy” or “trans girl” in the self-identification space. Additionally, students who chose to self-identify and wrote in a gender identity outside the “traditional” gender binary (i.e., “non-binary,” “genderqueer,” and “gender fluid”) were included in the analysis. It is important to note that more students identified this way than identified specifically as “transgender.” Allowing students to identify as something other than male or female allowed for an examination of transgender and gender non-conforming students’ perceptions of their school climate. Additionally, because students’ responses to the Student Climate Survey were identified, their attendance and State of Texas Assessments for Academic Readiness (STAAR) passing rates were compared across gender groups. The following report uses these findings to discuss AISD transgender students’ school experiences.



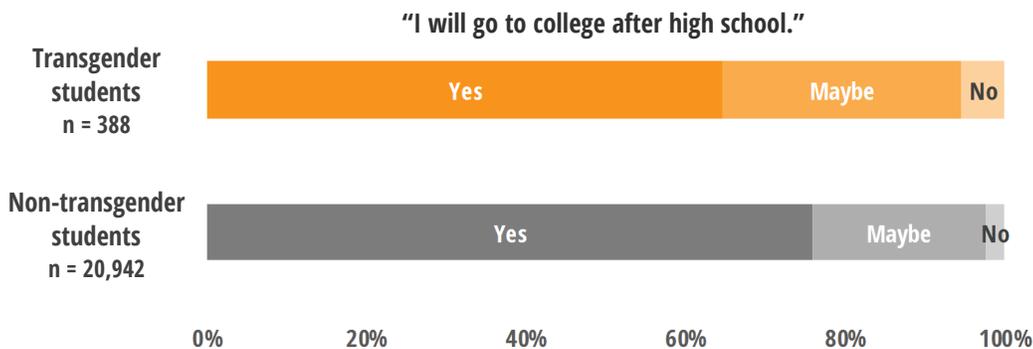
Transgender Students' Perceptions of Their School Climate

Experiences of Victimization and Feelings of Safety at School

National surveys of LGBT youth have found that transgender students face high levels of victimization and bias at their schools, and this has a negative impact on these students' school performance, attendance, and educational aspirations (Greytak et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2016). In AISD, transgender students' school performance in reading and math, measured by STAAR normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores, was not significantly different from that of students who were not transgender (see sidebar for explanation of NCEs). However, transgender students in AISD had lower college intentions than did students who were not transgender (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Transgender students were less likely to agree that they "will go to college after high school" than were their non-transgender peers.



Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. Response options were yes, no, and maybe. The graph shows the percentage of students who answered yes, no or maybe. Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

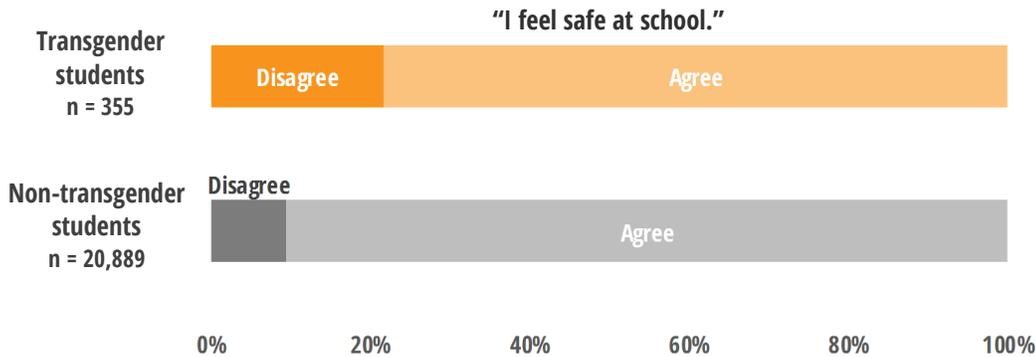
Additionally, examinations of students' attendance rates found that transgender students in AISD had significantly lower attendance rates (95%) than did students who were not transgender (96%). This result raises the question of why these students had lower educational aspirations and attendance rates. One possible explanation for poor attendance, posited by Greytak et al (2009), is that transgender students miss school because of safety concerns. They found that transgender students face physical and emotional harm in their schools, and that students skip school to avoid this violence.

What is an NCE score?

The normal curve equivalent (NCE) was generated for student's STAAR scores. Similar to percentile ranks, numbers range from 0 to 100 on the NCE line, with a standard deviation of 21.06 (Central Rivers Area Education Agency, 2017). Using NCE scores allows for significance testing because NCE scores can be averaged. Because the group of transgender students was so small ($n = 398$) and spanned multiple grades (6 through 11), NCE scores were used to assess student's STAAR test performance across different grade levels for math and reading.

Transgender students across the nation, unlike non-transgender students, do not find their schools to be safe places, and this was also found to be true for some transgender students in AISD. In 2016–2017, 78% of transgender students reported that they felt safe at school, which was significantly lower than the percentage of non-transgender students who reported feeling safe at school (91%) (Figure 3).

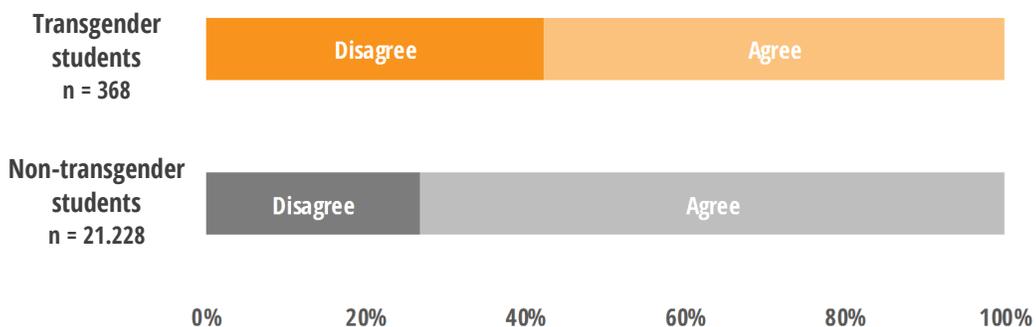
Figure 3.
Transgender students felt less safe at school than did students who were not transgender.



Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey
 Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering “a lot of the time” or “sometimes,” and students who disagreed, answering “a little of the time” or “never.” Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

GLSEN’s most recent School Climate Survey showed that transgender students had negative perceptions of their school climate, and they felt less connected to their school community than did students who were not transgender (Kosciw et al., 2016). In this national survey, transgender students reported that they frequently heard homophobic and transphobic language at their schools. Additionally, they reported that this language was not only used by classmates but also by teachers and adult staff at school. In addition to verbal abuse, transgender students reported to GLSEN that they experienced physical harassment and abuse from other students at their school (Greytak et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2016). These experiences of being victimized made school an unwelcoming space for transgender students. In fact, transgender students in AISD also reported lower levels of agreement than did their non-transgender peers to the Student Climate Survey item “I like to come to school” (Figure 4).

Figure 4.
Transgender students liked coming to school less than did students who were not transgender.

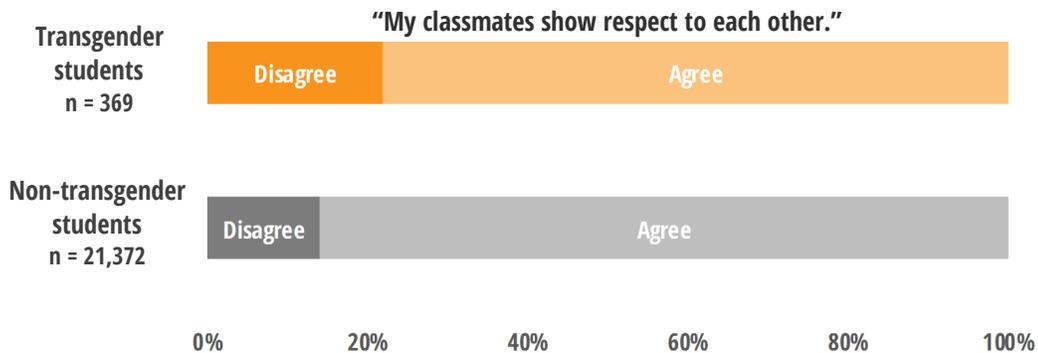


Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey
 Note. Response options ranged from 1-4 with 1=never, 2=a little of the time, 3=sometimes, 4=a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentage of students who agreed, answering “a lot of the time” or “sometimes,” versus students who disagreed, answering “a little of the time” and “never.” Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

Perceptions of Classmates

Though we were unable to explore AISD students' experiences with verbal and physical harassment and abuse, AISD's Student Climate Survey did include a number of items addressing how students perceive their classmates and how they treated others. Student Climate Survey results showed that transgender students had less positive perceptions of their classmates than did students who were not transgender (Figure 5).

Figure 5.
A higher percentage of **transgender students** than of students who were not transgender disagreed with the statement "My classmates show respect to each other."

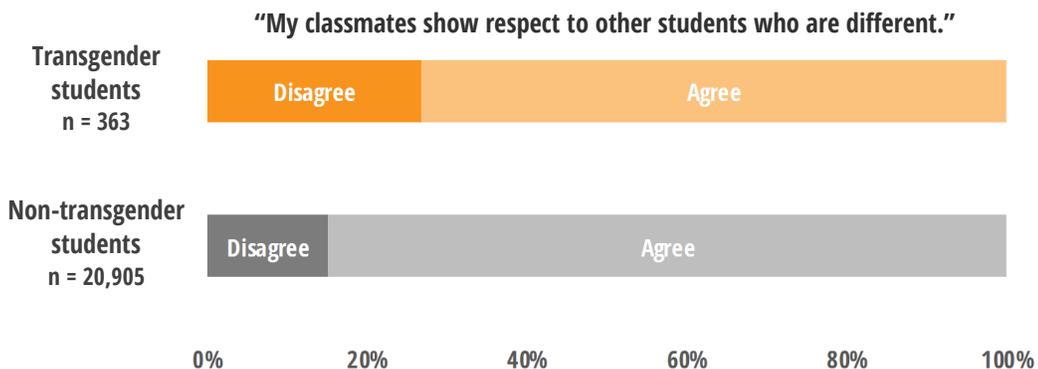


Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering "a lot of the time" or "sometimes," and students who disagreed, answering "a little of the time" or "never." Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

Furthermore, Student Climate Survey responses showed that a higher percentage of transgender students than of non-transgender students reported that their classmates showed respect to other students who were different. This specific question is important to consider in the context of transgender students' experiences at school, because these students were likely to view themselves as different than their non-transgender peers.

Figure 6.
A higher percentage of students who were not transgender than of **students who were transgender** reported that their classmates showed respect to students who were different than them.



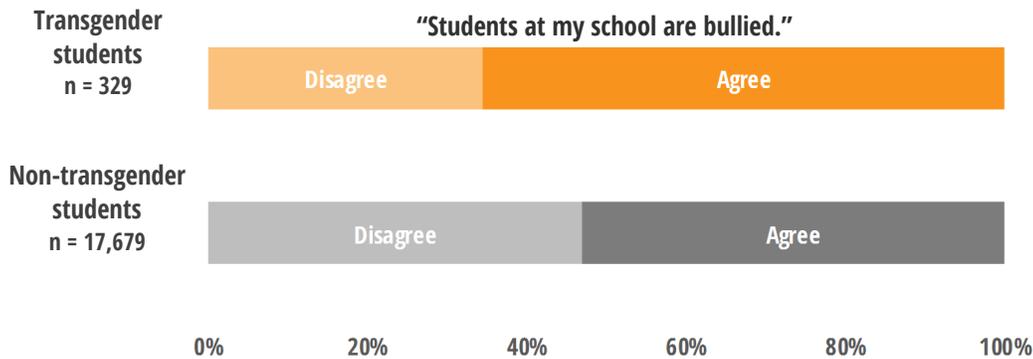
Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering "a lot of the time" or "sometimes," and students who disagreed, answering "a little of the time" or "never." Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

While the two previous survey items addressed how students treated each other generally, one item on AISD’s Student Climate Survey directly asked about bullying. Previous research showed that transgender students were targets of victimization and often experienced bullying in their schools by classmates and even by teachers (Grossman & D’Augelli, 2006; Grossman, et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2016). Though the Student Climate Survey did not include an item about students’ personal experiences with victimization and bullying, one item asked students if students at their school were bullied. Transgender students were more likely to agree with this item than were other students (Figure 7).

Figure 7.

Transgender students more frequently reported that students at their school were bullied than did students who were not transgender.



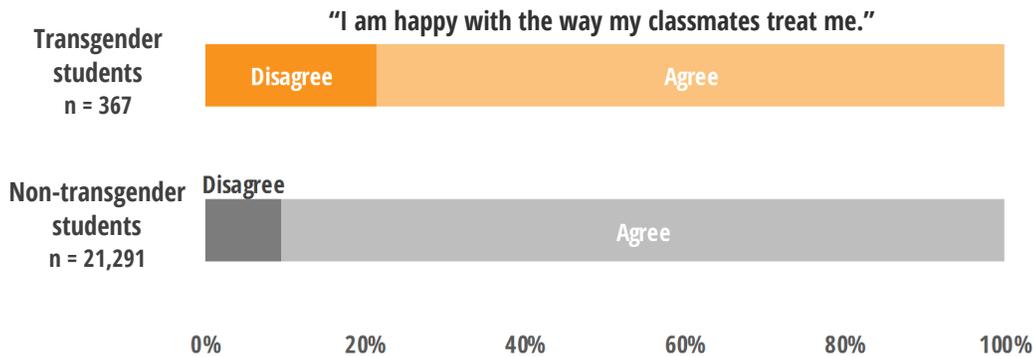
Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering “a lot of the time” or “sometimes,” and students who disagreed, answering “a little of the time” or “never.” Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

Other items on the Student Climate Survey addressed how students felt about the way they were treated by their classmates. Again, transgender students had poorer ratings than did their peers who were not transgender. They were less likely to agree that they were happy with the way their classmates treated them than were students who were not transgender (Figure 8).

Figure 8.

Transgender students were less likely to report that they were happy with the way their classmates treated them than were students who were not transgender.

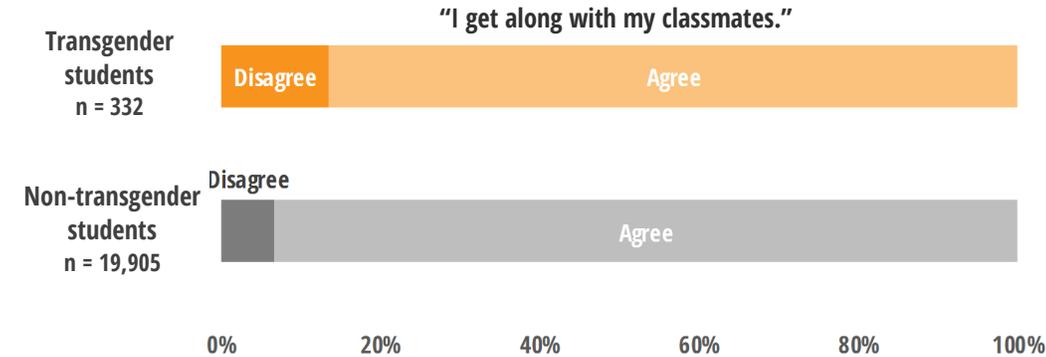


Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering “a lot of the time” or “sometimes,” and students who disagreed, answering “a little of the time” or “never.” Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

Additionally, transgender students reported having less positive relationships with their classmates than did students who were not transgender. Transgender students were more likely to disagree with the statement “I get along with my classmates” than were their non-transgender peers (Figure 9).

Figure 9. **Transgender students** were less likely to report that they got along with their classmates than were non-transgender students.

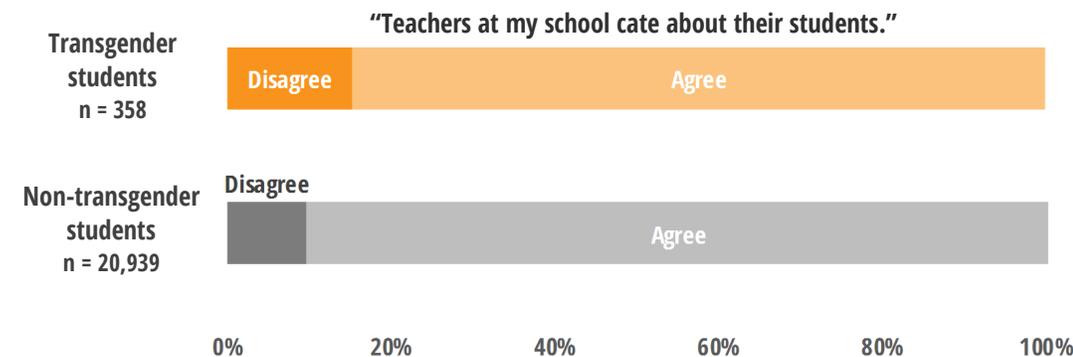


Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey
 Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering “a lot of the time” or “sometimes,” and students who disagreed, answering “a little of the time” or “never.” Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

Perceptions of Teachers and Adults

Items on the Student Climate Survey also addressed students’ perceptions of their teachers, and of other adults at their school. Transgender students reported fewer positive ratings on adult items than did students who were not transgender. For example, compared with their peers who were not transgender, transgender students perceived their teachers to be less caring (Figure 10).

Figure 10. **Transgender students** were less likely to agree with the item “Teachers at my school care about their students” than were students who were not transgender.

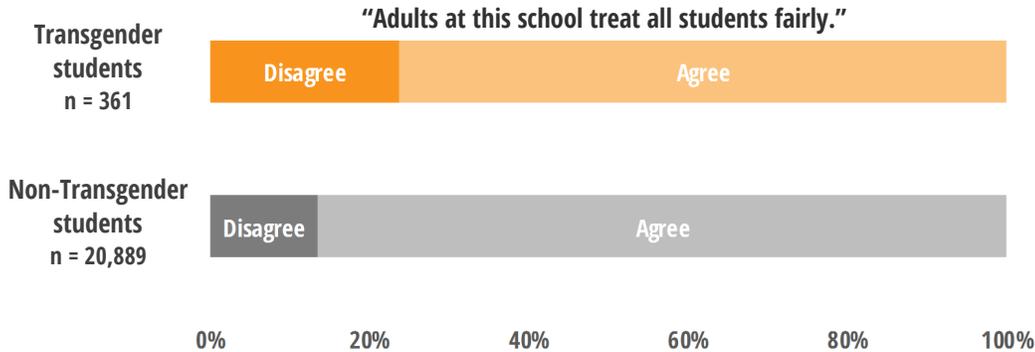


Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey
 Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering “a lot of the time” or “sometimes,” and students who disagreed, answering “a little of the time” or “never.” Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

In addition to having lower perceptions that teachers cared for students, transgender students also had lower perceptions of adults' fairness towards students than did their non-transgender peers (Figure 11).

Figure 11.

Transgender students were less likely to agree with the item, "Adults at this school treat all students fairly" than were students who were not transgender.



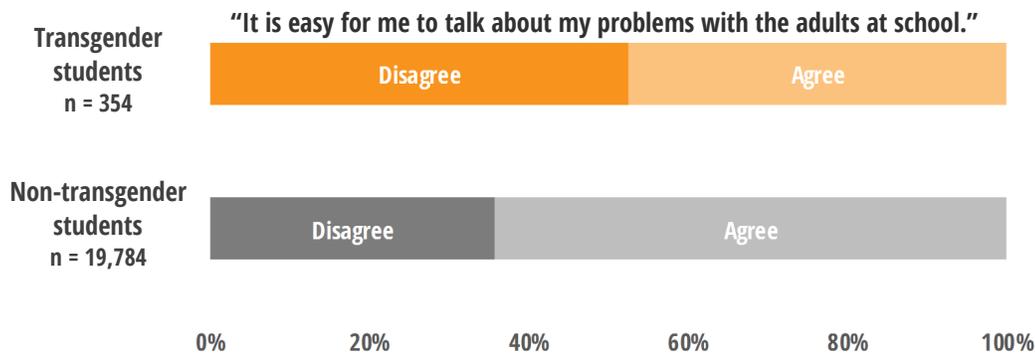
Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering "a lot of the time" or "sometimes," and students who disagreed, answering "a little of the time" or "never." Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

Additionally, the majority of transgender students did not perceive their school to be a place where they could seek help. Fewer than half of the transgender students (47%) who took the Student Climate Survey believed it was easy to talk to adults at their school about their problems (Figure 12).

Figure 12.

The majority of **transgender students** did not believe they could talk to adults at their school about their problems.



Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. Response options ranged from 1 through 4 with 1 = never, 2 = a little of the time, 3 = sometimes, 4 = a lot of the time. The graph shows the percentages of students who agreed, answering "a lot of the time" or "sometimes," and students who disagreed, answering "a little of the time" or "never." Chi square tests were used to compare ratings, and results were significant at $p < .001$.

As previously mentioned, transgender students frequently hear biased remarks about gender identity and expression in their schools (Greytak et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2016). These remarks are heard from other students, but are also heard from teachers and other adults in school (Greytak et al., 2009; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Kosciw et al 2016). Making problems even worse, most students in GLSEN's survey reported that adults who heard these biased remarks rarely intervened (Kosciw et al., 2016). When students reported

their experiences of victimization, most reported that the response was not effective.

Considering these findings, it is easy to see why students at AISD might find it hard to talk to teachers at their school about their problems, especially problems that directly relate to their gender identity. If teachers are not responding to incidents of harassment and abuse, and worse yet, sometimes perpetuate this harassment, they are not safe or effective allies for transgender students.

This is unfortunate and troubling because GLSEN also found that the few students who had teachers they could regularly talk to about LGBT issues had a higher sense of school belongingness than did student who did not have teachers to talk to (Greytak et al., 2009). In AISD, the majority of transgender students do not feel that they can talk to their teachers about their problems. They likely also feel that they cannot talk to teachers about LGBT issues, which could be contributing to poor school climate perceptions.



In Their Own Words

The AISD 2016–2017 Student Climate Survey also included two open-ended response questions; students were asked, “Do you feel welcome at your school? What makes you feel welcome?” and “Do you ever feel unwelcome at school? What makes you feel unwelcome?” Many transgender students’ responses to these questions addressed their transgender identity and the general climate for LGBT students at their schools. Many transgender students referenced transgender and LGBT issues when they were citing reasons they did not feel welcome in their school.

What Makes You Feel Unwelcome at School?

Many students spoke about how they and other transgender students were discriminated against at their school. The most common response to what made students feel unwelcome at school was the bullying they experienced. Students mentioned other students telling “trans jokes,” “bullying other students just because they are different,” and “looking at me like I’m an alien and bully me.” Some students generally stated that they would want the bullying in their school to be minimized (i.e.; “fix bullying,” “make the school have no bullies,” and “crack down on bullying”). Others asked that their school “not be transphobic” and wanted their school to “protect the LGBT+ community.”

“There’s a lot of ignorance about [trans] people perpetuated by policies where teachers aren’t supposed to be “political” in our classes, so teachers are hardly allowed to correct kids when they say or do something ignorant.”

Other students went further and discussed school policies and how gender identity- and expression-based bullying was not properly addressed by teachers and school administration. One student wrote, “Some teachers don’t protect students from certain bullying from peers, so it’d be nice if that were improved.” Another student stated, “There’s a lot of ignorance about [trans] people perpetuated by policies where teachers aren’t supposed to be “political” in our classes, so teachers are hardly allowed to correct kids when they say or do something ignorant and

when those kids are called out there is hardly any punishment or teaching.” Another student wrote, “I feel unwelcome when they keep students who have harassed and bullied other students in the school despite them being reported and receiving multiple...referrals.”

Many students spoke about the discrimination they faced from other students, and some students spoke about discrimination from teachers. For example, one student wrote, “Many students are discriminated against by students and some teachers.” Another student wrote, “I feel unwelcome as a transgender boy. It is very hard to identify as what I do because the teachers are under the assumption that everyone at this school identifies as female.” Other students wrote about teachers refusing to acknowledge their gender identity, which made them feel “invalidated.” One student

“I’d appreciate if teachers would stop treating trans students differently, [and] misgendering them.”

wrote, “I’d appreciate if teachers would stop treating trans students differently, misgendering them.” Some students offered solutions that they believed would help improve the way they are treated by teachers at their school, including training to teach teachers to “respect kids’ identities and genders.” For example, one student said, “People can be more trans inclusive. Train teachers to be respectful of trans kids. Transphobic teachers make me feel horrible.”

Students also felt that school would be more welcoming to them if LGBT topics were discussed and celebrated at school. One student wrote, “They should have announcements for things like LGBT history month and other celebrations similar to that.” Another student stated that it would be better if their teachers “addressed the confusion... of gender, sexuality, culture, and self-identity.” Transgender students wanted their peers and teachers to have a better understanding of transgender issues and people.

“They should have announcements for things like LGBT history month and other celebrations similar to that.”

What Makes You Feel Welcome at School?

“They make me feel welcome by calling me my preferred name rather than my birth name”

Transgender students’ open-ended responses were not only negative. Students also spoke about transgender-specific things at their school that made them feel welcome. Many students referenced their school’s Gay-Straight Alliance. Others referenced “safe space” and [No Place for Hate](#)® stickers and signs around their school, and how these signs made them feel supported and welcome as a transgender student. One student wrote that their school was “marked a Safe Place for All and is accepting of any identity and diversity.” Another student said, “The whole No Place for Hate thing is cool. I don’t get bullied often.”

Some students spoke about supportive teachers and how they create a welcoming atmosphere. One student wrote, “Everyone praises me for who I am and fights my battles with me.” Another student stated, “The teachers are open to everyone on the LGBTQ+ community.” Some students reported that teachers acknowledging their gender identity made them feel welcome, and made statements such as “They make me feel welcome by calling me my preferred name rather than my birth name” and “The adults always try their best to recognize that I am a boy.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings from this report, when viewed alongside previous findings from national surveys, illustrate that schools are not always safe or welcoming places for transgender students. In AISD specifically, compared with their non-transgender classmates, transgender students had poorer attendance, had lower college intentions, felt less safe at school, and liked coming to school less. Additionally, these students had more negative perceptions of their classmates and teachers than did students who were not transgender. Transgender AISD students' perceptions of their school climates were lower than those of their non-transgender peers. [A previous report](#) from AISD's Department of Research and Evaluation found similar results for other minoritized groups, including ethnic and racial minorities, students requiring special education services, students from economically disadvantaged families, and English language learners (Clark, 2017). It is not uncommon to find that students from less privileged groups and students with minoritized identities have less positive experiences in their school environments.

However, there is a crucial difference between these previously studied groups and transgender students. AISD, and most other school districts, provide systems and structures to support other kinds of minoritized students. For example, schools provide free and reduced lunch and other services to economically disadvantaged students. AISD's Multilingual Education Team exists to support students who are English language learners. Special education services are provided at all schools to better care for and educate students who need special services. Programs and curricula are implemented to teach students about appreciating ethnic and racial diversity. While AISD has programs that generally teach about respecting diversity and non-discrimination (e.g., No Place For Hate, Social and Emotional Learning, and Culturally Responsive Practices), no official system or program exists to specifically support transgender students at district schools, or explicitly teach acceptance of transgender people.

Gay-Straight Alliances improve school climate for all students.

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) are student-led clubs that exist to provide a safe space for LGBT students and their allies. Research has shown that GSAs have a protective effect for students; LGBT students at schools with GSAs perceived their schools as safer and reported lower levels of homophobic bullying than did students at schools without GSAs (Ioverno, Belser, Baiocco, Grossman & Russell, 2016; O'Shaughnessy, Russell, Heck, Calhoun, & Laub, 2004; Toomey et al., 2011). At schools with GSAs, students reported fewer homophobic comments, less gender expression-related victimization, feeling safer at school, higher levels of school connectedness, and more teacher intervention when victimization occurred (Kosciw et al., 2016). Additionally, LGBT students who had access to a GSA missed fewer days of school (Walls, Kane, & Wisneski, 2010). Research has shown that GSAs not only were helpful to LGBT students, but improved climate for all students (O'Shaughnessy et al., 2004). Most AISD high schools list a GSA on their website of current clubs, but it is not clear how active they are in each school. In open-ended responses, after being asked what makes students feel safe at school, multiple transgender students referenced their school's GSA. One student said, "We have a Gay-Straight Alliance and lots of services for students who are going through tough times, so I feel welcome to be who I am." However, some students

included GSAs in descriptions of what made them feel unsafe at school. For example, one student wrote, “My school isn’t terribly inclusive of the LGBT+ community. We weren’t allowed to have yearbook pictures for the GSA which I believe was wrong.... I believe my school should give more attention to the GSA.”

Work should be done to ensure that every existing GSA is supported by administration, and that they are able to continue as active and effective clubs. Also, although no middle school at AISD is listed as having a GSA, 54% of the students who identified as transgender were in middle school. A GSA should be created and supported in each AISD middle school.

LGBT-inclusive curriculum has been shown to make schools safer for transgender students.

GSAs serve LGBT students and straight allies who choose to join the club. As important and effective as they are, they do not serve the entire school population. LGBT-inclusive curricula should be implemented in middle and high schools, teaching all students about LGBT people and issues. This not only increases all students knowledge about LGBT people, but also teaches all students to be more tolerant and accepting of LGBT people. Inclusive curriculum helps create a safer school climate for LGBT youth, helps these students feel more connected to their schools, and can help increase peer acceptance of LGBT students and decrease LGBT-based bullying and victimization. LGBT-inclusive curriculum at schools has been shown to make schools safer for LGBT students, with less harassment (O’Shaughnessy et al., 2004) and less gender identity- and sexual orientation-based bullying (Russell, Kostroski, McGuire, Laub, & Manke, 2006).

Transgender students who are able to discuss transgender topics and issues with supportive teachers have a more positive perception of their school climate.

Though GSAs and LGBT-inclusive curriculum are effective steps, the district should do more to improve transgender students’ school experiences. These methods are focused not just on transgender students, but also on lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. It is important to consider the specific and unique needs of transgender students, separate from LGB students.

To address the specific needs of transgender students, first, AISD should develop and implement professional development opportunities for teachers and school staff to understand basic information and issues

regarding transgender people and students. Second, they should be trained on how to support these students in their schools, specifically by intervening when gender identity- and expression-based victimization occurs. O’Shaughnessy et al. (2004) found that when teachers intervened in such situations, students reported fewer incidents of harassment at their school. As this report shows, the majority of transgender students do not believe they can talk to adults in their schools about their problems. GLSEN (Greytak et al., 2009) reported that students who were able to discuss transgender topics and issues with teachers had a more positive perception of their school climate than did students who felt they could not talk about these issues. Therefore, it is critical that AISD train teachers on how to provide such support to their transgender students.

Finally, GLSEN (Kosciw et al., 2016) found that many students who overheard biased

language from their classmates also reported that teachers who observed these incidents never intervened. Research on bullying has outlined the “bystander effect,” in which observers are less likely to intervene when they see bullying occur and other people are present (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012). As has already been discussed, in many cases of bullying of transgender students, teachers and adults play the role of bystanders who do not intervene. However, research on the bystander effect has shown that bystander intervention in instances of bullying are often successful at reducing victimization (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000). These findings illustrate why it is crucial to train teachers and adults, arming them with knowledge about transgender students and how to respond to gender identity based bullying. This training can make adults more capable and empowered to intervene when they observe such bullying, which can reduce the rates of victimization of transgender youth in their schools (Polanin et al., 2012). Training should be provided to AISD teachers and staff so they have the skills to intervene and correct students when these biased incidents happen, creating a more supportive environment for the school’s transgender students.

Finally, the district needs to reevaluate its anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies to ensure that they include explicit reference to gender identity- and gender-expression based harassment and victimization. Research shows that such school and district policies contribute to more positive school climates for transgender students. For example, clearly explicit and enumerated anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies have been found to improve school climates and experiences for LGBT students (Mallon & Decrescenzo, 2006; Russel & McGuire, 2008; Toomey et al., 2012;).



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Appendix A.

Students' Reported Gender Identities From the AISD 2016–2017 Student Climate Survey

Response written in after "I prefer to self-identify"	Number of responses	Response written in after "I prefer to self-identify"	Number of responses
"Boy" or "girl," opposite of what the student's official school records state	31	Boy girl	1
Genderfluid	27	Demiboy	1
Non binary	27	Demigirl	1
Agender	18	Doesn't matter	1
Transgender	12	Either	1
Neither	10	Feminino	1
Both	7	Figuring it out	1
I don't know	6	Gender neutral	1
They/them	5	Gender roles are stupid	1
Genderqueer	4	Gendervoid	1
Person	4	He/she	1
?	3	He/they/them	1
Androgynous	3	He, him, they	1
FTM (female to male)	3	I don't even know honestly	1
Gender non-conforming	3	I think that I feel like I am a girl but then I feel that I am a boy.	1
None	3	I'd prefer not to answer	1
Other	3	Male/female	1
Trans	3	Mascugender	1
Who knows?	3	Me	1
Gender is a social construct	2	Neutral	1
Maybe	2	Quadgender Demiboy	1
Transmasculine	2	Questioning	1
Transgender male	1	She/they/occasionally her	1
A person in between	1	Tomboy	1
Ambigender	1	Trans boy	1
Better not say	1	Trans woman	1
Bigender	1	Two genders	1
Boi or girl	1	Unknown	1
Born a girl but identify as a boy	1	I do not like to tell people	1

Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Appendix B.

Percentage of Students Who Agreed With Each Statement on the AISD 2016-2017 Student Climate Survey

	Transgender students	Non-transgender students
My classmates show respect to each other.	78%	86%
My classmates show respect to other students who are different.	73%	85%
I am happy with the way my classmates treat me.	78%	91%
Teachers at this school care about their students.	85%	91%
Adults at this school treat all students fairly.	76%	87%
It is easy for me to talk about my problems with the adults at my school.	47%	64%
I like to come to school.	58%	73%
I feel safe at school.	78%	91%
I can reach the goals I set for myself.	79%	92%
My teachers are fair to everyone.	80%	87%
Students at my school are bullied.	65%	53%
I don't give up even when I feel frustrated.	81%	88%
I get along with my classmates.	87%	93%

Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey.

Note. Students who agreed answered “a lot of the time” or “sometimes.” Students who disagreed answered “a little of the time” and “never.”

Appendix C.

Percentage of Students Who Disagreed With Each Statement on the AISD 2016-2017 Student Climate Survey

	Transgender students	Non-transgender students
My classmates show respect to each other.	22%	14%
My classmates show respect to other students who are different.	27%	15%
I am happy with the way my classmates treat me.	22%	10%
Teachers at this school care about their students.	15%	9%
Adults at this school treat all students fairly.	24%	14%
It is easy for me to talk about my problems with the adults at my school.	53%	36%
I like to come to school.	42%	27%
I feel safe at school.	22%	10%
I can reach the goals I set for myself.	21%	8%
My teachers are fair to everyone.	20%	13%
Students at my school are bullied.	35%	47%
I don't give up even when I feel frustrated.	19%	12%
I get along with my classmates.	14%	7%

Source. 2016–2017 AISD Student Climate Survey

Note. Students who agreed answered “a lot of the time” or “sometimes.” Students who disagreed answered “a little of the time” and “never.”

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