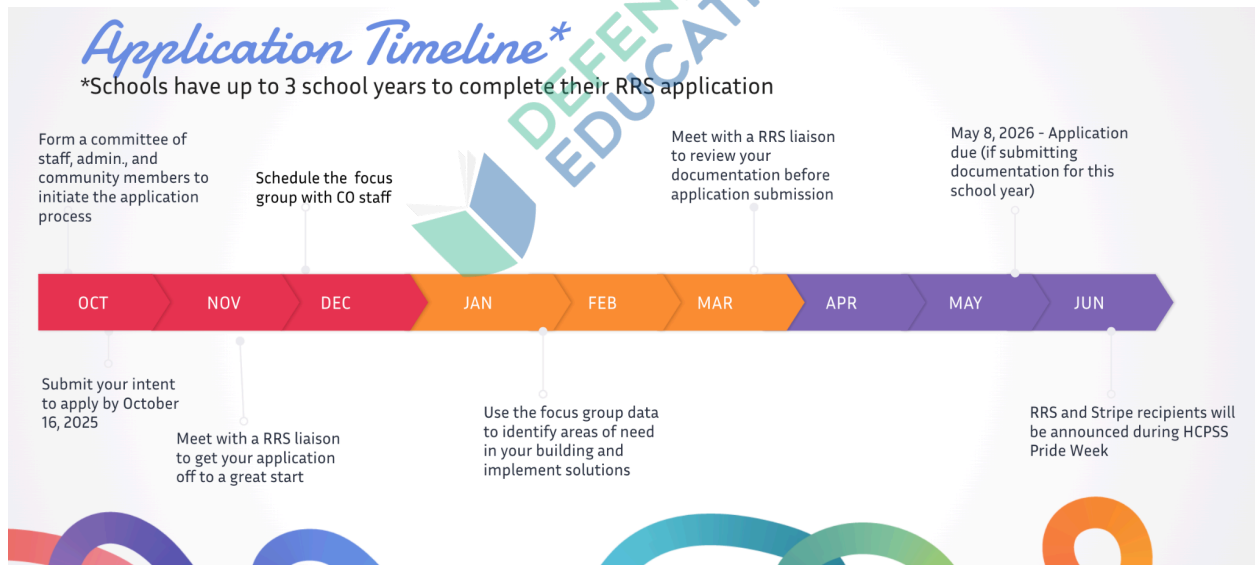




Rainbow Ribbon Schools Application Checklist

Community Allies of Rainbow Youth (CARY) is an organization of caregivers, students, staff and community members, who advocate for LGBTQIA+ youth and raise awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues within the HCPSS. Our Rainbow Ribbon Schools (RRS) initiative intends to inspire HCPSS school leaders to provide a safe and affirming environment for LGBTQIA+ students. Feedback from LGBTQIA+ students will be central to the RRS application and evaluation process. We encourage your school's RRS committee to use this checklist to guide them through the application process.



KEY DUE DATES

____ Due **Oct 16, 2025** Form a RRS committee of admin., staff, and parents. Submit the [Intent to Apply](#) form.

____ Due **Oct 31, 2025** Meet with, or have scheduled a meeting in November, with a RRS liaison (Robyn Page, Amy Holly, Amy Urban, or Paul Carpenetti) to review

application requirements and plan for the collection of artifacts. This meeting is required of all schools.

___ Due **Jan 23, 2026** Have held, or have scheduled, the one required student focus group with Danielle DuPuis for this school year. (Optional for schools that will not complete their application this school year, or for schools that need to earn a stripe for a criterion that does not require student feedback, such as PL.)

___ Due **April 17, 2026** Deadline for the second meeting with a RRS liaison (Robyn Page, Amy Holly, Amy Urban, or Paul Carpenetti) to review documentation of application requirements prior to submission. This meeting is required of all schools intending to submit an application in May 2026.

___ Due **May 8, 2026** Time to [submit your RRS application!](#) CARY will announce stripe(s) and ribbon earners during HCPSS Pride Week in June.

REQUIRED CRITERIA

Schools must demonstrate all of these criteria to be considered for a Rainbow Ribbon:

C1. Demonstrate curriculum and instruction that affirms LGBTQIA+ identities and contributions across grade levels and subjects, using respectful language. Instructional materials and activities reflect the rich diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community, including but not limited to variations in race, ability, and culture (intersectionality). These efforts create a learning environment where all students, regardless of their identity, feel seen, valued, and experience a deep sense of belonging.

Effective Documentation for C1 must include:

- Lesson plans, including materials of delivery, such as slide decks, texts, and videos, that demonstrate the C1 objectives for inclusion. Teachers should provide a paragraph that explains the context of the lesson in their curriculum and the intended outcomes for student learning.
- Completed student work samples from these lessons that demonstrate implementation with fidelity to the lesson plan. All student names and identifiers must be redacted.
- Students are able to reflect on the value of these lessons during their focus group conversation with the HCPSS LGBTQIA+ Initiatives Specialist.
- Administrators report on how they are addressing students' curriculum concerns (if needed) on the post-Focus Group questionnaire

Elementary schools must provide:

- A total of six lesson plans with a sampling of completed student work from each, across grade levels, including a health lesson plan as detailed below.

- Effective documentation demonstrating the HCPSS health curriculum was implemented with fidelity at one grade level. This can be documented in the form of a signed letter from the school administrator from a teacher observation (as part of teacher evaluation) that the health lessons were delivered as instructed by HCPSS/MSDE and not omitting required content inclusive of LGBTQIA+ identities OR in the form of a lesson plan with highlighted inclusive script.
 - For example, an elementary school might submit documentation from the health families lesson (grade 2), an art lesson (grade 3), social studies (Kindergarten), media (grade 1), ELA (grade 4), and science (grade 5).

Secondary schools must provide:

- A total of six lesson plans with a sampling of completed student work from each, across grade levels, including a health lesson plan as detailed below.
 - Effective documentation demonstrating the HCPSS health curriculum was implemented with fidelity at one grade level. This can be documented in the form of a signed letter from the school administrator from a teacher observation (as part of teacher evaluation) that the health lessons were delivered as instructed by HCPSS/MSDE and not omitting required content inclusive of LGBTQIA+ identities OR in the form of a lesson plan with highlighted inclusive script.
 - For example, a middle school might submit documentation from ELA (grade 6), math (grade 6), social studies (grade 8), world language (grade 7), science (grade 7), and health (grade 8).
 - A high school might submit documentation from health (grade 9), PE (grades 9/10), theater 1, biology (grade 9), English (grade 11), AP African American History (grades 11/12), and American History (grade 9).

C2. Establish a Rainbow Representative (RR) for Your School

- The RR should be part of the school's RRS application process
- The RR should be listed on the staff page of the school's website, with contact information and a description of their role
- Students in the school should be aware of the RR as a resource/safe space (as verified by the focus group)

C3. The school must offer and promote a LGBTQIA+ affinity group or groups

- Secondary schools must have a GSA/SAGA (or similar) club
- Elementary schools must have a LGBTQIA+ affinity group, such as a Rainbow Reading Group, Lunch Bunch, Rainbow Family Group, etc.

C4. The school should work toward being free from bias-based bullying, harassment, and discrimination of LGBTQIA+ students

- Student focus groups must indicate that school-based administrators responded in an effective and timely manner to end bias against LGBTQIA+ students
- Schools must have well-known and well-understood procedures for reporting bullying, harassment, and discrimination
- Students report that bullying, harassment, and discrimination are quickly acted upon and corrected, as outlined in HCPSS Policies 1060 and 1010
- These criteria will be verified by the focus groups
- Administrators report on how they are addressing students' bullying concerns (if needed) on the post-Focus Group questionnaire

C5. Identifiable Allies: LGBTQIA+ allies are visible in the school community

- 75% of students who participate in the focus group can identify at least one staff member by name who openly presents themselves as an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community, as verified by the focus groups

C6. Professional Learning for Staff: School staff receive training and information on building an affirming and inclusive environment

- At least 65% of the school staff participate in professional learning on building an LGBTQIA+ affirming and inclusive school environment. Examples include: Rainbow Conference participation; completion of an LGBTQIA+ CPD course; attendance at a staff or team meeting at which an LGBTQIA+ PL was conducted; or participation in an LGBTQIA+ book study
- The following documentation of staff participation is required to demonstrate implementation, and must include at least one of the following for each PL cited: a staff sign-in sheet, materials of instruction used during the PL, course syllabus, meeting or conference agenda, etc.
- The school's Rainbow Rep periodically provides information to all school staff via email on best practices in supporting LGBTQIA+ students. Screen shots of

emails to staff must be included as documentation

C7. Media Collection: The school's media collection should contain LGBTQIA+ themed titles that are accessible to all students

- At least 5% of media purchases for the school year must include LGBTQIA+ themed selections OR
- Your school's media purchases during the RRS application process (3 consecutive years) has increased your LGBTQIA+ selections by 5%
- LGBTQIA+ themed selections should be available for checkout in the general collection as verified by your focus group
- Documentation is provided in the form of a spreadsheet with LGBTQIA+ titles generated by your school's media specialist.

C8. CHOOSE TWO OF THE CRITERIA BELOW

Schools must demonstrate 2 of the criteria below to be considered for a Rainbow Ribbon:

ALL-GENDER RESTROOM

- Have all-gender restroom(s) in main student/staff areas. Restrooms must be easily accessible in a prominent area of school building (verified by the focus group). HS students' all-gender restroom should be as close to locker rooms as possible. Documentation required to demonstrate implementation and must include a school map showing the location(s) of the restroom(s).

STUDENT INTERACTIONS

- The student body is well-educated on how to interact with and address their LGBTQIA+ peers, as verified by the focus group. Administrators report how they are addressing students' peer interactions concerns (if needed) on the post-Focus Group questionnaire.

VISUAL AFFIRMATIONS

- Signage and visual displays prominently welcome and celebrate LGBTQIA+ identities, as verified by students in the focus group. Photos of these affirmations around the school can also serve as documentation.

SCHOOL-WIDE ANTI-BULLYING CAMPAIGN

- A school-wide campaign that promotes acceptance and prominently includes LGBTQIA+ identities is held. Documentation and focus group feedback are

required to demonstrate implementation. Documentation of the campaign should include planning documents, promotional materials, and products generated by the campaign, such as student-made posters, videos, speeches, etc.

SCHOOL-WIDE CELEBRATION

- The school organizes a school-wide event that celebrates Pride, recognizes LGBTQIA+ history/accomplishments, or creates an affirming and inclusive environment. Documentation of the event is required to demonstrate implementation and should include planning documents, promotional materials, and photos from the event. (Please do not show students' faces without parental consent.)

QUESTIONS? Contact CARY's RRS liaisons

Elementary: Paul_Carpenetti@hcpss.org and Amy_Urban@hcpss.org

Secondary: Amy_Holly@hcpss.org and Robyn_Page@hcpss.org

