

The logo features a central teal circle containing the text 'Rainbow Ribbon Schools' in a black cursive font. This central element is surrounded by several thick, colorful ribbons in shades of purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red, which are artistically curled and looped around the central circle. A faint, diagonal watermark reading 'LEARNING & EDUCATION' is visible behind the central text.

*Rainbow
Ribbon
Schools*



COMMUNITY ALLIES OF
RAINBOW YOUTH

Community Allies of Rainbow Youth (CARY)

We are caregivers, students, staff and community members, who advocate for LGBTQIA+ youth and raise awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues within the HCPSS



DEFENDING
EDUCATION



Rainbow Ribbon Schools Initiative


The aim of the Rainbow Ribbon Schools (RRS) initiative is 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.





RRS Criteria

Schools must demonstrate meeting 7 universal criteria and 2 additional criterion of their choice to be considered for RRS recognition



Schools must hold one focus group with your school's LGBTQIA+ affinity group

- We encourage your school to schedule your focus group early in the school year
- Your focus group must be held by April 17, 2026



LGBTQIA+ Focus Groups

- Students who participate in the LGBTQIA+ affinity group at your school will be invited to anonymously participate in a focus group led by the HCPSS LGBTQIA+ Initiatives Specialist.
- The purpose of these focus groups is to obtain student feedback on your school environment.
- School administrators will be asked to complete a Google form by the application deadline to report on what actions were taken to address students' concerns reported in the focus group, if any.



A decorative graphic featuring a central teal circle containing the text 'Required Criteria'. The circle is surrounded by several thick, colorful ribbons in shades of purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red, which swirl and loop around the central circle. A faint watermark 'DEFENDING EDUCATION' is visible behind the text.

*Required
Criteria*

*C1 Inclusive
Curriculum and
Instruction*

LGBTQIA+ identities are affirmed, and
their contributions highlighted,
across all contents



C1 Inclusive Curriculum and Instruction

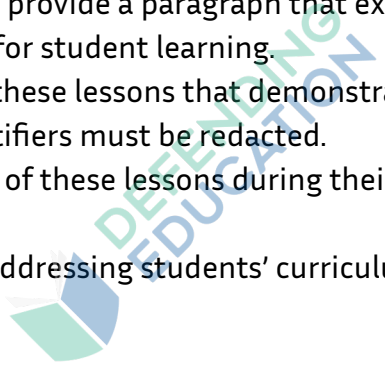
Demonstrate curriculum and instruction that affirms LGBTQIA+ identities and contributions across grade levels and subjects, using respectful language. Instructional materials and activities reflect the rich diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community, including but not limited to variations in race, ability, 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.



C1 Inclusive Curriculum and Instruction

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



C1 Inclusive Curriculum and Instruction

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).



C1 Inclusive Curriculum and Instruction

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 for Your School



C2 Establish a Rainbow Representative (RR)

- 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 groups).



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C3 Affinity Group

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

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C3 Affinity Group

- 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 Act Against LGBTQIA+ Bullying

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



C4 Act Against LGBTQIA+ Bullying

- 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



C5 Identifiable Allies

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



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C6 Professional Learning for Staff

School staff receive training and information on building an affirming and inclusive environment



C6 Professional Learning for Staff

- 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. Screenshots 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



C7 Media Collection

- 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 (verified by the focus group)
- Documentation is required in the form of a spreadsheet with LGBTQIA+ titles generated by the school's media specialist





*C8: Select
Two
Criteria*

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.

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.



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 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.



Stripe Recognition Awards

- Schools will be recognized for their progress as they meet each of the criteria. For each criterion that is met, schools will receive one "Stripe" toward their final Rainbow Ribbon
- Schools can earn more than one stripe in a school year as they continue to work towards their Rainbow Ribbon. However, some schools may choose not to submit documentation during a given school year, and wait until they believe their application is complete before submitting. (Thereby forgoing any Stripe awards.)
- **Schools have 3 consecutive years to complete their application and earn a full ribbon.**

Application Timeline*

*Schools have up to 3 school years to complete their RRS application

Form a committee of staff, admin., and community members to initiate the application process

Schedule the focus group with CO staff

Meet with a RRS liaison to review your documentation before application submission. Due April 17, 2026.

May 8, 2026 - Application due (if submitting documentation for this school year)

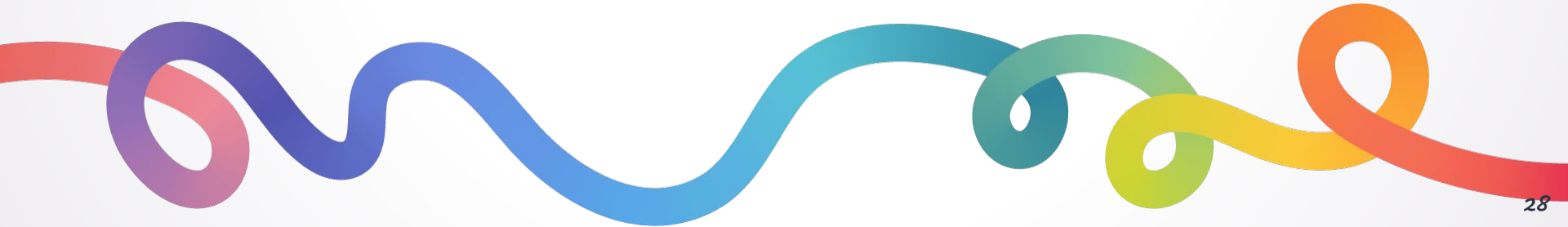


Submit your intent to apply by October 16, 2025

Meet with a RRS liaison to get your application off to a great start

Use the focus group data to identify areas of need in your building and implement solutions

RRS and Stripe recipients will be announced during HCPSS Pride Week



Recognition!

Rainbow Ribbon flag or stripe(s)
graphic for your school's website

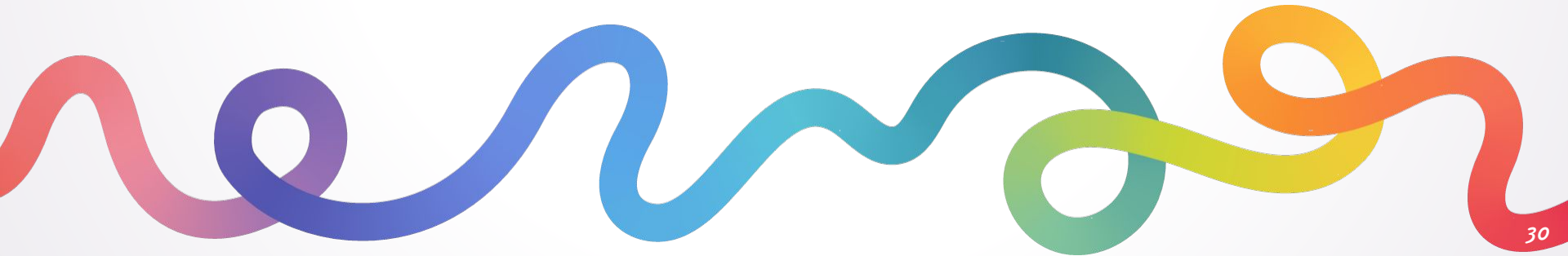
Recognition by the BOE

Recognition on CARY's website

Rainbow Ribbon School

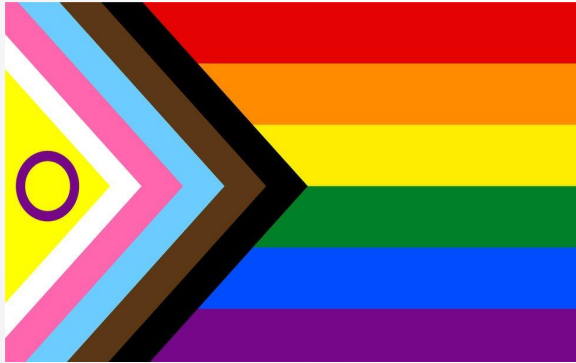
*Congratulations to the 2024-25
Rainbow Ribbon School!*

Elkridge Elementary School



Stripes Recognition Awards

CARY recognizes HCPSS schools with Stripe Recognition Awards for their achievements in creating LGBTQIA+ affirming and inclusive school environments. These schools are progressing towards earning a Rainbow Ribbon, by demonstrating that they have met the following criteria:



- Demonstrate inclusive curriculum and instruction in which LGBTQIA+ identities are affirmed, and their contributions highlighted, across all contents.
- Establish a Rainbow Representative for Your School
- The school must offer and promote a LGBTQIA+ affinity group or groups
- The school should work toward being free from bias-based bullying, harassment, and discrimination of LGBTQIA+ students
- Identifiable Allies: LGBTQIA+ staff and allies are visible in the school community
- Professional Learning for Staff: school staff will receive training on building an affirming and inclusive environment
- Choose 2: All-gender Restrooms; Student Interactions; Visual Affirmations; or School-wide Celebration



Congrats!

CARYS's 2024-25 Stripe Recognition Award Schools

Atholton ES

Centennial HS

Hanover Hills ES

Howard HS

Ilchester ES

River Hill HS

Talbott Springs ES

Triadelphia Ridge ES

RRS Intent to Apply

Intent forms are due October 16, 2025



Thanks!

Any questions?

Elementary Support:

- Paul_Carpenetti@hcpss.org
- Amy_Urban@hcpss.org

Secondary Support:

- Robyn_Page@hcpss.org
- Amy_Holly@hcpss.org

Become a CARY member

Email CARYmembership@gmail.com or visit <https://www.cary-hoco.org/>



Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- Presentation template by [SlidesCarnival](#)
- Photographs by [Unsplash](#)



Presentation design

This presentation uses the following typographies:

- Titles: Damion
- Body copy: Inria Sans

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