# Taking Action with the RAC for LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools

**Why are policy changes necessary?**

* Anti-LGBTQ+ bullying is widespread in schools: 81.8% of LGBTQ+ youth report feeling unsafein schools due to their personal characteristics.
* LGBTQ+ students experience mental health issues at a worryingly high rate: 67% report symptoms of anxiety, 54% report symptoms of depression.
* 33% of LGBTQ+ students missed at least one day of school in a month due to feeling unsafe.
* 61.5% of bullied LGBTQ+ students did not report it because they thought their school would fail to respond. When students did report, 60.3% said their school did not respond.
* 78.8% of LGBTQ+ students report that they have avoided school functions or extracurricular activities because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.
* Most LGBTQ+ students (58.9%) report that they had experienced LGBTQ+ related discriminatory policies or practices at school.
* These statistics clearly indicate that most LGBTQ+ students persistently feel unwelcome at school. School boards have the power to make a difference by implementing comprehensive policies on LGBTQ+ inclusion and anti-bullying.

**What do our Jewish values say about safe schools and LGBTQ+ inclusion?**

* The Torah teaches in Genesis 1:27 that everyone is created *b'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God) and deserves dignity and respect, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
* The Talmud teaches that “anyone who humiliates another in public, it is as though he were spilling blood.” (Bava Metzia 58b) We are commanded that we must not stand idly by the blood of our neighbor (Leviticus 19:16), meaning that as Jews we are obligated to prevent bullying.
* Rabbi Hillel taught that a person who is shamed (or timid) cannot learn (Pirkei Avot 2:5). We must then create schools where students feel confidence and belonging, not shame and timidity.

**How can I contact my School Board members?**

Visit [XQ School Board Lookup](https://schoolboard.xqsuperschool.org/) After inputting your address, you should be shown your school district’s website as well as the names and email addresses of your school board members. From there, get in contact with your school board to ask what they are doing to promote LGBTQ+ equality and inclusion in your school district.

Please contact RAC Legislative Assistant Mason Purdy for more information about model school board policies, how to connect with your elected officials, or the Reform Movement’s work on LGBTQ+ equality.