

# Welcoming Schools Seal of Excellence

National Recognition of Exemplary Schools

## Why Inclusion Matters

When students feel safe and supported at school, their ability to focus, engagement in class, and academic performance improve. Evidence shows that schools that embrace inclusivity and actively combat bias-based bullying see improved outcomes for students, educators, and families.

- **More than 50% of LGBTQ+ youth** report that they have been **victimized at school** at least once in the past year because of their LGBTQ+ identity. Only **1 in 5** of students who reported the bullying felt that adults helped.
- 89% of educators who participate in the Welcoming Schools program report **greater confidence** in supporting LGBTQ+ students.

## Benefits of the Seal of Excellence

- **Students** develop a sense of belonging, demonstrate upstander behaviors, and improve academic performance and social connections.
- **Educators** gain the confidence and skills to support all learners through an anti-bias, anti-racist framework.
- **Families and caregivers** experience authentic engagement with schools that celebrate diversity and promote respect.
- **School communities** demonstrate leadership and commitment to inclusion, earning national recognition through the Seal of Excellence.

## The Path to Achievement

Schools demonstrate commitment through the implementation of **9 key Benchmarks**: Policies & Procedures, Leadership Team, Professional Development, Lesson Plans & Activities, Bulletin Boards, Family Engagement, Books & Resources, School Climate Assessment, and Additional Artifacts.

Each Benchmark is supported with guidance from a dedicated Welcoming Schools staff member.

## Commitment & Support

- 2-3 year implementation timeline.
- Program costs vary based on several factors - please reach out to our team to discuss details and explore the best fit for your needs at [welcomingschools@hrc.org](mailto:welcomingschools@hrc.org).
- Formal participation includes dedicated consultation, weekly office hours, and quarterly Peer-to-Peers.

## Recognition & Celebration

Upon completion of the program, schools are honored with the Seal of Excellence banner at a community-wide event joined by HRC and local/state leadership.

Start your journey toward the Seal of Excellence today by reaching out to [welcomingschools@hrc.org](mailto:welcomingschools@hrc.org)