

Students Speak Out!

"As a straight male... I was constantly called 'the gay kid'. Nothing seemed to change the fact that simply because I [participated in arts], I was gay...

[Because of] the constant nagging of teammates, and sometimes even coaches... I gave up on the soccer team altogether, despite the fact that I had only one season left [and] how much I truly loved the sport."

-- Former Hume Fogg Student

"I have had to lie many times about my sexual orientation when students asked if i was a 'fag'. They made these assumptions because of the way I speak."

-- Current MLK Student

"My boyfriend came out as bisexual [and] everyone thought it was fascinating, disgusting, horrible, an abomination, hilarious.... If there's an unflattering way to mess with this 17-year-old boy, they probably already thought of it and carried it out. People still joke around about his orientation, and it makes me sick....After 17 years he thought he could be himself, but the ignorance of kids just couldn't accept it.... If there's absolutely any way to put an end to all this, I truly hope Metro will take it."

-- Current Hillsboro Student

Help Get The Word Out!

Our coalition wants to spread its message of safety and equality throughout Nashville by distributing bumper stickers, buttons, and postcards for free to students, parents, and community members.

Your contribution of any amount will help our coalition become a more visible and powerful call for a policy that protects all MNPS students.

We are accepting donations through the **ACLU of Tennessee**. You can support us through the form below.

Please accept my contribution of \$ _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail (opt): _____

Phone (opt): _____

Please make your check payable to:

MNPS Support Student Safety

c/o ACLU of Tennessee

P.O. Box 120160

Nashville, TN 37212

Please write "MNPS Project" on the memo line of your check.

___ Please add me to the MNPS: Support Student Safety e-mail list.



MNPS: Support Student Safety

An initiative led by current and former Metro Nashville students to increase student safety and ensure that every student has the chance to succeed.

Who We Are

MNPS: Support Student Safety is a coalition led by current and former students of the Metropolitan-Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) who are working to persuade the MNPS school district to expand its non-discrimination policy to protect all of its students. We began our project in June 2007 with the assistance of the LGBT Project of the American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee.

A number of Nashville's most well-respected child welfare and youth organizations have joined our coalition. These organizations include:

- ◆ **The Oasis Center**
- ◆ **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee**
- ◆ **Centerstone**
- ◆ **One-in-Teen Youth Services**
- ◆ **The Child and Family Policy Center at the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies**
- ◆ **Mayor's Youth Council**

Members of the MNPS: Support Student Safety coalition have one overriding goal: *to ensure that all MNPS students have access to public education that is safe and free from discrimination.*

Contact us at changemyschool@gmail.com

* Our coalition is not associated with the Metro Nashville Public School district.



Our Objective

Our coalition is working to have the MNPS school district adopt a non-discrimination policy that states:

“It is the policy of the Metro Nashville Public Schools to afford all persons, regardless of their actual or perceived race, religion, color, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, or gender, including gender identity, expression, and appearance, equal rights and opportunities in all of its educational institutions.”

Why is this important?

There has never been a time where the Nashville education community has been more committed to addressing the negative effects, such as increased drop-out rates and school violence, of bullying and discrimination within MNPS. As Mayor Karl Dean recently said: “**Above all else, children should feel safe in school.**” A comprehensive non-discrimination policy would be a concrete step towards helping students feel more connected and safe at school, thereby benefiting all students and the city of Nashville as a whole.

How The Policy Will Help Increase Student Safety and Decrease The Drop-Out Rate

★ ***What's the connection between student safety and student drop-out rates?***

Simply put, students who feel unsafe at school are more likely to drop out or miss school. According to a 2005 nationwide study, compared to students who were not harassed, students who reported being harassed because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation were more than 3 times as likely:

- ◆ to carry a weapon to school
- ◆ seriously consider suicide, and
- ◆ miss at least one day at school within a 30 day period.

The same study by GLSEN also showed that as a result of harassment and the feeling that there is nowhere to turn to in the school system, 28% of gay youth drop out of school, a rate 3 times as high as the national average for heterosexual students.

★ ***Do educators support this type of policy?***

Overwhelmingly, yes. School districts across the country have passed comprehensive non-discrimination or anti-bullying policies including nearby cities such as **Memphis, Knoxville, Gainesville, St. Louis, and Little Rock.** Indeed, the 2005 GLSEN study showed that in schools with comprehensive policies, students reported “a more positive overall school climate,” “fewer incidents of harassment and bullying, fewer bias-related comments and less name-calling, greater feelings of safety, [and] improved connections to school, community, and supportive adults.”