

CHILDREN & YOUTH COMMUNITY PLAN (CYCP) REPORT CARD

ALEXANDRIA'S PROGRESS TOWARDS LGBTQ+ AWARENESS EDUCATION FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

CYCP Goal

All children, youth, and families will have positive experiences.

Education and awareness towards the LGBTQ+ community can impact individual experience by facilitating civil interactions between community members who are and are not apart of the LGBTQ+ community.

The existing FLE curriculum incorporates gender neutral education even if it is not a specific identity-focused lesson. However, some issues come from teachers who might be struggling with actually delivering the gender-focused parts of the curriculum.

Alexandria does seem to provide any survey to collect student and staff feedback regarding FLE education.

Alexandria Spotlight

- This Report Card recognizes the age-appropriate Family Life Education (FLE) curriculum designed for K-12 students in the City.
- The curriculum addresses family living, relationships, and personal identity.
 - For example, the 6th grade FLE curriculum covers gender identify and associated stereotypes during unit 2, Lesson 3.
- The curriculum goes through ongoing revisions, most recently being revised and approved in 2024.

In the Virginia Commonwealth, local school divisions can decide whether or not to provide FLE to students, which grade levels it is offered, and the curriculum they can use. There are still standards and guidelines established by the state.

The Review of Family Life Education in the Commonwealth Report (November 2020) provides a summary of responses from a survey tool:

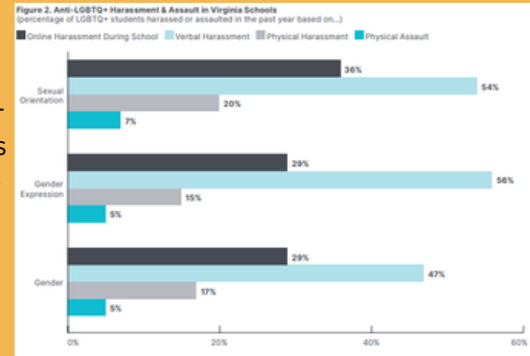
- 113 divisions (which serves 96.2% of Virginia's student population) report offering FLE instruction.
- 71% of FLE curriculums include a range of contraception options in instruction.
- 43% of FLE curriculums include sexual orientation in instruction.
- 36% of FLE curriculums include gender identity in instruction.

This data shows that education regarding LGBTQ+ topics are not as prevalent amongst the school divisions that provide FLE.

Why This Result Matters

According to the GLSEN 2021 National Climate Survey, it was demonstrated that many Virginia schools did not have a safe or friendly environment for LGBTQ+ students. Many students regularly heard anti-LGBTQ+ remarks. Furthermore, data showed higher rates of verbal harassment towards LGBTQ+ students regarding sexual orientation and gender expression.

While Alexandria does not have specific data on the academic environment for LGBTQ+ students, unfair treatment towards LGBTQ+ students is still an issue faced on a national level. This means that this is a relevant issue that should be measured and addressed within the City of Alexandria to improve mental health among students and create a healthier learning environment for all students. Overall, in measuring and addressing possible stigma or misunderstanding towards the LGBTQ+ community among the younger levels of education, students can be more equipped to interact with different types of people in their community.



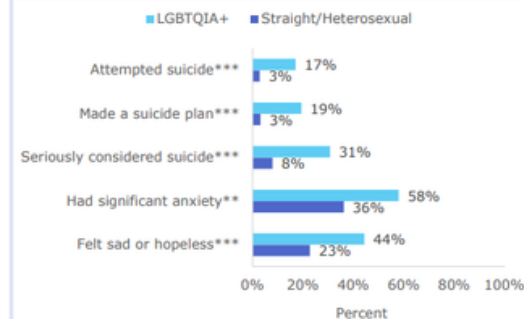
How are we doing?

According to the ACPS Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (2014-2023), higher rates of LGBTQIA+ students are struggling with mental health compared to their heterosexual peers.

Currently, there are no specific programming or policies in place to address the statistical gap within the mental health crisis in the city.

Focus Area: Mental Health (Grade 8)

Figure 18. Anxiety, Depression, & Suicide by Sexuality (2023)



Eighth graders who identified as **LGBTQIA+** were **significantly more likely** to report attempting suicide, making a suicide plan, seriously considering suicide, having significant problems with feeling very anxious, and/or feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in the past year compared to their peers who identified as straight/heterosexual.

Note: In 2023, 88 eighth graders identified as LGBTQIA+. This number includes students who indicated that were questioning their sexuality as well as students who identified as LGBTQIA+. See **Appendix C Table 16** for details.

31% of 8th graders who identified as **LGBTQIA+** (n=27) reported that they **seriously considering suicide** in the past year

Strategy from CYCP

One strategy to address the mental health crisis among LGBTQ+ students include additional programming or city-sponsored workshops that educate community members on sexual orientation and gender related topics. This can dissolve stigma or clear up misunderstanding towards the LGBTQ+ community.

Champion

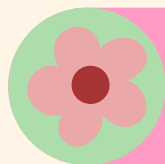


Community Partners

ACPS DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING, THE SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD (SHAB), AND THE ACPS SCHOOL BOARD.

Safe Space Nova is an organization dedicated to creating a safe space for LGBTQ+ youth. This partnership would be beneficial in creating awareness or designing workshops or programs for LGBTQ+ education and awareness.

Additionally, certain ACPS departments work in revising FLE education. This would be helpful in collaboration to ensure accurate, appropriate, and effective information is used regarding gender and identity education.



Implementation Progress

There is no current measurement on perceptions from or towards LGBTQ+ youth in the city, which would be helpful in figuring out what stigma may be strongest within the city.

There is also no active feedback from community members towards the revised FLE curriculum, which would be helpful in quantifying how many people in the city are supportive or unsupportive of the learning topics within the instruction.

Overall, progress is much slower due to lack of specific data on LGBTQ+ community members.

Proposed Solutions

Policy change would be executed on the local level through the Alexandria City School Board. Staff training to communicate and facilitate LGBTQ+ friendly discussion would be one helpful strategy. Overall, surveys to measure current perceptions or stigma would be another the most helpful place to begin strategizing.

Citations

ACPS, et al. ALEXANDRIA YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS) 2019 & 2023 Survey Results. 15 Dec. 2023, www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/yrbs_2019_and_2023_report.pdf.

ACPS et al. Family Life Education: 6th Grade Curriculum Guide. 2024, drive.google.com/file/d/1WkbL885U-ILka09_XqdlYRIFH4h8OgIr/view.

Department of Education. "RD82 (Published 2022) - a Review of Family Life Education in the Commonwealth Report - November 2021." Virginia.gov, 2022, rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2022/RD82.

"Family Life Education - Alexandria City Public Schools." K12.Va.us, 2025, www.acps.k12.va.us/academics/family-life-education.

GLSEN. School Climate for LGBTQ+ Students in Virginia (2021 State Snapshot: Virginia). 2023, maps.glsen.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/GLSEN_2021_NSCS_State_Snapshots_VA.pdf.

Performance Measurements: Key Takeaways

The City has done well in incorporating some LGBTQ+ topics in the FLE curriculum.

HOW WELL WAS IT DONE?

The FLE curriculum has been most recently updated as of 2024, which makes the information accurate and relevant.

However, there is barely any data that provides insight on the academic and social experiences of LGBTQ+ students compared to their heterosexual peers. This makes it hard to put more numbers on the effectiveness of the current FLE topics being taught.

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

According to the ACPS Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (2014-2023), students most recently reported:

(LGBTQIA+ to heterosexual peers)

- Persistent sadness/hopelessness (49% to 27%)
- Seriously considering suicide (27% to 8%)
- Making a suicide plan (15% to 3%)

DIRECTION

Overall, we are headed in the direction towards diverse and inclusive education through FLE revisions and city resources provided for LGBTQ+ community members.

However, there is no current indication that the city plans on focusing LGBTQ+ specific education or lessons.

RESOURCES

- [Alexandria Resources for LGBTQ+](#)
- [Safe Place Nova](#)
- [Alexandria Mental Health Outpatient Services](#)
- [Alexandria City Youth Risk and Behavioral Survey \(2019-2023\)](#)