Facing Pushback in School Districts

Advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusive schools can spark discomfort or even outright opposition. Whether you're speaking at a school board meeting, hosting a family night, or talking with a colleague, you may encounter resistance. It's important to remember: you don't have to be an expert to be effective. You just need to stay calm, grounded in the foundations of Welcoming Schools, and focused on what truly matters—the well-being of every student.

Key Messages & Mythbusters

When misinformation shows up, you can gently but clearly reframe the conversation.
Here are a few helpful anchors

❌ MYTH	✅ TRUTH
"Talking about LGBTQ+ people is inappropriate for kids." **"My child is too young to learn about LGBTQ+ topics."**	LGBTQ+ people are part of every community, including families and classrooms. Discussing LGBTQ+ topics in school shows respect for all families and individuals and lays the foundation for valuing all human beings. When we reflect the diversity of students and families—including LGBTQ+ ones—we help all children feel seen and respected.
"Teaching about gender or pronouns is confusing kids."	Research shows that when children are introduced to inclusive language and ideas, they're more accepting and better equipped to navigate a diverse world.
"These students are too young to be LGBTQ+"	The 2023 HRC Youth Report suggests that 11 is the average age lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer youth realized they were not heterosexual and 12.5 years old was the average age transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary youth realized they were not cisgender. Additionally, no one questions heterosexual or cisgender youth for being too young to know their identities.
"Transgender girls are pretending so they can get into women's safe spaces."	Transgender girls are not pretending to be girls, it is who they are. It is not appropriate to encourage a culture of blame or shame based on students' identities. Students are accountable for their behaviors in schools that impact school climate, regardless of gender.
"Being non-binary or transgender is new and trendy! Youth are just imitating what they see in media and on TikTok."	Non-binary and transgender people have existed for centuries in nearly every culture across the globe. What has changed is access to information, shared language, and more acceptance from adults for non-binary and transgender youth.

❌ MYTH	✅ TRUTH
"This is pushing a political agenda."	Supporting the dignity and safety of all students is not political—it's part of our shared responsibility as educators and caregivers.
"My religious beliefs don't align with this."	Equity is not political—it's educational best practice. Our schools serve students from many different backgrounds. Ensuring respect and safety for LGBTQ+ students doesn't ask anyone to change their beliefs—only to uphold inclusive, nondiscriminatory practices.
"Families should decide what values are taught."	Families are critical partners in education. At the same time, schools have a responsibility to uphold equity, prevent harm, and teach respect for people across lines of race, gender, identity, and family structure.
"Kids are too young to know if they're LGBTQ+."	Just like kids understand their racial and cultural identity early on, many LGBTQ+ youth know who they are from a young age. Our job is not to decide if their identity is valid, but to create space where they are safe to be themselves.
"We're focusing too much on LGBTQ+ topics and not enough on academics."	Students can't learn if they don't feel safe. The same is true for Black students experiencing racial bias and LGBTQ+ students experiencing gender-based harassment. Inclusion improves learning outcomes by building connected, respectful classrooms.
"If we talk about this, we'll encourage kids to be LGBTQ+."	You can't 'turn' someone LGBTQ+. But you can show them they matter. Visibility doesn't change a person's identity—it helps them feel less alone.
"Parents should have total control over what their children are exposed to."	Families are essential partners in education. At the same time, schools have a legal and ethical duty to uphold non-discrimination policies and protect every student's right to feel safe and included.
"This is a distraction from more serious issues."	Racial justice and LGBTQ+ inclusion are deeply connected. Many students live at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities—like Black trans youth—who face compounded harm. A truly welcoming school cares for all of who a student is.
"These topics belong at home, not in school."	Many LGBTQ+ students don't have support at home. For them, school might be the only place where they can be affirmed. Inclusive schools ensure that no child has to hide who they are in order to learn. When we ignore identity in school, we allow bias and bullying to grow. Proactively affirming students—especially those from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities—creates safer environments for everyone.
"Being an LGBTQ+ young person puts you at risk for depression, anxiety, and even suicide."	Being LGBTQ+ does NOT put someone at risk. Homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia or how LGBTQ+ youth are treated by their family, peers, and adults in their lives can dramatically impact their mental health and well-being. Youth with higher levels of support, report fewer mental health challenges.