# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Russell D. Johnston, Acting Commissioner |
| **Date:**  | April 19, 2024 |
| **Subject:** | Update on the Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students |

The Board meeting on April 30, 2024 will include a presentation on the Safe Schools Program for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students. This anti-bullying initiative is a collaborative effort between the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE or the Department) and the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth (Commission).

The Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students aligns with DESE's educational vision, advancing teaching and learning environments that are antiracist, inclusive, and embrace a multitude of cultures and identities. The program places a high value on acknowledging and supporting each student and their family and ensuring access to equitable opportunities and experiences for all students, particularly students who have been historically underserved due to their race, gender, sexual orientation, or abilities. The program helps advance DESE’s strategic objectives, including supporting the whole student, so all students feel connected and ready to learn. The Department and Commission have a long-term commitment to carry out this work and present it periodically to the Board, as outlined in our 2013 Memorandum of Understanding.

The presentation will be led by DESE’s Associate Commissioner of Student and Family Support Rachelle Engler Bennett, Associate Commissioner of the Center for Instructional Support Erin Hashimoto-Martell, Commission Executive Director Shaplaie Brooks, and Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students Director, Jason Wheeler. Additionally, student and administrator perspectives will be offered to provide greater insights into both the challenges and the promising strategies that can help LGBTQ students – and all students – thrive.

For your convenience, we have included below several online resources relevant to the presentation:

* [Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/lgbtq/)
* [Commission on LGBTQ Youth](http://mass.gov/cgly)
* [Guidance for Massachusetts Public Schools Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment - Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/lgbtq/GenderIdentity.html)
* [Principles for Ensuring Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/lgbtq/Principles-SafeEnvironment.html)

We look forward to the discussion of this important topic.