

## **Resource Center - Statement on MacArthur High School Walkout and Irving ISD Response**

Every student in Texas deserves a safe and respectful environment where they can learn and thrive. Officials at Irving ISD, however, have reportedly chosen to punish faculty and staff who express their support for safe learning environments.

Yesterday, hundreds of students walked out of MacArthur High School in a demonstration opposing the removal of “safe space” signs and in solidarity with faculty members who have reportedly been suspended for displaying them.

### **Irving ISD Statement**

In Irving ISD, our campuses are a safe zone for all students - not just our classrooms, but every inch of our schools.

*Excerpt from Irving ISD statement*

In [response](#) to the walkout, the district claims to provide a “safe zone” for all students. The district endorsed a policy of “neutral” signs and displays on campus, saying “safe space” signs that are a visible symbol of understanding and solidarity with LGBTQ students would violate this policy.

The district further stated, “while educators have the right to express their personal viewpoints on their personal time, Irving ISD policy . . . states that teachers shall not use the classroom to transmit personal beliefs regarding political or sectarian issues.”

LGBTQ students in Texas face unsafe campus climates due to the failures of ISDs across the state. According to [GLSEN’s 2019 State Snapshot for Texas](#):

- 40% of LGBTQ students report hearing school staff make negative remarks about someone’s gender expression.
- 74% of LGBTQ students report verbal harassment due to sexual orientation.
- 59% of LGBTQ students report verbal harassment due to gender expression.
- More than a quarter of students experience physical harassment due to gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation.
- Nearly 60% of transgender students have been prevented from using their gender-affirming name or pronouns in school.
- Only 5% attend a school with a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity.

Resource Center CEO Cece Cox said, “If Irving ISD is not providing a solution, they are perpetuating the problem. By removing safe space signage and taking action

against teachers who visibly support LGBTQ students, Irving ISD is fostering an unwelcoming and potentially threatening environment that only makes life more difficult for LGBTQ students. The district should foster dialogue, not limit it. They are failing to meet their obligation to serve all students equitably.”

School districts in Texas are required by law to protect students from bullying and harassment. Both the U.S. Constitution and Title IX prohibit districts from being deliberately indifferent to bullying.

Irving ISD should take immediate action. Resource Center calls on the district to:

- Return all teachers who have been suspended due to supporting LGBTQ student safe spaces to the classroom;
- Develop a comprehensive, inclusive plan to support LGBTQ students, including a commitment for [Gender-Sexuality Alliances](#) (GSAs) on every high school campus to promote dialogue and understanding.
- Provide administration and staff training on LGBTQ identities and risk factors faced by LGBTQ students in Texas.

As the primary LGBTQ community center serving North Texas, we support the MacArthur High School students in their walkout and stand in solidarity with the Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA) at the school.

Any LGBTQ-identified youth age 12-17, including Irving ISD students, who are seeking a safe space [should contact Youth First](#), a Resource Center community group that addresses the challenges they face.