



Guide to hosting inclusive school formals.

Inclusive school formals and events.

School formals, deb balls and school dances can be an exciting time for senior students. For same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students however, participating in school events may not always bring the same level of excitement and in fact might be a source of anxiety or fear. This is a quick guide to the policy and practice that can help make your school event safe, inclusive and fun for all students.

1

Planning.

Students, the planning committee, school administration and the school community can work together in order to create safer, more inclusive and more respectful school formals and school events more generally. Making the event fun for everyone should be a part of the planning and discussion process, so putting together a planning committee is the first thing you need to do. Try having a fixed agenda item about inclusion or diversity and make sure you include all the other items covered in this guide.

2

Policy.

Find out if your school already has a policy on formals or student events. Does it mention who students are allowed to bring with them, and what they can wear? The planning group can help the school develop a policy or revise the existing one. In the run up to the event make sure all students, staff and families are aware of your policy and that it covers dress code, partners and discrimination.

3

Dress code.

Students have the right to feel safe and comfortable at their formal. Some schools may have a dress code policy; however some strict dress code policies may discriminate against or exclude gender diverse or transgender students. Work to ensure the dress code is inclusive by allowing students to express their identity in whatever way makes them comfortable within reason, including at deb balls. Make sure that students, staff and families are aware of what expectations there are around what to wear.

Guide to hosting inclusive school formals.

4

Partners.

If students are permitted to bring someone to the event, make sure your policy explicitly states that all partners and friends of students are welcome, including partners or friends of the same sex or gender. This includes who someone is allowed to partner with at a deb ball. Having this written down will also show more support for those with same sex or transgender parents/ guardians, as well as for same sex attracted or transgender staff members who may attend.

5

No discrimination.

The policy needs to include putting signs up on the door and/ or inside the venue that clearly state that the event is a safe space for all students, including same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students. Students and staff should be aware that negative language, homophobic or transphobic bullying and bad behaviour in general will not be tolerated at the event, or in the lead up to the event.

6

Event promotion.

Make sure your posters and other advertising materials promoting the event will be inclusive of all students, including same sex, intersex or gender diverse individuals or couples, and that the dress code is inclusive, with students able to bring a partner of their choice and express their identity in whatever way makes them comfortable within reason.

7

Getting it right on the night.

Hold a meeting with the staff, chaperones and other adults supervising the event and ensure they are all aware of your event's policy around supporting gender diversity and sexual diversity. This group should also be given guidance on how to address any homophobic or transphobic behaviour that they may witness at the event. This includes addressing negative language and behaviour and being available for young people to talk to about anything that has made them feel uncomfortable.

✓

Safe Schools Coalition Australia can provide further support.



Facilitating planning discussions.



Staff professional development.



Facilitating group student talks.



Print and online resources.



Guidance on updating policies.

Safe Schools Coalition Australia can work with you to make your school events safe and inclusive environments for all same sex attracted, gender diverse and intersex students, staff and families.