Take-aways from Conversation with Student Panelists:
Ash, Claire, Esmée, La'Tavi, Nic, Noah, Noe'aah, and Reed
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Question #1: If my school could just pay attention to _____, my day or my school year would be so much better.

- Usage of student's pronouns
  - *La'Tavi:* I had a teacher who wouldn't follow my pronouns and called me by my birth sex, and it's really dysphoric.
  - *Noah:* I've actually had a teacher give my entire class a lecture about how you are what you are and you can't change that.
- Usage and understanding of neopronouns, which are pronouns beyond she/her, they/them, and he/him
- Providing resources for trans students
- Bullying toward trans students from students and teachers
- *Noah:* "...if schools would just pay attention to what would make the student comfortable, because in the end of the day, you're teaching the student."

Question #2: Does the school that you attend have a policy or procedure on how to inform them of your name or pronouns? Was there someone who could help you with that process?

- Scenario 1, *La'Tavi:* Yes. My guidance counselor allows us to come to discuss if we have a name change or pronoun change. If a teacher refuses to follow it, we have to let her know so she can make sure that our teachers will actually follow our pronouns and our preferred name.
- Scenario 2, *Ash:* Yes. My middle school's policy was if they find out that there is a student who identifies differently than what is in school records, the guidance counselors bring them in and talk with them about it. We have a procedure that asks how they want to be referred to, their pronouns, stuff with locker rooms, bathrooms, and all that.
- Scenario 3, *Noah:* No. My school did not have any kind of policy. I was the person who pushed for that. Now we have a policy where they will change your name, your sex marker, and everything so that in the system, it will come up however you want. It took a lot of time. I helped change it from trans students having to go to the bathroom assigned to their assigned sex at birth, to actually them being able to choose whichever bathroom they would like.

Question #3: What are the LGBTQIA+ friendly supports that your school has or you wish they had that you appreciate?

- Gay-Straight Alliance
  - *Esmée:* What these clubs do is they foster a sense of community, create a space where people can meet each other. People can make friends, people can connect with each other and people can feel safe and supported in an environment. It's a lot like in a way when you walk into your school and you're wearing like a Halloween costume and nobody else is. And you're like, "Oh my God, I feel so out of place right now." That's what many LGBTQ+ kids might go through at school is they may feel out of place, or they may feel excluded. These clubs help that, these clubs make people feel that they have a place in school because when you're surrounded by a bunch of people who are just like, it really touches you in terms of making you feel like that you're not alone, and that you're supported, and that you're valued as a person.
- LGBTQ+ inclusive health education and sex education
- Diversity council
  - *Nic:* Towards the end of my freshman year, I founded my school's diversity council and this is a group that wasn't there before. But it was essentially just a group where we coordinate events and create materials to help support LGBTQ+ students and educate the student body and staff about how they can best stand in solidarity with LGBTQ+ students.
- Mental health support groups
- On the first day, teachers asking all students for their pronouns and asking if their pronouns can be used when to talking to their parents
- Civil rights club
- Reducing sexism and violence program

Question #4: What should schools do so that they do not out students in front of their parents?

- Ask students for their name and pronouns and identify in what settings to use which name and pronouns (e.g., in front of the class, in front of the student's family, etc.)

Question #5: If you could tell a teacher one thing that they could do to help you to feel respected and safe in school, what would you say?

- Give all students a form at the beginning of the school year to fill out about their pronouns, name, and identity.
- Facilitate a conversation with the entire class about how we need to be respectful of others' identities.
- *Noah:* Just treating people like normal human beings would be great. That's all we want. That could just fix everything.
- Use non-gendered language in classrooms
  - Replace "boys and girls" with "students" or "kids"
  - Rather than splitting students up based on gender, separating by random groups (e.g., "Team Watermelon vs. Team Apple")

Question #6: Pretend it's the year 2050 and we're in a new world. What would it look like or feel like to be in a school where every student feels safe, valued, respected, and empowered?

- *Esmée:* My future is seeing every single school having a GSA that wants one, and that comes in just the form of every school being able to have adequate support and adequate guidance for LGBTQ+ students. I see a world where people don't need to be afraid for being different and where that difference and that uniqueness is embraced. I see this as a world where people do not get judged based on the basis of gender, or sexual orientation, or gender identity. I see it as a world where everybody is treated as humans first and foremost and with that same level of respect that everybody deserves. What I envision is I am creating a giant network of GSA's up in New England and I'm starting to gather up names. I'm envisioning that will be running and it'll still be running, and that every single school in New England and every single student in New England will be able to have access to that. I see trans people being able to play in sports and I see many more awesome things.
- *Reed:* In 50 years, I would hope that LGBTQI+ kids get to walk into school with the same amount of confidence that the cis, straight, able bodied white boys get to. Like, there's no fear of like, "Well, what if something happens today?" Or like, "Oh God, not again." And just being able to walk around with the same confidence that everybody else does. In 50 years, I would like to see kids worrying more about homework than how their friends and family will react when they come out. And I would really like to see kids openly experimenting with their gender expression and who they like, and not worrying about, "Well, what if I'm wrong?" Or, "What if this is a big mistake?" I'd just really like to

see kids like me be able to walk around with confidence that isn't fake or put on. But I would really like to see it happen before 50 years passes of course.

- *Ash:* What I would like to see in schools and the community, and just kind of everywhere, by 2050 would be just more open communication about LGBTQ issues and problems. Like in my school, I discussed this with the guidance counselor. And we kind of agreed that my school was not ready to have an assembly trying to get everyone to understand that we need to respect each other, because a lot of the students that I go to school with are not in a good mindset yet to openly talk about issues that affect LGBT students. It's just one of those things that I hope in the future everyone will be able to respect each other and understand that even if you don't agree, you have to try and support everyone regardless of your beliefs or anything like that.

- *La'Tavi:* I hope to see that teachers are actually respecting students' pronouns, even if their gender expression does not match what their pronouns are. And I'd like to see more sex ed that is towards LGBTQ+ people and not just one type of relationship, like a straight relationship, and not just discussing that they have these types of condoms. Like I wish there was more explained about same sex or LGBTQ+ sex education. And I hope to see that teachers are actually cracking down on homophobic or transphobic language that is being used towards students who are LGBTQ+.

- *Noe'aah:* Having people walking into school and being like, "Hey, everything's going to be great today. Today is going to be a great day school." Instead of going to school, "Hey, am I gonna get beat up walking home today?" Because kids at school can't fathom the idea that I'm just trying to be normal. And that teachers and other students are respectful, and just understand that we are just trying to live life just like them. And we can't change anything about ourselves, we just are what we are and we can't change that.

- *Claire:* For me, it's like the little things. I'd like to see in math problems, word problems, like the people using they/them pronouns, neopronouns. I'd love to see that. I think those are like small things that can really affirm people's identity. I'd like to see, like I said before, students not being split up into gendered groups for no reason. I'd like to see comprehensive sex education that includes same sex sex education, and also sex education that includes and acknowledges people like me who are asexual, aromantic and who might experience a relationship to sex differently than other people.

- *Nic:* Yeah, I would say that as an LGBTQ+ student who is also a person of color, specifically black, and living with both those identity simultaneously, it's really hard for me to imagine a liberated future with safe schools without also recognizing not just discrimination based on sexuality and gender identity, but also discrimination based on

race, class, religion and all those different identities. So I think that a liberated future for me looks like getting rid of every policy, every practice and every system that still leads to unequal outcomes between students of different groups. So whether that means we have to look at what homes people are coming in and how we can get everybody the resources that they need when they're outside of the school building. Whether that looks like abolishing laws that have people not teach about LGBTQ+ sex ed, or have people not teach about LGBTQ+ issues. Whether that means making sure that all students are able to get the accommodations they need, whether that be meals, access to facilities, or whatever they need. I definitely see a liberated future as being one where all students can have the same experiences that, as was said before, cisgender, straight, white male students are having today.