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I asked a question, and the U.S. Department of Education acted

Jul. 12, 2013 ? Isaias Guzman

One year ago, I met with Secretary Arne Duncan [1] and asked him to support LGBT youth by collecting data about our experiences and challenges in school.

This afternoon, I jumped on the phone with him and other youth advocates to follow up.

The Department of Education will now collect data on reported incidents of bullying based on sexual orientation through the Civil Rights Data Collection [2]. And they credit our meeting a year ago for this announcement, showing that youth voices are key to finding solutions to bullying and creating safer schools.

Data collection might not sound that exciting, but this is huge news. In order for the government and schools to take a problem seriously, they need to know it exists. And they need to understand exactly what?s happening to come up with real solutions. Students can use this data to advocate for enumerated anti-bullying policies, and that means a lot in conservative areas where schools might not otherwise pay attention to this issue.

With this announcement, 15,000 school districts will have to report incidents of harassment

based on sexual orientation and the data will then be available publicly.

Of course, data on bullying won?t capture the full experience of LGBT youth in schools. There are so many more unanswered questions about access, educational equity and funding, school discipline, curriculum inclusiveness, and more.

But there is no question that this is a remarkable step that will greatly help our advocacy for all students to have the chance to succeed. Today, I?m proud.

**Photo from the Homeroom Blog. Official Department of Education photo by Paul Wood.*

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Links:
[1] http://www.ed.gov/blog/2012/06/lgbt-students-give-secretary-duncan-homework/
[2] http://ocrdata.ed.gov/