SCHOOL CLIMATE

BEST PRACTICES FOR SERVING LGBTQ STUDENTS

A Teaching Tolerance Guide

TEACHING
TOLERANCE
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

To feel safe and to feel seen. To feel valued and capable of growth. These are simple concepts—basic pillars of student achievement and the results of good pedagogy.

For many **queer** students, these rights remain out of reach.

We recognize the complicated history of the word "queer" and that its reclamation as a positive or even neutral term of identity isn't universally accepted. In this guide, we use *queer* as an inclusive term to refer to those who fall outside of cisgender or heterosexual identities—not as a pejorative.

According to data from GLSEN—an organization that provides resources, research and advocacy in support of queer youth—more than half of LGBTQ students feel unsafe at school. Fewer than 25 percent of those students see positive representations of queer people in their classrooms. More than half hear negative remarks about their sexuality or gender identity from school staff. And, due to these and other circumstances, LGBTQ students are more likely to miss school, see their grades suffer, and to face dire consequences outside of school, such as homelessness.

A recent survey from the Human Rights Campaign shows these problems haven't dissipated; just a quarter of LGBTQ students feel they can be their authentic selves at school, and only 27 percent say they always feel safe in the classroom.

Current research also offers reasons to be hopeful, but that hope is grounded in action. LGBTQ students who go to school in a fully inclusive environment—where both curriculum and schoolwide policies value their identities—experience more positive outcomes. They also experience less harassment, feel more valued by school staff and face fewer barriers to success.

We also know that an LGBTQ-inclusive school benefits *all* students. Seeing LGBTQ identities valued in the classroom, in the curriculum and in day-to-day interactions inspires empathy, understanding and respect. The overall school climate is safer. The lessons on history, literature and culture are more complete. And the dangerous expectations of constricted gender roles—from the mask of suppressed emotional expression placed on boys to the unrealistic beauty standards facing girls—can give way to a culture that values all students.

This work isn't revolutionary. It reflects basic pedagogy and best practices.

With this guide, we hope to help school leaders ensure that all students feel safe, seen and capable of success; to ensure that the curriculum is as complete and representative as possible; to ensure that the school climate fosters open and respectful dialogue among all students and staff; and to prepare youth to engage and thrive within our diverse democracy.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The journey toward an LGBTQ-inclusive school climate begins with simple steps recommended in each of the four key areas of this guide:

➥ **Policy checkup**. Review the constitutional rights of LGBTQ students and see exemplar policies addressing bathrooms, locker rooms, sports, sex education and more.

➥ **Classroom culture**. Learn best practices for making all students feel welcome in your classroom, including how to facilitate conversations, speak up against bullying behavior, and evaluate the ways in which your words or actions could marginalize LGBTQ students.

➥ **Instruction**. Discover strategies for integrating LGBTQ perspectives into your curriculum and navigating challenges that may result.

➥ **Family and community engagement**. Get ideas for responding to pushback from the community, as well as helping LGBTQ students and nontraditional families feel included in school communities.

Along the way, this publication aims to offer guidance for addressing critical conversations, backlash and burning questions, such as:

➥ What do I do if an unaccepting family, an outside group or the community pushes back against inclusive practices?

➥ What do I do if my administration isn't supportive?

➥ What do I do if a student comes out to me?

We know educators can face cultural *and* professional barriers when implementing anti-bias policies and curriculum. But we also know the importance of protecting LGBTQ students and their rights to an education. The steps in this guide can be taken in any K–12 school in any community. Together, we can move toward a world in which LGBTQ-inclusive classrooms are no longer the exception, but the rule.

POLICY CHECKUP

Policies reflect a school's priorities and, like budgets, reveal as much in what they omit as in what's written on the page. It's time more LGBTQ kids see themselves on the page. School leaders who make inclusive policies a priority can set the tone for entire schools and districts.

Some policies that sound standard or fair on the surface can marginalize or discriminate against LGBTQ students. These examples point to aspects of school that can be tough for kids with queer identities—and offer ways to follow the law *and* create more equitable and inclusive policies.

KNOW YOUR STUDENTS' RIGHTS

Creating more inclusive policies begins with an understanding of students' basic rights, as determined by the law *and* by educational best practices. These rights serve as the backbone of good policymaking and equip school leaders with a legal and moral defense against backlash.

➼ **Students have a right to express their gender as they wish—regardless of their sex assigned at birth**. While students must follow basic dress codes—e.g., no profanity on T-shirts—they cannot be forced to align with gender-specific guidelines. The same is true of hair length, makeup, prom attire, jewelry, footwear, etc. Gender-specific guidelines based on a student's assigned sex violate a student's rights to freedom of expression. As long as one student can wear an outfit without breaking rules, so can another.

➼ **Students have a right to be free from discrimination or harassment based on religious views**. LGBTQ students in public schools have equal rights to their peers, including the right to freedom from religious persecution. This means students can't be denied equal access to safety and opportunity due to someone else's religious beliefs.

➼ **Students have a right to express LGBTQ pride**. If your school's dress code allows students to wear T-shirts with slogans or pictures, it's unlawful for your school to ask a student to take off their shirt just because it endorses LGBTQ pride or makes a statement about their LGBTQ identity.

➼ **Students have a right to form Gay-Straight or Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs)**. If your school permits other student clubs, it should allow students to form and publicize a GSA.

➼ **LGBTQ students have a right to attend proms, field trips and dances**. Students cannot be denied equal access to school events or school learning opportunities because of their identity. Students also have the right to take a date of any gender to school dances as long as their date satisfies all attendance eligibility rules, such as age limits.

➥ **Students have a right to access facilities and opportunities that match their gender identity**. This includes bathrooms, locker rooms and gender-specific activities.

➥ **Students have a right to be free of harassment and to have harassment treated seriously**. Public schools must treat harassment or bullying that targets LGBTQ students with the same seriousness they would use in a case of harassment against any other child. Ignoring harassment and bullying is a violation of Title IX.

➥ **LGBTQ students have a right to be "out**." Educators can always ask students to stop disruptive speech—in the classroom during a lecture, for instance. But schools cannot tell a student not to talk about their sexual orientation or gender identity while at school.

➥ **LGBTQ students have a right not to be "outed**." Even if people within the school know about a student's sexual orientation or gender identity, educators cannot disclose a student's private information without consent. Outing LGBTQ students violates their constitutional rights and has led to tragic and fatal consequences.

Schools that successfully acknowledge these rights in their policies take important steps toward providing an environment where LGBTQ students can succeed, feel supported and have access to the same opportunities as their peers.

ANTI-BULLYING/HARASSMENT POLICIES
Research shows that LGBTQ students in schools with inclusive policies are less likely to experience harassment and more likely to advocate for themselves if they do. Naming LGBTQ identities within the policy is critical to promoting physical safety in your school.

An inclusive policy:

➥ **Includes gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation** (actual or perceived) as protected, immutable identities, alongside race, religion, ethnicity, disability, etc. (Unfortunately this isn't possible in South Dakota where, as of 2018, naming protected groups in anti-bullying policies is illegal.)

➥ **Lays out a clear expectation that all incidents of bullying will be investigated seriously.**

➥ **Lays out a clear expectation that staff will intervene to stop all forms of bullying and harassment,** and report incidents when they occur.

➥ **Includes digital harassment** within the scope of potential investigation and punishment, as students often face the worst bullying from peers online. According to GLSEN, nearly half of LGBTQ students face cyberbullying—a persistent threat that cannot be ignored by schools just because it sometimes occurs "off school grounds."

➡ **Makes it clear that students and educators will be held responsible** for bullying behavior and protected from harassment.

Most importantly, these inclusive policies must be widely known. Make sure students, educators and the school community have access to the anti-bullying policy from the beginning of the year. This transparency clearly communicates the expectations to all students and educators and helps LGBTQ students feel safer and valued.

BATHROOM AND LOCKER ROOM ACCESS

Students should have access to bathrooms, locker rooms and other gender-specific spaces that best match their gender identity. Basing bathroom access on assigned sex can have dangerous ramifications for students whose gender expression does not match their assigned sex. According to a survey from UCLA's Williams Institute, 68 percent of transgender people faced verbal harassment while in the bathroom; nearly 10 percent endured physi-

cal assault. Those who fear such harassment will often not go to the bathroom at all, risking their physical health.

Bathroom policies often ignore the identities and experiences of intersex students entirely. Biological or birth certificate criteria might force them to use facilities that do not correspond with their gender expression which, again, can violate their privacy and dissuade them from using these facilities at all.

A common pushback: "I am (or my child is) uncomfortable being in the bathroom with a transgender student."

Be prepared to respond. Point out the difference between accommodation and discrimination. If someone is uncomfortable being in a shared space—for whatever reason—give them the option of a more private facility. Just remember that their discomfort isn't justifiable cause to force another student to use a different bathroom or locker room. A gender-neutral or sin-

For an example of an exemplary policy, see the nondiscrimination addendum adopted by Atherton High School of Louisville, Kentucky, in 2014:

Guidelines on Accessibility for Students

[School Name] shall not discriminate on the use of school space as the basis of gender identity nor gender expression. The school shall accept the gender identity that each student asserts. There is no medical or mental health diagnosis or treatment threshold that students must meet in order to have their gender identity recognized and respected. The assertion may be evidenced by an expressed desire to be consistently recognized by their gender identity. Students ready to socially transition may initiate a process with the school administration to change their name, pronoun, attire, and access to preferred activities and facilities. Each student has a unique process for transitioning. The school shall customize support to optimize each student's integration.

t-t.site/guidelines-on-accessibility

gle-stall bathroom can be made available to any student—LGBTQ or not—who desires more privacy. If such a facility is available, make sure students know they have the option. At primary public-use bathroom locations, post a map that points to where students can find the single-stall or gender-neutral bathroom.

INCLUSIVE SPORTS POLICIES

Schools should, to the best of their ability, allow students to play on sports teams and clubs that best match their gender identity. Sometimes this will run counter to the rules of your state's high school athletics association. As of 2018, 17 **state associations*** have fully inclusive policies, allowing trans and intersex student athletes to participate with teams that correspond to their gender identity—without the requirement of hormone treatments or surgery.

*The states with fully inclusive policies are California, Nevada, Washington, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Minnesota, Florida, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire. Elsewhere, states have varying rules. For example, in Alaska, the state association will honor the school district's policy, inclusive or exclusive. In states like Delaware, Georgia, Illinois and New Mexico, associations require that students meet one or more of the following criteria: a legally changed birth certificate, a time period of undergoing hormone treatments and/or sex reassignment surgery. States like Iowa and North Dakota have different rules for trans boys and trans girls. And some states, such as Alabama and Kentucky, say sports participation must be determined by sex assigned at birth. Six states (Montana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, South Carolina and West Virginia) have no policy at all. Transathlete.com maintains an updated list you can reference.

School leaders in states with policies that require queer students to undergo medical interventions or legal changes can advocate for more inclusive options. Often, such policies cite competitive disadvantage as the reason for instilling such rules, especially in the case of transgender and intersex girls. However, not all students have the financial or social means to pursue medical intervention—and not all transgender or intersex people want to transition medically and physically.

Schools attempting to craft a more inclusive policy for sports participation should keep the following recommendations in mind:

➥ **Students should be able to join intramural clubs and sports teams** that correspond most closely with their gender identity.

➥ **Students should have access to locker rooms** that correspond most closely with their gender identity.

➥ **Gender-neutral changing facilities, locker rooms and bathrooms can be offered to any student who feels uncomfortable changing among their peers,** but should not be *required* as the only option for trans, intersex or nonbinary students. This segregates them.

School leaders in states where there is no policy or where the policy gives power to school districts should draft and suggest inclusive policies, such as the "eligibility to participate" guidelines for a model policy spelled out by Erin E. Buzuvis, director of the Center for Gender & Sexuality Studies at the University of New Hampshire.

Eligibility to participate: A student has the right to participate in athletics in a manner consistent with the sex listed on that student's school records. A student whose gender identity is different from the sex listed on the student's registration records may participate in a manner consistent with the student's gender identity in accordance with the policy below.

Additional guidelines
The [state athletic association] endorses the following guidelines to ensure the nondiscriminatory treatment of transgender students participating in [state athletic association] activities.

1. Changing Areas, Toilets, Showers. A transgender student-athlete should be able to use the locker room, shower and toilet facilities in accordance with the student's gender identity. Every locker room should have some private, enclosed changing areas, showers, and toilets for use by any athlete who desires them … transgender students should not be required to use separate facilities.

2. Hotel Rooms. Transgender student-athletes generally should be assigned to share hotel rooms based on their gender identity, with a recognition that any student who needs extra privacy should be accommodated whenever possible.
t-t.site/trans-athletes

Or this example from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

Physical education is a required course in all grades. … Where there are sex-segregated classes or athletic activities, including intramural and interscholastic athletics, all students must be allowed to participate in a manner consistent with their gender identity.
t-t.site/MA-guidance

➤ Anti-bullying and harassment policies should also cover the actions of coaches and athletes, with specific mention that bullying based on one's gender, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation will not be tolerated.

➤ Students who do not publicly identify as trans or intersex have a right to not be outed to anyone—including peers and teammates—by their coach or school officials.

➤ When traveling, students should be assigned hotel rooms and roommates that correspond with their gender identity; any student who requests privacy should be accommodated while not singled out as demanding "special treatment."

➤ Students should not be forced to wear gendered sports uniforms that conflict with their gender identity.

While the science behind hormones and perceived gender differences is more complicated than many people believe, the idea of trans and intersex students (without hormone treatment) competing alongside cisgender students may generate a lot of pushback from the community. Balancing gender inclusivity and "fair play" can seem difficult, and state rules may determine that teams are ineligible if they allow such participation. In such instances, we recommend schools consider three possibilities:

They can ensure that intramural or non-sanctioned community sports are available to all students, regardless of assigned sex.

They can look for local, co-ed leagues and participate.

They can allow transgender and intersex athletes to practice, travel with the team and compete in exhibitions.

These are imperfect solutions, but schools should strive for the most inclusive option available to them, while continuing to advocate for more inclusive policies at the state or district levels.

DRESS CODES

In compliance with students' legal rights, school dress code policies should allow for students' free expression, including expression of their gender identities and pride in their queer identities. This means never targeting specific students' identities with the dress code. If the gender expression or apparel worn by LGBTQ students is causing distraction, harassment or incidents of bias, this is a school climate problem—not a problem best solved by punishing LGBTQ students and suppressing their rights to free expression.
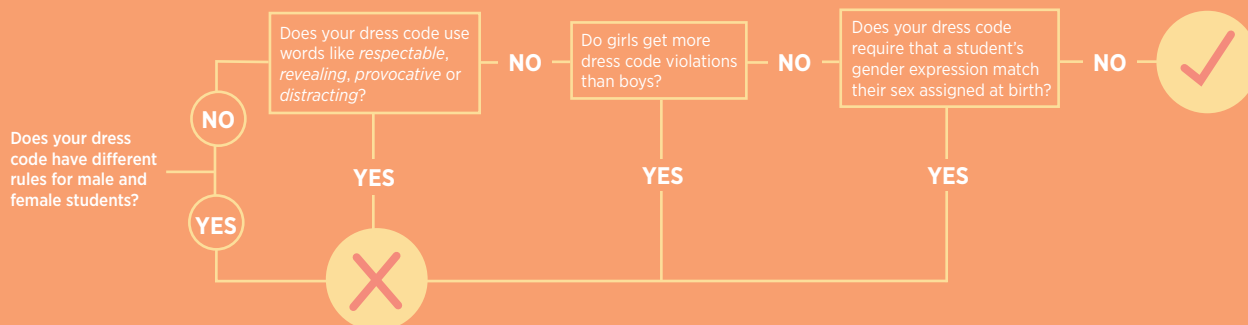
Dress codes *should:*

➤ **Allow exceptions that promote a safe or comfortable learning environment,** such as allowing athletic attire in P.E., tights in dance or gymnastics, or protective gear in science labs, workshops or art class.

➤ **Prevent students from wearing attire that disrupts a safe learning environment,**

IS MY SCHOOL DRESS CODE GENDER-INCLUSIVE?
Gendered dress codes can harm students in a variety of ways.
Use this flowchart to assess your school's dress code for gender bias.

Does your dress code have different rules for male and female students?

NO → Does your dress code use words like *respectable, revealing, provocative* or *distracting*?

NO → Do girls get more dress code violations than boys?

NO → Does your dress code require that a student's gender expression match their sex assigned at birth?

NO → ✓

YES (Does your dress code have different rules...) → ✗

YES (Does your dress code use words...) → ✗

YES (Do girls get more dress code violations...) → ✗

YES (Does your dress code require...) → ✗

✗ Your dress code may seem to be targeting clothing, but it may actually be targeting students' identities. Students—regardless of gender identity or gender expression—need a clear, agreed-upon set of guidelines for how everyone should dress in a school environment. Gendered guidelines can humiliate students and even rob them of instructional time.

✓ **YOUR DRESS CODE SEEMS TO BE INCLUSIVE AND PROACTIVE.**
It honors students' rights as individuals, which supports a safe learning environment. Way to go!

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such as clothes that feature hate speech or pornography, target a specific group of people, or advocate for violence or drug use.

➥ **Treat students equitably regardless of their sex assigned at birth.** Clothes that are permissible for one gender should be permissible for students of all gender identities.

➥ **Require the covering of body parts generally considered private.**

Dress codes *should not:*

➥ **Be different for boys and girls,** or force students to dress based on their sex assigned at birth.

➥ **Disallow shirts proclaiming pride in a student's LGBTQ identity** on the false grounds that it is "distracting" or "offensive language to some."

➥ **Vary based on a student's weight, body type or appearance.**

➥ **Discriminate against headwear or hairstyles** that might correspond with a student's religious, racial or ethnic identities.

The graphic above, from "Controlling the Student Body," provides a guide for leaders who want to ensure their school's dress code is gender-inclusive.

An inclusive policy can look simple, such as the policy of Portland Public Schools.

INCLUSIVE SEX EDUCATION
Most LGBTQ students face a void when it comes to sex education—a void they often fill with inaccurate and age-inappropriate resources online. According to the Guttmacher Institute, only 12 states require the discussion

PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS DRESS CODE POLICY

The District Dress Code policy applies to all schools in Portland Public Schools grades PK–12, with the exception of schools with a Uniform Dress Code policy. *The responsibility for the dress and grooming of a student rests primarily with the student and his or her parents or guardians.*

Allowable Dress & Grooming

➥ Students must wear clothing including both a shirt with pants or skirt (or the equivalent) and shoes.

➥ Shirts and dresses must have fabric in the front and on the sides.

➥ Clothing must cover undergarments, waistbands and bra straps excluded.

➥ Fabric covering all private parts must not be see-through.

➥ Hats and other headwear must allow the face to be visible and not interfere with the line of sight to any student or staff. Hoodies must allow the student's face and ears to be visible to staff.

➥ Clothing must be suitable for all scheduled classroom activities including physical education, science labs, wood shop and other activities where unique hazards exist.

➥ Specialized courses may require specialized attire, such as sports uniforms or safety gear.

Non-Allowable Dress & Grooming

➥ Clothing may not depict, advertise or advocate the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or other controlled substances.

➥ Clothing may not depict pornography, nudity or sexual acts.

➥ Clothing may not use or depict hate speech targeting groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation or any other protected groups.

➥ Clothing, including gang identifiers, must not threaten the health or safety of any other student or staff.

➥ If the student's attire or grooming threatens the health or safety of any other person, then discipline for dress or grooming violations should be consistent with discipline policies for similar violations.

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of sexual orientation in sex ed; three of those states (Alabama, South Carolina and Texas) require that all coverage of queer sexual orientations be negative in nature.

This gap in our teaching negatively affects LGBTQ students, who, according to the CDC, are already at greater risk for intimate partner violence, sexual assault, STIs and negative feelings about their bodies. These risk factors underscore the need for inclusive sex education that positively covers LGBTQ identities. This also benefits non-LGBTQ students who otherwise may not understand their peers.

Providing comprehensive sex education is nearly impossible for educators and school leaders in states where so-called "No Promo Homo Laws" prohibit teachers from

Comprehensive and inclusive sex ed includes:

➥ Discussion of gender identities and sexual orientation—and not just as a special topic, but included throughout the coursework.

➥ Examples of healthy relationships, including same-sex relationships.

➥ Examples of diverse family constructions, including families with same-sex couples.

➥ Countering stereotypes about gender roles, LGBTQ identities and what it means to be a man or woman.

➥ Information for safe and protected sex practices for people of all identities.

➥ Medically accurate, myth-free and age-appropriate information on sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

➥ Messaging that does not assume students' sexual orientations and gender identities, and that covers LGBTQ topics whether students in the class are "out" or not.

For more recommendations, see the National Sexuality Education Standards.

discussing LGBTQ topics in the classroom. (As of 2018, these states included Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Alabama and South Carolina). Educators in these areas can advocate for changes in state law and reach out to civil rights organizations that may want to represent LGBTQ students and teachers facing this discrimination.

For educators in all states, pushing for more LGBTQ-inclusive sex ed requires a plan. Here are some tips for making sure the initiative is taken seriously:

➥ **Partner with community organizations.** They often have more resources and may have also identified gaps in your school and district policies.

➥ **Include student voices.** Encourage students to advocate for their own education, and you'll have strong allies throughout the process.

➥ **Attend school board or community meetings.** Identify potential allies and possible counterarguments. Don't forget to indicate if you're there in an official capacity (with permission from your school) or as a private citizen.

➥ **Push boundaries.** If your school board can't make changes due to state legislation, encourage members to pass a resolution calling for improved sex education. The resolution can help state-level advocates push for legislative change.

KNOWING YOUR ROLE AS AN ALLY

Following these four guidelines will put you in the best position to stand alongside your queer students:

GOOD ALLIES BEGIN WITH SELF-REFLECTION.
Being an effective LGBTQ ally requires significant self-reflection and a strong sense of one's own relationship with gender identity and sexual orientation. Before spreading this work throughout your school, begin within.

Take time to consider these questions:

➥ *When did I become aware that I had a gender? When did I first become aware of my sexual orientation?*

➥ *What messages did I learn about sexual orientation or gender growing up?*

➥ *Was my sex, gender identity or expression ever in conflict with activities I wanted to participate in?*

➥ *Did my sexual orientation (or the fear of being perceived to have a different sexual orientation) ever keep me from participating in certain activities or social situations?*

➥ *Did I ever feel pressure to conform to cultural expectations related to my gender? Did I ever feel pressure to perform or hide my sexual orientation in any way?*

➥ *Did I ever judge others for not conforming to these cultural norms? If so, where did these beliefs or judgments originate?*

➥ *What messages—both implicit and explicit— do I convey to my students about sexual orientation or gender?*

➥ *Was there ever a time I wanted to challenge or transgress gender norms? What was the outcome and why?*

Once you've had a chance to self-reflect on your experience, take an honest self-assessment of your readiness to talk about these topics with students or colleagues.

➥ *Talking about gender or sexual orientation is challenging because...*

➥ *Talking about gender or sexual orientation is necessary because...*

➥ *Talking about gender or sexual orientation is beneficial because...*

When talking about sexual orientation with students...

☐ I am almost always uncomfortable.

☐ I am usually uncomfortable.

☐ I am sometimes comfortable, sometimes uncomfortable.

☐ I am usually comfortable.

☐ I am almost always comfortable.

When talking about gender identity with students...

☐ I am almost always uncomfortable.

☐ I am usually uncomfortable.

☐ I am sometimes comfortable, sometimes uncomfortable.

☐ I am usually comfortable.

☐ I am almost always comfortable.

If you find yourself listing a lot of challenges and leaning toward the "uncomfortable" end of the spectrum, focus on the sections from this guide titled Be Willing to Learn Essential Terms; Facilitate Conversations About Identity With Care; Challenge Gender Norms and Lead Discussions

with Courage and Care. Our publication *Let's Talk!* is a good starting point for doing this internal work before diving deeper.

GOOD ALLIES SPEAK UP AGAINST BULLYING, HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA AND HARASSMENT.

Chances are high that homophobic or transphobic bullying or harassment is occurring in your school.

One of the most effective things you can do is respond directly to homophobic or transphobic behavior. This includes remarking on the use of slurs and other phrases, such as "That's so gay." Here are four approaches you can use:

1. Interrupt. Speak up against biased remarks, every time, without exception.

2. Question. Ask simple questions to learn why the comment was made and how it can be addressed.

3. Educate. Explain why a word or phrase is hurtful or offensive and encourage the speaker to choose different language. Help students differentiate between intent and impact.

4. Echo. While one person's voice is powerful, a collection of voices incites change.

Respond to biased or homophobic behavior as if there is an LGBTQ student in the room at all times. After all, educators can never fully grasp the extent to which students are listening or how deeply they are affected by harmful words.

For more practical advice on speaking up against biased language and intolerance from students, administrators and peers, see our guide *Speak Up at School*.

Teachers can also encourage students to respond to bullying or bias incidents as a community to promote unity, improve school climate and raise awareness. To help assess the severity of the problem, for exam-

ple, students can gather together to conduct a survey on hurtful language used at school. Student groups can also organize an assembly or a march, observe GLSEN's Day of Silence or plan another campaign about the damaging effects of hurtful words.

## GOOD ALLIES DON'T TRY TO DO THIS WORK ALONE.

One way to preempt backlash or prevent feeling alone in this work is finding other allies in your school. Let administrators, teachers and counselors know your plans. Secure their support ahead of time. Work together to ensure content meets academic criteria and expectations. These conversations provide an entry point for building a community of support and collaboration across the school.

GOOD ALLIES FOSTER AN INCLUSIVE AND EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENT.

At the end of the day, skilled educators strive to make their schools and classrooms safer spaces so meaningful, constructive and rewarding social, emotional and academic learning can take place for everyone involved. In these spaces, students are encouraged to value their own individuality while also learning to value the unique experiences and perspectives of others.

> "When I act courageously in the classroom, I express my sense of trust in my students. Trust is actually the most important quality of a safe space for an LGBTQ student."
>
> Peter J. Elliott, "How to Craft an Open Classroom"
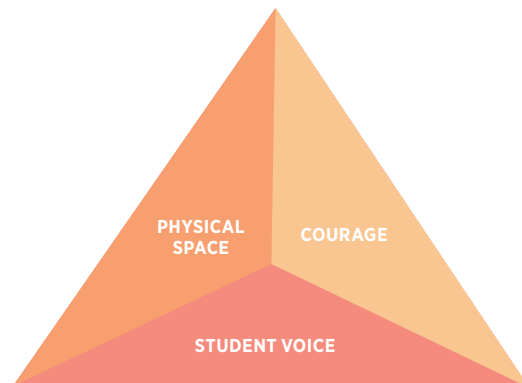
AN INCLUSIVE AND EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENT

This triangle of inclusion will ensure an optimal, supportive learning environment is in place.

Point 1: Physical Space

Use visual aids such as quotation walls, posters of queer historical and literary figures, safe space stickers or other resources to serve as a consistent reminder to students that they are fully welcome.

Point 2: Student Voice

Encourage students to speak their truth. Structure discussions so that all students, introverted and extroverted alike, have equitable opportunity to share. Use a variety of storytelling methods so that all students—including LGBTQ youth—have a chance to tell their lived experiences.

Point 3: Courage

It takes courage to be an educator ally. Be willing to take risks with your students, and appreciate their bravery as they engage with the hard work of anti-bias education. It's normal to get nervous; congratulate yourself for your commitment to telling the whole truth.

WHAT DO I DO IF...

THE COMMUNITY PUSHES BACK?

Here are some basic tips if your school, your colleague or you face an organized or sizeable backlash to LGBTQ-inclusive practices. For more tips and details, read our article "Teaching From the Bulls-eye."

➥ **Know the landscape of hate.** Be aware of local and national hate groups that actively target schools over LGBTQ-inclusive practices. For example, the Liberty Counsel has organized letter campaigns and even hassled individual teachers to pressure educators into resisting things like inclusive sex ed. The Alliance Defending Freedom is another group heavily organizing against practices such as allowing trans students to use facilities that match their gender identity. In some cases, both groups offer free legal counsel to sue the schools. Arm yourself with information so you can counter their misleading messages.

➥ **Find allies in your community.** Build relationships with local business leaders, churches, sports teams or organizations who support inclusivity, and who can show that support in a public, influential way.

➥ **Support the targets.** If outside groups or online communities target particular students or student groups, bring those students together and give them an opportunity to express their feelings. Let them know that you support them, even after the worst is over. Provide counseling and additional security if needed. Make sure public statements do not draw a false equivalency between the demands of hate groups and the needs of LGBTQ students.

➥ **Do not let misinformation go unchecked.** Outside groups may respond to the implementation of best practices with untrue accusations. Inform students and families of misinformation being spread in the community, and set the record straight through your usual channels of communication.

Here are some of the most common examples of "pushbacks"—and ways to respond.

"I believe being gay or transgender is a sin; schools should not promote it."

Response: Those who advocate for inclusive school environments for LGBTQ students *are not* asking you to forfeit your religious beliefs. Nor are sexual orientation and gender identity things to be promoted; they are innate. Just as LGBTQ students should not be pressured or bullied into expressing an identity that isn't their own, we would never ask a cisgender or straight-identifying student to hide or change their true self.

Advocates *are* asking schools to take a stand against anti-LGBTQ harassment and its damaging effects on the educational outcomes for LGBTQ students. We hope most people can agree that all students should be able to attend schools free of verbal and physical harassment and can understand

For more information on anti-LGBTQ hate groups, visit t-t.site/anti-LGBTQ.

that a school serves a diverse population. School leaders must value all cultures and identities in the curricula and policies—without playing favorites.

We have the constitutional right to exercise our own religious beliefs in our lives (or to exercise none at all), *and* we are charged with a responsibility to protect the rights of others to hold religious beliefs as they choose. This is a core tenet of our democracy and a great civics lesson for us all. Public schools must strike that balance. They cannot privilege a dominant culture or religion while simultaneously denying equitable opportunity and safety to other students.

"LGBTQ students are getting special rights and preferences."

Response: Creating a school climate that reduces anti-LGBTQ harassment and increases empathy for LGBTQ people enriches the lives of *all* students. Straight, cisgender students can still suffer or endure bullying because of strict gender norms and homophobia.

LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, practices and policies do not give additional rights to LGBTQ students. They simply fill gaps where LGBTQ students deserve the rights that their straight, cisgender peers *already have*. Straight, cisgender students already see themselves in curriculum. Straight, cisgender students already have access to bathrooms and locker rooms that match their identities and within which they can feel safe. And aspects of straight, cisgender students' identities, such as race and gender, are already covered by anti-bullying and harassment language. Adding LGBTQ people to these spaces does not erase their peers who are already there; instead, it brings them together.

"It's not appropriate to talk about sex in the classroom."

Response: While there are appropriate spaces to talk about sex in schools—in sex education or health classes, for example—talking about LGBTQ issues is not the same thing as talking about sex. Like heterosexual identities, relationships or feelings, LGBTQ identities, relationships and feelings are fundamentally about love and affection between human beings. If we can talk about one identity, we can talk about others.

Gay-Straight and Gender and Sexuality Alliances are also not about sex. Rather, they provide a space for people with a common interest, be it exploring culture and identity, sparking conversations, creating a respectful community, or activism.

"If GSAs are allowed, you have to allow students to form any club with a collective purpose, like a Neo-Nazi club."

Response: There is a distinct difference between affinity groups (which bring people of shared experiences or cultures together) and groups that promote hate, harassment and exclusion. Schools have a right to disallow clubs that contribute to a disrupted education and unsafe school environment for some students. GSAs do neither; they promote inclusion and make school climates more equitable.

PREPARE TO SPEAK UP WHEN YOU HEAR MYTHS AND MISINFORMATION.

Myth: "No one is born gay."

Facts: The American Psychological Association (APA) states that "most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation." In 1994, the APA wrote that "homosexuality is not a matter of individual

choice" and that research "suggests that the homosexual orientation is in place very early in the life cycle, possibly even before birth."

Myth: "Gay people can choose to become straight."

Facts: "Reparative" therapy has been rejected by all established and reputable American medical, psychological, psychiatric and professional counseling organizations. As early as 1993, the American Academy of Pediatrics stated that "[t]herapy directed at specifically changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving change in orientation."

Myth: "Transgender identity is a mental illness."

Facts: Although transgender identity is not itself an illness, transgender people may experience mental health issues because of discrimination and disapproval. But these illnesses do not cause—nor are they caused by—transgender identity. They result from social exclusion and stigma.

Myth: "Students are too young to know their gender identity or sexual orientation."

Facts: While a child's concept of self may change over time, this isn't because they are changing their minds. LGBTQ youth must navigate many social barriers and norms to come to terms with and accept their queer identities. This doesn't mean they don't recognize their identities at an early age; often it isn't until later in life that they feel comfortable or safe to be their authentic selves.

Children do not need to be pubescent or sexually active to "truly know" their gender identity or sexual orientation. This is an expectation we do not place on straight, cisgender students. In reality, children often know their gender as early as 2 or 3 years old. Moreover, research suggests that allowing young children to align their gender identity with expression is associated with better mental outcomes among transgender children.

CLASSROOM CULTURE
Creating an Inclusive Environment With Words

Creating an LGBTQ-inclusive classroom culture begins with a readiness to answer questions or facilitate appropriate conversation around LGBTQ issues. In order to facilitate sensitive, productive conversations with students—in class or one-on-one—consider these steps.

BE WILLING TO LEARN ESSENTIAL TERMS

Young people today have a large vocabulary with which they can articulate their identities. That vocabulary may be unfamiliar, but understanding these words can open doors for educators to become more effective allies to LGBTQ students. This means, for example, knowing the difference between **biological sex**, **gender identity** and **gender expression**; between **cisgender** and **transgender**; and between **asexual** and **pansexual**.

For a full glossary of LGBTQ terms, see **page 41**.

MODEL INCLUSIVE PRONOUN USE

Gender's fluidity is expressed in the many pronouns students use across the gender spectrum. Allied educators understand the necessity of asking their students what pronouns they use—and respecting their decisions.

A study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that when the parents, teachers and peers around them use their chosen names, **trans youth experience a lower risk for depression and suicidal ideation**.

You can affirm transgender and nonbinary students by taking these steps:

➥ **Use the singular "they."** Make space within language for nonbinary genders that do not fit the strictures of "he" and "she." Adopting use of the singular "they" disrupts the binary and affirms the fluidity of gender and the legitimacy of all gender identities.

➥ **Decentralize cisgender identity by stating your own pronouns**. Explicitly share your pronouns with name tags, in an email signature or on a pin. This normalizes the process rather than making it a big deal. Students will notice and take your lead.

➥ **Conduct pronoun check-ins.** Collective pronoun check-ins help students learn peers' pronouns without forcing nonbinary students to come out repeatedly. You may say, "To make sure we're referring to each other accurately, let's go around so everyone can share their name and pronoun." This process can help transgender and nonbinary students feel seen, not singled out.

➥ **Begin the year with a student survey that asks students about pronoun use in different situations**. This helps value students' identities while also protecting their privacy. To ensure their own safety, students may use one pronoun with friends and teachers and another with family members. Ask something like: *What are your pronouns? Are there situations where you would want me to use different pronouns?*

> **"Gender does not have end-points; it's three-dimensional. Males float around somewhere, females float around somewhere else, and some people just don't float at all—they swim."**
>
> Cameron, gender-fluid teenager, *Beyond Magenta*

Practice responding to instances of *misgendering* (referring to a student by the wrong pronoun). Try out these simple suggestions. Students will take note and are likely to follow your thoughtful example.

If *you* misgender a student:

➥ **Apologize briefly,** correct yourself and move on. Note your error without calling attention to it.

➥ **Do not over-apologize.** This co-opts a moment that *should* be about the student, and re-centers it around your own guilt.

If you overhear a coworker or student misgender someone:

➥ **Correct in the moment.**

"The other day I saw Jess and he was saying..."
"Oh right. They were saying?"

➥ **Model the correct pronoun afterwards.**

"Yes, I remember Jess saying that. They were just telling me..."

➥ **Address it directly.**

"Yes, I definitely remember that. And Jess uses they/them pronouns. Just wanted to let you know."

FACILITATE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT IDENTITY WITH CARE

When topics of personal identity come up in the classroom, the conversation may be unpredictable. Properly facilitating those conversations means getting comfortable with discomfort; it means being aware of your own biases and conditioned beliefs; and it means relying on a consistent model of civil classroom discussion so you can handle emotional responses thoughtfully.

If you have concerns about your comfort level with facilitating these conversations, start with our publication *Let's Talk!*—which provides you with self-assessment and strategies that will help you get there.

CHALLENGE GENDER NORMS THROUGH CLASSROOM PRACTICES

To create a classroom that is inclusive of all genders, evaluate your concrete, day-to-day classroom practices. Here are some suggestions for assessing the gender-inclusivity of your classroom:

> **"Heteronormativity perpetuates the closet and the closet is a hotbed for shame."**
>
> Chris Tompkins, "Why Heteronormativity Is Harmful"

Learn more about exploring gender roles and stereotypes in the classroom with these Teaching Tolerance lessons:

➥ Exploring Gender Stereotypes in Stories
➥ Exploring Gender Stereotypes Through Role Plays
➥ Gender Shouldn't Limit You
➥ Gender Stereotyping Awareness
➥ What Are Gender Stereotypes?

tolerance.org/classroom-resources/lessons

➥ **Conduct a visual audit of your classroom** to examine your wall posters and other visible materials. Do they represent individuals with diverse gender expressions? Are there portrayals of nontraditional families or families with LGBTQ members?

➥ **Refer to a group of kids as students, scholars, class, friends, everybody or y'all.** Avoid the binary term "boys and girls."

➥ **Do not separate students according to gender.** Dividing students along binary lines only enforces feelings of difference. When dividing students into teams, for partner work or to form a line, use rows, table groups or sides of the room.

➥ **In casual conversations with students, don't make assumptions based on gender** such as, "boys will be boys" or "girls are such gossip queens." Never tease or joke around with students in a way that presumes cisgender identity or heterosexual orientation.

➥**Encourage all students to try different types of activities.** Do not ask for a group of "strong boys" to help carry furniture or "artistic girls" to decorate a bulletin board. Include everyone in a wide range of classroom activities and offer equitable opportunity for participation.

WHAT DO I DO IF...
MY ADMINISTRATION ISN'T SUPPORTIVE?

Many educators are hesitant to adopt LGBTQ-inclusive curricula and practices for fear of pushback. These steps to working with your administration can help you overcome these hesitations and make sure your LGBTQ-inclusive work has a solid foundation.

1. Lay the groundwork with colleagues. Preview new teaching material with administrators or department chairs, and tie the content back to your state curricular, AP, IB or other educational standards. Be open and direct about your support and inclusion of LGBTQ students. Having conversations about the content you plan to bring into your classroom will create a support system as you move forward with your curriculum.

2. Present facts. Be ready to offer facts and evidence about how your approach will benefit students and school climate. The data from GLSEN's National School Climate Survey is a good place to start. For instance, compared to LGBTQ students with no supportive school staff, students with many (11 or more) supportive staff members at their school were less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, had higher GPAs and were less likely to say they might not graduate high school. Administrators should find the promise of better academic outcomes and less truancy to be a compelling case.

SOURCE GLSEN's 2015 National School Climate Survey

3. Explain that an inclusive school environment benefits everyone. Conduct a school climate survey in your school. Provide examples of anti-LGBTQ behavior you have encountered in the hallways or in your classroom. Use the descriptions to show administrators why change is needed. Emphasize that inclusive curriculum can help combat gender and sexuality stereotypes that hurt everyone.

4. Provide examples. Come prepared with suggestions for how educators can serve as supportive allies for LGBTQ students and for inclusive policies and bullying prevention practices that have been implemented elsewhere with positive results. Give administrators reference material, such as this guide or resources from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and PFLAG. Seeing this work has been done elsewhere may help an administrator overcome their hesitation.

5. Plan a time to check in again in the future. Allow administrators to consider your discussion points and educate themselves further before meeting for additional conversation.

6. Document everything. Keep a record of these interactions so that your forethought and intentions cannot be misrepresented. If administrative pushback becomes hostile or threatens to deny legal rights to students, look for support among district leadership.

INSTRUCTION

Integrating Queer Voices into the Curriculum

It may seem like a minor adjustment for a teacher to mention a queer figure in history or analyze a queer character in a canonical work of literature. But affirming an LGBTQ student's existence helps them feel more connected to their school work and school community.

Help forge that connection with these classroom practices.

ASSESS YOUR TEXTS

Teachers send a powerful message with the resources they choose. Students undoubtedly perceive highlighted texts as representations of what is valued and celebrated in our culture. Omission sends an equally loud message. Including the voices of LGBTQ people supports students' abilities to affirm their identities and cultivates empathy for those experiences that differ from their own.

In selecting the texts and books students will find in their curriculum or class library, educators should keep a number of questions in mind, including:

➤ What voices does this text include?

➤ Does the text include stereotypes or misrepresentations of people? How are those stereotypes or misrepresentations treated?

➤ Does the text accurately reflect lived experiences and cultures?

➤ Are certain people or groups glaringly absent or given an insubstantial role?

➤ Are certain questions or issues related to the topic left out/glossed over?

➤ Does this text promote a healthy self-concept?

➤ Does this text foster intergroup understanding?

➤ How might this text motivate, engage or enable my students?

Educators can answer these questions and more with TT's Reading Diversity tool.
tolerance.org/reading-diversity

If you find that none of your current texts include the perspectives of LGBTQ people, look for options that are relevant to your students' lives and that pair well with other texts your students will encounter. For a list of children's and young adult books featuring LGBTQ characters and themes, download **Appendix A** at tolerance.org/lgbtq-guide.

Remember: Students benefit from seeing their experiences reflected, or *mirrored*, in a text, and from empathizing with perspectives different from their own—using the reading as a *window* to better connect with and appreciate others. Students can also practice their literacy and analysis skills by determining if an author or narrator in a text echoes their own experience (mir-

The TT Perspectives Text Library offers a selection of readings that address LGBTQ experiences, including photos, cartoons, fiction stories and informational nonfiction, all accompanied by discussion questions.
tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts

ror), or illustrates the perspective of people whose identities differ from their own (window). Do not undermine this positive representation by labeling the texts as "mature" or "controversial."

TEACH QUEER HISTORY

Integrating LGBTQ history into existing units—as opposed to doing stand-alone units—serves to normalize it, rather than presenting it as an add-on to "real" history. Here are four ways to do this in your classroom:

➤ **Capitalize on historical eras during which LGBTQ figures played a prominent role.** These include: the suffrage and women's rights movements of the 1800s; the Harlem Renaissance and the Jazz Age; the Frontier West; and the civil rights and social movements of the 1960s.

➤**Look at LGBTQ movements within the context of different social movements:** the black civil rights movement, the women's movement, or Latinx labor and civil rights activism, for example.

➤**Cover LGBTQ rights history by beginning with the 19th and 20th centuries**, then teaching about Daughters of Bilitis, the Mattachine Society, Stonewall and the gay rights movement of the 1970s, HIV/AIDS, and marriage equality.

➤ **Ask students to contrast the LGBTQ rights movement with other movements**, such as those of African Americans, women, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, disability rights advocates, Japanese Americans

Teach LGBTQ history with these TT lessons on LGBTQ historical figures.

➤ Pauli Murray: Fighting Jane and Jim Crow
➤ James Baldwin: Art, Sexuality and Civil Rights
➤ Bayard Rustin: The Fight for Civil and Gay Rights
➤ Lorraine Hansberry: LGBT Politics and Civil Rights
➤ Role of Gays and Lesbians in the Civil Rights Movement

tolerance.org/classroom-resources/lessons

James Baldwin at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

and others. Compare the goals, strategies and support for each movement, as well as their historical efficacy in promoting civil rights.

Our podcast *Queer America* offers tips on teaching these topics and more. Listen for more ideas, and more details, from experts in the field.

To supplement these lessons, consider these recommendations from "Putting Ideas into Practice: High School Teachers Talk about Incorporating the LGBT Past," a chapter from *Understanding and Teaching U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History*:

1. Look for opportunities to inform and improve understanding of current events through this history.

2. Use historical information that confronts enduring stereotypes and narrow perceptions of what it means to be gay, bi, trans, intersex, and others. Highlight successful, proud or powerful figures, as well as those—from warriors to emperors to cowboys—who bucked expectations of masculinity or femininity. Allow students the space to connect historical anti-LGBTQ rhetoric with examples of the opposite.

3. Tell more than just the story of oppression. Include the histories of coherent culture, strong identity, celebration, agency and resilience.

SET GROUND RULES

Creating a classroom contract from the beginning gives your students a structure that can help prevent inappropriate comments or interruptions when you introduce LGBTQ perspectives. Here are tips for making sure those ground rules foster an LGBTQ-inclusive environment:

1. If possible, create community agreements with student input to inspire personal investment and relevance to students' lives.

2. Open the community agreements process with discussion prompts, such as "What rules would help you have a productive, respectful conversation?" or "When someone disagrees with you, how can you stay engaged in that conversation while still being respectful of the other person?"

3. If you suspect that LGBTQ perspectives will be new territory for some students, **begin the discussion with a statement about the importance of being open to ideas that may be unfamiliar**.

4. Make sure ideas of identity and difference are discussed explicitly. Make it clear that any derogatory, dismissive or purposely hurtful remark directed at any of a person's identities or differences is never OK.

5. Post these community agreements in a visible location and refer back to them often.

LEAD DISCUSSIONS WITH COURAGE AND CARE

Broaching topics about LGBTQ people may lead to discomfort, disagreement and or even dehumanizing words from students. If that worries you, we recommend reviewing the strategies in our *Let's Talk!* guide.

But there *are* key strategies specific to LGBTQ students' experiences that should be noted here—and employed by educator allies.

1. Never let a homophobic remark go uninterrupted. Prepare for the possibility that students will have strong reactions and make hostile or hateful comments. Intervene. Refer back to your classroom contract and explain why certain terms or phrases are inappropriate and how they can be hurtful to LGBTQ students. For strategies, refer to our *Speak Up* guide.

2. Prepare for the possibility that religion will arise as a topic. Do not send the message that a student's religion does not matter or that they are not welcome to discuss this aspect of their identity. Rather, remind them that they cannot use their religion to justify

the harassment of another student or a violation of your classroom contract.

3. Never present LGBTQ identities as up for debate. A classroom debate on whether sexual orientation or gender identity is innate, by definition, violates a community agreement not to attack someone's identities. Similarly, do not label conversations or content about LGBTQ people or issues as "controversial," as this suggests people's identities are on the margins of acceptable conversation or that such a conversation carries risk.

RESPOND TO COMMON MYTHS WITH FACTS

Misconceptions about LGBTQ identities and communities may present roadblocks to creating an open classroom and queer-inclusive curriculum. If students derail discussion or fellow educators push back against your classroom practices by reinforcing these myths, be ready to intervene with facts. For a list of common myths and ways to respond, see the "What do I do if... the community pushes back?" section of this guide on page 19.

RESPOND TO CURRENT EVENTS AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Keep an eye out for current events or news articles that can be used for staff and classroom discussion. Educators who are allies use teachable moments to build student capacity for empathy and understanding across lines of difference. Remember: Political events or legislation that limit the rights of LGBTQ people may leave queer students and their allies feeling disappointed and threatened.

Here are some suggestions for responding to current events in a way that lets LGBTQ students know they have space to be who they are in your classroom.

1. Encourage discussion instead of silence. Unwillingness to engage in conversation about the lives of LGBTQ people validates the belief that such experiences should be whispered about. Use political events as opportunities to encourage queer students to speak their truth and as opportunities for all students to understand the consequences of court decisions and legislation. The question "What does this mean for me and the people I know?" deserves a thoughtful, nonpartisan response.

2. Bring LGBTQ role models and public figures into your classroom. Take time to learn and teach about strong LGBTQ public officials in contemporary history, such as Mark Takano, Deborah Batts and Tammy Baldwin.

3. Take inventory of the stories and messages you share while discussing current events. Craft a positive narrative of inclusion. Many students will look to their social context for their sense of approval and belonging. As an authority figure, everything you say carries weight and influence. Even if you unintentionally model negative or biased messages, students may conclude: *My identity is abnormal. I do not matter here.*

> **"An intersectional approach to LGBTQ youth advocacy means taking young people like me as WHOLE people— with numerous identities, all of which need to be validated and supported."**
>
> Giovanni Blair McKenzie, HRC Foundation Youth Ambassador

> **"I couldn't find myself in history. No one like me seemed to have ever existed."**
>
> Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors*

> **"Being seen—truly seen—is to feel that all parts of who I am are recognized not as compartmentalized pieces of myself, but blended truths of my identity."**
>
> Renee Watson, *Black Like Me*

TEACH WITH INTERSECTIONALITY IN MIND

Adopting an intersectional approach means understanding that everyone has multiple identities—some visible and some invisible—and acknowledging that some people experience multiple forms of oppression. Make sure your curriculum does not present a narrow or one-sided story about the queer experience by leaving out certain aspects of multifaceted identities and groups.

Contemplate your personal teaching practice. Ask yourself questions such as:

"Does my curriculum include a diverse array of stories and combinations of identities?"

"Am I allowing for a multiplicity of narratives about what it's like to be LGBTQ?"

"Am I highlighting the experiences of LGBTQ people of color?"

TEACH THE GAPS AND SILENCES

It is no accident that so few historical records preserve the lives of queer individuals. History does not remember what it does not value. This is particularly true of individuals who experience intersecting oppressions, such as enslaved LGBTQ persons.

To teach the gaps and silences is to acknowledge the places LGBTQ people likely existed and to acknowledge the reasons why there is little to no record of them.

When there's a lack of queer representation, teach the context:

➤ For the given era, **explain the laws, culture, power structures and societal values** that may account for the erasure of queer people.

➤ **Explain why queer people would not have used modern-day identifiers** such as "gay" or "transgender" and how this makes it easy for historians to ignore queer identity.

➤ When possible, **point out the exceptions.** For an LGBTQ student who has been made to believe that queerness is an aberration or a 20th century invention, evidence to the contrary is validating. From cave paintings to Ancient Egypt to indigenous American cultures and beyond, queer people have lived and even been celebrated.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Being an ally to LGBTQ students means bringing people in *and* reaching out. With these tips, we hope you can create a community within and beyond the school that helps all families feel valued and helps all students feel they have a place to be their authentic selves.

INCLUDING AND EMPOWERING ALL FAMILIES

Including families of all types in your teaching and classroom activities builds empathy and disrupts rigid ideas about what constitutes a "normal" family. For LGBTQ students who may one day desire to raise a family, this practice offers role models and representation.

Consider these steps to ensure that activities include LGBTQ students and students with LGBTQ guardians.

➥ **Start the year with a family survey, inviting families to tell you about themselves and about your student.** Let students and their guardians work together to answer questions such as, "Who is in your family?" "What's your favorite thing to do as a family?" "What makes your family unique?" "Where does your family come from?" and "What's your favorite holiday and how do you celebrate it?" Creating a classroom culture of respect and letting students share these answers with classmates will set the tone for the year.

➥ **Keep holidays inclusive.** It's not uncommon to celebrate holidays like Mother's Day, Father's Day and Valentine's Day in the classroom. But be aware that activities and decorations surrounding these holidays can sometimes alienate LGBTQ kids and kids with nontraditional family structures. Writing cards for Mother's or Father's Day? Make sure instructions include options to express gratitude to all sorts of guardians. Having kids pass out Valentine's Day cards? Try to avoid heteronormative or binary expectations of who should give them to whom.

➥ **Incorporate all families into the curriculum and classroom community.** Introduce your students to different families by including them in assignments and guest-speaking opportunities. Have students do community- or family-based projects like oral histories, memoirs or surveys. Invite guardians to speak to your class about their culture, job or community—or invite them to read a story that means a lot to their family!

INVITING LGBTQ PEOPLE AND ALLIES INTO YOUR CLASSROOM

Even if none of your students have LGBTQ family members, you can highlight other members of the community to ensure your queer students feel seen and that all students see examples of LGBTQ-inclusion from daily life.

Local LGBTQ organizations, activists or allies can contribute to many of the conversations discussed in this guide. Make sure you aren't presenting LGBTQ people as exhibits, as if to say, "See, they do exist!" Instead, invite them to add substance to a conversation you're already planning to have in the classroom.

Perhaps invite guest speakers or groups on days that correspond with:

➥ LGBTQ History Month in October
➥ Local Pride parades or events

Lessons relating to LGBTQ figures in literature or history

Consider asking those community members if they'd be interested in mentorship. Many queer young people have no local role models with whom they can talk about struggles and triumphs. Finding trustworthy community members who can fill that gap could help students see paths to success and acceptance. If your town has an LGBTQ community center, that's a great place to start.

WORKING WITH UNACCEPTING FAMILIES
For a variety of cultural reasons, LGBTQ students will not always find acceptance from their families or communities. For educators, this can create a conflict. On one hand, we must do what is best for the safety and well-being of the student. On the other, we must be genuine in our efforts to involve all families in that endeavor. These suggestions can help educators value a student's identity while also maintaining a relationship with an unaccepting family.

Never "out" a student to their family (or others) without their consent. LGBTQ students have the right to come out to others at their own pace and often have valid reasons to wait. "Out" or not, they may have witnessed homophobic or transphobic behavior at home. Telling their family about their sexual orientation or gender identity could compromise both their trust and their safety.

Meet families where they are. Avoid finger wagging or demanding language such as, "You have to do this for your child." This may cause defensiveness or, worse, backlash. Instead, start from the assumption that each family cares deeply for their LGBTQ child and try to help them understand how nonacceptance could negatively impact the well-being of their child and their family dynamic.

Use an evidence-based approach. Some parents will be genuinely curious or ignorant as to what it means that their child is gay, bi or gender nonconforming. They may ask questions like "How could they know?" or "What does that mean?" Others may be more hostile or dismissive. In both situations, point to research when available. Stay calm. If they are open to it, ask families what kinds of guidance

WHAT DO I DO IF...
A STUDENT COMES OUT TO ME?

It's natural to want to respond appropriately if an LGBTQ student comes out or discloses the orientation of a family member. Just remember this guiding principle: Focus on the student, not yourself. Here are some general suggestions to keep to help you act as an affirming ally when the situation occurs.

DO

➤ **Listen**. Listening is one of the most powerful, healing resources educators can offer; it's also simple and requires no pre-prepared effort. For many LGBTQ students, the most damaging or painful part of living in the closet is not feeling seen, respected, heard or understood. Having someone to talk to throughout the coming out process may be all the support the student needs to thrive authentically at school. Asking clarifying or open-ended questions such as "do you feel safe at school?" will also reassure the student that they have your attention and your ongoing concern.

➤ **Make yourself available without being a rescuer.** The student is likely to benefit from knowing they have your support, but they may not be in the midst of a crisis or desiring substantial help. Offer up your support in an open-ended manner without insisting or pushing them to take any particular action.

➤ **Respect confidentiality**. Inform the student that you will not share the information with others unless their safety would require you to do so. Allow the student to come out to others in their own way and in their own time.

➤ **Keep biases in check**. Coming out is a critical moment for youth who are still navigating their identities in the world. The student may remember your conversation for a long time to come. Do not use the time to warn them of how their identity will influence their life or to push cultural norms around sexuality or gender.

➤ **Know the resources**. Assess why the student is coming to you—if they trust you and want to involve you in their coming out process, listening may be most appropriate. But if the student is anxious or in crisis, be ready to provide a referral to a counselor, hotline, GSA or an LGBTQ community center—*if* the student is interested.

Note: This guidance applies if you are responding to students coming out to you. If a student discloses trauma or is considering harming themselves or others, follow your school's crisis response protocol.

➤ **Take inventory of your response**. Remember, the student who just came out to you is the same person they were ten minutes ago. If you find yourself seeing them differently, notice this and process your own reaction without allowing it to color your actions or response. Make your unwavering support evident without making the news into a big deal.

➤ **Follow the student's lead on language**. Use their terms. For instance, if a student uses the word "queer" do not tell them to use "homosexual." Refrain from using any slurs or potentially hurtful slang.

WHAT DO I DO IF...
A STUDENT COMES OUT TO ME?

DO NOT

- Tell the student it could be a phase.

- Tell them you "don't care" about who they are and how they identify.

- Ask if they've been sexually assaulted.

- Inquire about past heterosexual experiences.

- Tell the student the information would best be kept to themselves.

- Tell them to wait to come out until they are sure.

- Inform the student they are choosing a more difficult path.

- Respond with silence, with blankness or by dismissing what the student has said.

- Question their certainty.

- Tell this information to their family, friends or coworkers. Unless the student has told you something that requires you to act as a mandatory reporter, honor their privacy at all times.

and materials they may need to feel more informed, and do the research so you can help them make the connection.

➥ **Be open about attitudes and biases.** Be honest about any preconceptions you may bring to the conversation about nonaccepting families, and ask them to do the same regarding their preconceptions about LGBTQ people. This creates an opportunity for an open and honest discussion that can eventually reach a hopeful consensus point: both parties want what is best for the child, and that may mean overcoming preconceptions.

➥ **Remind families that the school values religious identities.** LGBTQ-inclusive practices are often viewed as anti-religious. Families may feel these practices 1) promote "behavior" in their child that is against their beliefs or 2) force their child to abandon their religious beliefs. Remind them that students are entitled to religious viewpoints and that all identities—including religious identities—can be reflected in class discussion, classroom libraries or studied historical figures. But students of other identities have the same rights and are just as deserving of representation and respect.

➥ **Encourage dialogue between families.** Members of unaccepting families may feel more comfortable talking about this topic with people who share common ground. It may prove fruitful to connect such a family with another family who accepts and honors their queer child's identity. Starting this conversation among families may help some feel as if they have a community of support—and it offers them a window into what it would look like to accept their child.

➥ **Point to resources.** If dialogue with the family isn't going well, share options for the family to pursue. Let them know about groups like PFLAG, the Family Acceptance Project, or LGBTQ-affirming religious organizations

> **"Just being able to bounce ideas off of people who have both very similar and very different experiences really makes me feel more like my identity makes sense, which I struggled with for a long time."**
>
> Simona Morales, "LGBT Students Speak Out: What It's Like to Live in Today's South," *USA TODAY College*

that offer materials for parents of LGBTQ children. If you are worried for your student's well-being beyond school hours, see if there is a local LGBTQ (or LGBTQ youth-friendly) community center nearby, and make them aware of it.

➥ **Remember that every family is different.** Some families can move faster than others. Some can change their behavior overnight; other families, from all kinds of backgrounds, may start with rejection and ambivalence and become more supportive over time.

Even the most constructive dialogue may not result in a family becoming more accepting of their child's identity and engaged in their child's life. Hearts and minds do not change easily. But if you follow these guidelines, students will remember that they had an active supporter who affirmed their identity, and perhaps families will remember that you treated them with respect and offered an open door for dialogue.

GSAS AND CREATING COMMUNITIES WITHIN

LGBTQ affinity groups such as a Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) are proven ways to support LGBTQ student communities. These clubs aren't about centering allies or adults. Successful GSAs are often started by students who see a

need in their school. At the least, they are faculty-led or sponsored but driven by students.

These suggestions—adapted from resources from the GSA Network—can help ensure that any GSA is successful, inclusive and student-led. Copy or print these guidelines for any faculty sponsors you know who are involved in organizing a GSA.

➤ **Follow the rules**. Reference the student handbook or school policies and learn the criteria for starting a club at your school. If you are acting in an advisory capacity, encourage students to keep track of correspondence and the dates that certain steps of the process are completed in case they are met with unnecessary delay or pushback. If they follow the rules, the club legally can't be treated differently from other clubs; student-organized clubs are protected by federal law.

➤ **Communicate with your colleagues**. Informing school leaders about the plan to start a GSA can help students find important allies who are willing to address and respond to criticism from families, other educators or outside groups. Guidance counselors, social workers and school psychologists should also be informed; they may know students who would benefit from the group or who may be looking for such a community.

➤ **Don't keep it a secret.** Advertise! Don't just rely on word-of-mouth. Use bulletin boards, flyers or announcements to let students know the option is available and how to join. For non-LGBTQ students, the very presence of public announcements and decorations can begin to normalize LGBTQ students as peers who are not relegated to the shadows.

➤ **Set standards**. Laying ground rules can help make sure all future discussions are safe, confidential and respectful. Similar to a classroom contract, the rules determined by the group can be put together and signed by all members.

➤ **Make sure the GSA is inclusive**. GSAs will go wrong if one clique of students controls the club or if students of color are left out of leadership and decision-making. Encourage leadership roles for students from various backgrounds and cultures, and encourage students to think of issues through an intersectional lens. Make sure everyone has a voice in determining the goals of the GSA. Is this a social group? A group dedicated to activism? A place for support and group therapy? If it's all three, decide how to devote time to each goal.

➤ **Be prepared to respond to pushback**. GSAs can inspire negative feedback and false equivalencies from administrators, school board members or outside groups. For common pushbacks and myths—and ways to respond—see pages 19–21.

➤ **Stay organized**. All students and advisors—current and future—benefit from good notes. Keep detailed record of the GSA's first year, taking note of what worked well and what obstacles the group faced. This will help future generations of the GSA build on successes and learn from tough times.

➤ **Ask the experts: the students.** Ask GSA members what they would like non-LGBTQ students and staff to know. This could inform goals, as well as student-led ally training in the future.

➤ **Let them lead**. Remember, ideally the GSA is a student-led organization. Provide guidance. Help the club run smoothly and equitably. But what the group becomes should be determined by the needs and wants of students. Encourage students to organize beyond meetings. Let them know it's okay to start Facebook groups, group chats or other forums that give them a space beyond school to stay organized.

I WANT MY Lgbtq STUDENTS TO FEEL... Included Valued Safe seen Heard Respected

You've learned the best practices—now put them into action! Download our LGBTQ instructional resources guide for access to: **a vetted list of books** with options for every grade level and professional development; **a list of LGBTQ figures** who shaped history; and **a glossary of terminology** to increase your knowledge of LGBTQ identity and experiences.

Download this guide and additional resources today! **tolerance.org/lgbtq-resources**

ILLUSTRATION BY **SHANNON ANDERSON**

SCHOOL CHECKLIST

How well is your school meeting the needs of your LGBTQ students?

PROM

☐ Gender-inclusive language is used on all event communications, including invitations.

☐ Event organizers are educated about students' First Amendment right to attend events with a date other than a student of the opposite sex and to wear clothing of their choice.

☐ At least one member of the prom committee is designated the "inclusivity planner" to ensure that every student feels welcome.

PRIVACY

☐ School staff are never asked or required to reveal a students' sexual orientation or gender identity without the student's permission—even to the student's family.

☐ My school's privacy policies explicitly assert the confidentiality of information pertaining to students' sexual orientations and gender identities.

POLICIES

☐ My school's anti-bullying policy includes language that specifically prohibits harassment based on gender identity, sexual orientation and gender expression.

☐ The policy gives examples of harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

☐ The effectiveness of my school's anti-bullying program is evaluated annually using student and staff surveys.

☐ Administrative forms and communications use gender-neutral language (singular "they," not "he or she") and provide an opportunity for students to communicate their gender identity. Updates are made as needed.

☐ My school's anti-discrimination policy states support for LGBTQ teachers and school personnel.

ANTI-BULLYING

☐ My school has a designated anti-bullying coordinator as well as an anti-bullying task force.

☐ Staff members are specifically trained to prevent and respond to bullying incidents involving LGBTQ students.

☐ The name and contact information for my school's anti-bullying coordinator is posted in the office, on my school's website and in the student handbook.

☐ My school communicates effectively and often with students, parents or guardians and the community about school climate issues such as bullying.

☐ Staff ensure that reactions to reports of harassment do not further stigmatize students who were targeted for their real or perceived LGBTQ identities.

☐ Teachers and administrators are educated about common bullying myths, such as the idea that LGBTQ students are "asking for it" by expressing their sexual orientations or gender identities.

☐ Counseling staff is well-versed in LGBTQ issues.

SCHOOL CULTURE

☐ My school's dress code is inclusive of a diversity of gender expressions, including for yearbook photos.

☐ My school has gender-neutral restrooms or single stall bathrooms and private changing areas.

☐ Students can use bathrooms and locker rooms that correspond with their gender identity.

☐ My school has a GSA that combats bullying and harassment.

☐ Within my school culture, other staff members are unafraid to be allies to LGBTQ and gender nonconforming students.

☐ LGBTQ educators and staff members feel safe to be "out" at work.

☐ My school offers public praise or formal rewards for school staff members who promote a safe and inclusive environment—for example: an "equity leader" certificate at the end of the year.

CURRICULUM

☐ My school's health and sexuality education is inclusive of all sexual orientations and gender identities. The curriculum does not take a heteronormative stance toward sexuality and gender (i.e., assuming students only need to know about heterosexual feelings and safe-sex practices.)

☐ My school's academic curriculum includes LGBTQ perspectives, voices, histories and current events.

☐ My school's library includes books and resources about LGBTQ individuals, history, events and issues.

THE ACRONYM AND BEYOND

A Glossary of Terms

From the outside looking in, the ABCs of LGBTQ identities can feel overwhelming, academic and inaccessible. But for students deprived of representation, words matter—and can open a door toward realization. To hear yourself or see yourself described for the first time can be transformational, especially if you've been conditioned to see yourself as abnormal. A definition can point to a community. And a community can make a kid feel less alone.

Today's youth, more than ever, have a large vocabulary with which they can articulate their gender expression, gender identities and sexual orientations. That vocabulary can make some feel uncomfortable. These terms often force us to confront our biases or assumptions. They ask us to consider the complexity of gender and attraction. But an understanding of these words opens a door for an educator to become an ally to LGBTQ students—capable of facilitating conversation, and more importantly, capable of listening.

Affirmed gender (*noun*): The gender by which one wishes to be known. This term is often used to replace terms like "new gender" or "chosen gender," which imply that a person's gender was chosen rather than simply innate.[1]

Agender (*adj.*): Describes a person who does not identify with any gender identity.

Ally (*noun*): A person who does not identify as LGBTQ, but stands with and advocates for LGBTQ people.

Androgynous (*adj.*), **Androgyne** (*noun*): Used to describe someone who identifies or presents as neither distinguishably masculine or feminine.[2]

Aromantic (*adj.*): A romantic orientation generally characterized by not feeling romantic attraction or a desire for romance.[3]

Asexual (*adj.*): Used to describe people who do not experience sexual attraction or do not have a desire for sex[4]. Many experience romantic or emotional attractions across the entire spectrum of sexual orientations.[5] Asexuality differs from celibacy, which refers to abstaining from sex. Also *ace*, or *ace community*.[6]

Assigned sex (*noun*): The sex that is assigned to an infant at birth based on the child's visible sex organs, including genitalia and other physical characteristics. Often corresponds with a child's *assigned gender* and *assumed gender*.[7]

Binary system (*noun*): Something that contains two opposing parts; binary systems are often assumed despite the existence of a spectrum of possibilities. Gender (man/woman) and sex (male/female) are examples of binary systems often perpetuated by our culture.[8]

Biological sex (*noun*): A medical classification that refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic or physical attributes that determine if a person is assigned male, female or intersex identity at birth. Biological sex is often confused or interchanged with the term "gender," which encompasses personal identity and social factors, and is not necessarily determined by biological sex.[9] See *gender*.

Bisexual, Bi (*adj.*): A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.[10]

Cisgender (*adj.*): Describes a person whose gender identity (*defined below*) aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Cissexism (*noun*): A system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people whose gender and/or gender expression falls outside of normative social constructs. This system is founded on the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders—usually tied to assigned sex.[11]

Coming out (*verb*): A lifelong process of self-acceptance and revealing one's queer identity to others. This may involve something as private as telling a single confidant or something as public as posting to social media.

Demisexual (*adj.*): Used to describe someone who feels sexual attraction only to people with whom they have an emotional bond—often considered to be on the asexual spectrum.[12]

Gay (*adj.*): Used to describe people (often, but not exclusively, men) whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex.[13]

Gender (*noun*): A set of social, physical, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other. Words and qualities ascribed to these traits vary across cultures.[14]

Gender dysphoria (*noun*): Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.[15]

Gender expression (*noun*): External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being masculine or feminine.[16]

Gender-fluid (*adj.*): A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender and whose identification and presentation may shift, whether within or outside of the male/female binary.[17, 18]

Gender identity (*noun*): One's innermost feeling of maleness, femaleness, a blend of both or neither. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.[19]

Gender neutral (*adj.*): Not gendered, usually operating outside the male/female binary. Can refer to language (e.g., pronouns), spaces (e.g., bathrooms) or identities.[20]

Gender nonconforming (*adj.*): A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. Also, *gender expansive.*[21]

Genderqueer (*adj.*): Describes a person who rejects static categories of gender (i.e. the gender binary of male/female) and whose gender expression or identity falls outside of the dominant social norms of their assigned sex.[22] They may identify as having aspects of both male and female identities, or neither.[23]

Gender roles (*noun*): The social behaviors and expression that a culture expects from people based on their assigned sex (e.g., girls wear pink; boys don't cry; women care for home and child; men are more violent), despite a spectrum of various other possibilities.

Heteronormativity (*noun*): Coined by social critic Michael Warner, the term refers to a societal assumption of certain norms: 1) that there are two distinct sexes; 2) that male and female functions and characteristics are distinctly different; and 3) that traits such as attraction and sexual behavior correspond to anatomy. Those who do not fit these norms—be it through same-sex attrac-

tion, a non-binary gender identity or nontraditional gender expression—are therefore seen as *abnormal,* and often marginalized or pressured to conform to norms as a result.[24]

Heterosexism (*noun*): The assumption that sexuality between people of different sexes is normal, standard, superior or universal while other sexual orientations are substandard, inferior, abnormal, marginal or invalid.[25]

Heterosexual (*adj.*): Used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to people of the opposite sex.[26] Also *straight*.

Heterosexual/cisgender privilege (*noun*): Refers to societal advantages that heterosexual people and cisgender people have solely because of their dominant identities. This can include things as simple as safely holding hands with a romantic partner in public or having safe access to public bathrooms. This can also include systemic privileges such as the right to legally donate blood, to adopt children without facing possible rejection because of your sexual orientation, or to play organized sports with others of the same gender identity.

Homophobia* (*noun*): A fear or hostility toward lesbian, gay and/or bisexual people, often expressed as discrimination, harassment and violence.[27]

Intersex (*adj.*): An umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome pattern that can't be classified as typically male or female.[28]

Latinx (*adj.*): A gender-expansive term for people of Latin American descent used to be more inclusive of all genders than the binary terms *Latino* or *Latina.*[29]

Lesbian (*adj.*): Used to describe a woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women.[30]

LGBTQ (*noun*): An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer." Less often, the Q stands for "questioning." Acronyms like LGBTQIA also include the intersex, allied and asexual communities, while acronyms like LGBTQ attempt to envelop an entire community of people who hold identities that are not cisgender or heterosexual.

Misgender (*verb*): To refer to someone in a way that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify, such as refusing to use a person's preferred pronouns or name.[31]

Nonbinary (*adj.*): An umbrella term that refers to individuals who identify as neither man or woman, or as a combination of man or woman. Instead, nonbinary people exhibit a boundless range of identities that can exist beyond a spectrum between male and female.

Outing (*v*erb): The inappropriate act of publicly declaring (sometimes based on rumor and/or speculation) or revealing another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent.[32]

Pansexual (*adj.*): Used to describe people who have the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender identity, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.[33] The term *panromantic* may refer to a person who feels these emotional and romantic attractions, but identifies as asexual.

Preferred pronouns (*adj.*): The pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual personally uses and would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. Can include variations of he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/their/theirs, among others.[34] This term is being used less and less in LGBTQ circles, as it suggests one's gender identity is a "preference" rather than innate. *Recommended replacement: "Your pronouns, my pronouns, their pronouns, etc."*

Queer (*adj.*): Once a pejorative term, a term reclaimed and used by some within academic circles and the LGBTQ community to describe sexual orientations and gender identities that are not exclusively heterosexual or cisgender.

Questioning (*adj.*): A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.[35]

Same-gender loving (*adj.*): A term coined in the early 1990s by activist Cleo Manago, this term was and is used by some members of the black community who feel that terms like gay, lesbian and bisexual (and sometimes the communities therein) are Eurocentric and fail to affirm black culture, history and identity.

Sexual orientation (*noun*): An inherent or immutable emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people; oftentimes used to signify the gender identity (or identities) to which a person is most attracted.[36]

Third gender (*noun*): A gender identity that is neither male nor female, existing outside the idea that gender represents a linear spectrum between the two. Sometimes a catchall term or category in societies, states or countries that legally recognize genders other than male and female.

Transgender (*adj.*): An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.[37] Not all trans people undergo transition. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or something else. Also, *trans*.

Transitioning (*verb*): A process during which some people strive to more closely align their gender identity with their gender expression. This includes *socially transitioning*, during which a person may change their pronouns, the name they ask to be called or the way they dress to be socially recognized as another gender. This includes *legal transitioning*, which may involve official name change and modified IDs and birth certificates. And this includes *physically transitioning*, during which a person may undergo medical interventions to more closely align their body to their gender identity. Transgender and nonbinary people transition in various ways to various degrees; self-identification alone is enough to validate gender identity.

Transphobia* (*noun*): The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people. This may manifest into transphobic actions, such as violence, harassment, misrepresentation or exclusion.[38]

Transsexual (*adj.*): A less frequently used term (considered by some to be outdated or offensive) which refers to people who use medical interventions such as hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery (GAS) or sex reassignment surgery (SRS) as part of the process of expressing their gender.[39] Some people who identify as transsexual do not identify as transgender and vice versa. *Only use this term if someone who specifically identifies as such asks you to*.

Two Spirit (*adj.*): An umbrella term in Native culture to describe people who have both a male and female spirit within them. This

encompasses many tribe-specific names, roles and traditions, such as the *winkte* of the Lakota and *nadleeh* of the Navajo people.[40] This term often describes Native people who performed roles and gender expression associated with both men and women. This term should be used only in the context of Native culture.

Words to avoid
Homosexual (*n.*); homosexual (*adj.*)
Sexual preference
Tranny/transvestite

Preferred terms
Gay man/person (*n.*); gay (*adj.*)
Sexual orientation
Transgender person or trans person
(*if they so identify*)

*University of California-Davis's LGBTQIA Resource Center offers this note on words like this: We've been intentionally moving away from using words like "transphobic," "homophobic," and "biphobic" because (1) they inaccurately describe systems of oppression as irrational fears and (2) for some people, phobias are a very distressing part of their lived experience and co-opting this language is disrespectful to their experiences and perpetuates ableism.

DEFINITION SOURCES

Note: Not all definitions are used word-for-word, but were inspired by meanings provided by the following sources.

1 PFLAG National Glossary of Terms.
2 Human Rights Campaign Glossary of Terms.
3 University of California Davis, LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary.
4 Glossary of Terms, from the GLAAD Media Reference Guide
5 Asexuality.org
6 The Trevor Project Glossary
7 PFLAG
8 The Trevor Project
9 PFLAG
10 Human Rights Campaign
11 UC Davis
12 Ibid.
13 GLAAD
14 Lambda Legal, Glossary of LGBTQ Terms
15 HRC
16 Ibid.
17 Oxford English Dictionary
18 UC Davis
19 Human Rights Campaign
20 PFLAG
21 Human Rights Campaign
22 Ibid.
23 UC Davis
24 International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences
25 Lambda Legal
26 GLAAD
27 Lambda Legal
28 GLAAD
29 PFLAG
30 GLAAD
31 PFLAG
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35 Human Rights Campaign
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 PFLAG
40 Tony Enos, "8 Things You Should Know About Two Spirit People," Indian Country Today. 2017.

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