

Supporting your LGBTQ Students: A Primer

What Teachers Can Do To Make Schools Safer for Their LGBTQ Students

Classroom Climate - Physical -

- Safe space poster visible in class Introduced the first day of school
- Tell students that no Harassment or bullying will be allowed
- Tell students that all are allowed to “freely be who they are”
- Greet students at the door each day
- Avoid seating or lining up students as boy/girl
- Avoid terms such as: boys/girls, “you guys”, etc.
- Use terms like: students, folks, scholars, you all
- Use inclusive, affirming and gender neutral language (not every family is the same, not every student is straight)
- Intentionally model inclusive terms and gender neutral language
- Think about how you will deal with students who do bully, harass or use slurs with other students *see section “how to intervene”
- Consider wall displays that represent all student - race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. (Do any posters show any type of bias? And does it matter?)

Classroom Climate - Rules and Teachable Moments with your students

- Establish rules that are inclusive of all students. Visible in the classroom and referred to often by the teacher.
- Create or use a lesson that teaches students about stereotypes, slurs, harassment and bullying
- When incidents arise, then discuss them with the class because if you don't address incidents, then they are likely to occur again (this is a teachable moment - acting in the context of an established rule or how we treat each other)
- Use the name or pronouns that students would like you to use (and make a note of them)

Personal Learning

- Educate yourself about needs of LGBTQ students and their families
- Examine your own bias and implicit bias
- Understand the difference between gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation
- Learn how to be an ally (support or sponsor an LGBTQ student club, attend an LGBTQ club meeting or LGBTQ event, know when and where to seek help, reliable resources). See the Safe Schools website.

Bullying or harassment statements defined:

- **Bullying** is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. (<https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/index.html>).
- Harassment - Intimidation or teasing another person because of their real or perceived identity.
- ACLU - My School My Rights - <https://www.myschoolmyrights.com/harassment-and-bullying/>
- Penal Code: 422.6.
- (a) No person, whether or not acting under color of law, shall by force or threat of force, willfully injure, intimidate, interfere with, oppress, or threaten any other person in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him or her by the Constitution or laws of this state or by the Constitution or laws of the United States in whole or in part because of one or more of the actual or perceived characteristics of the victim listed in subdivision (a) of Section 422.55.
- (1) Disability.
- (2) Gender.
- (3) Nationality.
- (4) Race or ethnicity.
- (5) Religion.

- (6) Sexual orientation.

SAS: Supporting All Students

How to intervene. Classroom Interventions / behavior to stop harassment or bullying

Behavior Intervention:

1. Stop the harassment immediately. Make sure all students in the area hear your comments.
2. Identify the harassment. Label the form of harassment. “You just made a harassing comment based upon...” Do not imply the target is a member of that identified group.
3. Broaden the Response. “We, at this school, do not harass people.” Re-identify the offensive behavior. “This name calling can also be hurtful to others who overhear it.”
4. Ask for a Change in Future Behavior. “Chris, please pause and think before your act.”
5. Check in with the Target. “Please tell me if this continues.”
6. Follow up
7. Decide if the incident needs to be reported or referred to someone else

What to do if a student “comes out” to you?

Note: Prior to beginning a one-on-one conversation with a student about “coming out,” the educator should state something like: “Before we have this conversation, I want you to know that if you are going to tell me you are hurting yourself or someone else is hurting you, I am required by state law to report this to the authorities” (Teachers should know what is required at their school for mandated reporting).

Suggested guidelines for talking with a student who may “come out” to you:

- Arrange a time to talk one-on-one with the students without other interruptions.
- Respect the student’s rights and confidentiality (Educators should not “out” students to anyone unless the student gives permission to do so.)
- Listen deeply and openly to what the student communicates so students can just share their feelings without judgment (often a student just wants to tell someone they respect)
- Questions a teacher may ask:
 - Describe how you feel inside
 - How are you feeling about who you are?
 - How do you feel about coming out? Who are you “out” to?
 - Are you feeling confusion in any way?
 - Have you been bullied or harassed by other students because of your gender or sexual orientation? How have you handled that?
 - Do you feel alone or guilty?
 - How would you describe your gender to someone else?
 - How would you describe your sexual orientation to someone else?
 - Is it ok if I share this information with other people? (other students, counselor, other teachers, etc.)
- At the end of the conversation, thank the student for sharing this information with you. The educator then decides if it is necessary to refer information about the student to another staff member (e.g. counselor or vice principal).

Discussions with students may be different for a student coming out as transgender than for a student coming out as bisexual, gay, lesbian, non-binary or any other gender designation.

Help with using students pronouns:

Name: _____

Name you want me to call you in class: _____

Pronouns (ex: He/him/his, She/her/hers, They/them/theirs/, El/ella

- May I use these pronouns **in front of the class**? Yes/No
- May I use these pronouns **when I contact home**? Yes/No
- May I use these pronouns **in front of other teachers**? Yes/No
- Would you like to follow up with me (in a private conversation) about your pronouns?
Yes/No

Tell me three things about yourself. This could be interesting facts, hobbies, or just things you want me to know about you. Use the back of the paper if needed.