

LGBTQ Inclusivity

As educators, it is important to include and respect all communities in order to establish a safe(r), more productive learning environment. Safety remains a continuous challenge, as a 2013 national survey found that more than half of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning (LGBTQ)* youth avoid school functions and extracurricular activities because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.¹ This reality is replicated in non-school based educational settings as well. An educational environment where all young people feel accepted, respected and valued is essential to student engagement, and ultimately helps create a better learning atmosphere for all involved. Recognizing LGBTQ inclusivity in community workshops, schools and classrooms is an important piece of this process. How do we build towards that?

Know the Facts

- 42.2% of transgender students specifically,² and 10.8% of LGBT students overall have been prevented from using their preferred name in school.
- More than half of LGBT students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff, most commonly because they doubted that effective intervention would occur or assumed the situation could become worse upon being reported.³
- 56.4% of LGBT youth have heard negative remarks about gender expression (not acting “masculine enough” or “feminine enough”) frequently or often.⁴

Show Support

- Be an ally. This can have positive outcomes for LGBTQ youth, even if they do not publicly identify as LGBTQ. This looks different within different communities,⁵ and can range from putting a rainbow or Trans* flag on training fliers, posting [welcoming posters](#) or Safe Space stickers around the training space, having LGBTQ students represented in materials, or using gender-neutral language (try “they”).
- Avoid using binary language (gendered language suggesting there are only two identity options, such as he/she, male/female, man/woman) in educational trainings to remove potential engagement barriers. This also applies to group activities; consider organizing students by their preference of chocolate or vanilla, dogs or cats, or other identity-removed groupings.

¹ Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Palmer, N. A., & Boesen, M. J. (2014). *The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN. Retrieved from <http://www.glsen.org/article/2013-national-school-climate-survey>.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *The Safe Space Kit: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students*. (2013). New York, New York: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. Retrieved from <http://www.glsen.org/safespace>.

*As a measure of inclusivity, the authors use the acronym LGBTQ to include all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. We understand that identities are not limited to the terms represented by the letters in this acronym and aim to be representative of the entirety of identities across the queer spectrum. Select studies utilize the acronyms LGBT or LGB to denote the specific populations represented in those studies and are marked as such throughout this tip sheet.

Value Identit(ies)

- Honor attendees' identities by respecting their self-determination. One way to show respect is by using their [self-identified gender pronouns](#)⁶ (they, ze, she, he, etc.). Not sure what to use? Ask.
- Consider providing name tags at trainings with an optional space for writing preferred pronoun(s): "I use ____" or "Please use ____." Another option is to have premade "He/His," "She/Hers," "They/Theirs," and blank stickers for people to add to their own nametags.
- Lead by example. People with a speaking role at the event can include their own pronouns in their introductions. Explaining the inclusion for pronouns on nametags can also be an easy way to open the door for conversations about respect and self-determination.
- Acknowledge the potential for safety concerns by providing non-gendered restroom access. Young LGBTQ people surveyed in all communities in the United States - rural, suburban and urban - listed restrooms and locker rooms as the spaces they felt least safe based on their sexual orientation.⁷ [Know the laws in your area](#), proactively discuss them with location staff prior to your training, and advocate for all attendees to have access to the restroom of their choosing.

Be Reflective and Responsive

- Make it known that homophobia or discrimination will not be tolerated by attendees or educators, and explain the values behind this. Encourage safe(r) spaces for all and provide space for attendees and facilitators to provide anonymous feedback and discrimination reports, for incidents that may happen either in the training or onsite with the location staff.
- Create a list of organizations, contacts and general information for LGBTQ young people, their friends and families. Provide this list to all educators so they can inform themselves, but also as a resource for attendees.

Always Be Learning

- [Allyship](#) is something that is earned, not chosen. A commitment to inclusivity requires ongoing learning and growth.
- Support teachers to understand and approach [teachable moments](#) with skill and grace. Reach out to local community members and school staff that work with LGBTQ populations and discuss the importance of language and support for LGBTQ students.⁸ Above all, make sure these conversations happen on *their* terms.
- Reach out to other schools and settings that have successfully facilitated inclusive environments and ask what trainings they used or how they approach creating an inclusive environment. Sharing best practices among educators is a strategic way to grow individually, and build upon each other's experiences. A [variety of resources](#) are available for [training development](#) to enhance trainers' capabilities.

⁶ *The Safe Space Kit: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students*, 2013.

⁷ Palmer, N. A., Kosciw, J. G., & Bartkiewicz, M. J. (2012). *Strengths and Silences: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students in rural and small town schools*. New York, NY: Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network. Retrieved from <http://www.glsen.org/ruralreport>.

⁸ *The Safe Space Kit: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students*, 2013.



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