

Good Practices for LGBTQIA+ Daycare and Preschools

Because an affirming, safe environment improves social-emotional and academic outcomes for LGBTQIA+ young people.

Good Practice	Examples	Why?
Use non-gendered language to refer to children as a group.	Good morning, children. Welcome back, everyone. Hey friends, listen up. Dear families, we love working with your children. Important: Divide children into groups in non-gendered ways (e.g., by first letter in name, favorite animal, etc.).	Some children are or will recognize themselves to be intersex, nonbinary, or genderfluid. Respectful inclusivity enables them to participate – and helps them accept their own and others’ identities.
Use non-gendered language to refer to children’s parents/guardians and other family members.	Ask about the important people in the child’s life. This could be a single parent, two moms, a grandparent, siblings, etc. <i>(Refer to them as your grownups, your families, etc. Not your mom and dad, your sisters and brothers, etc.)</i>	Some children have LGBTQIA+ parents/guardians and relatives, or a single grownup. They can feel left out and withdraw if you assume heterosexual, cisgender two-parent families as the norm.
During introductions, model offering your name and pronouns. Use neutral pronouns for others if unsure of their gender identity.	I am Val, and my pronouns are she/her/hers. My name is Ryan, and my pronouns are they/them/their. You can play with Ryan; they love puzzles, too. If you misgender someone, simply apologize and move on.	Using correct names and pronouns is respectful. Modeling inclusivity when children are young makes it easier for them to understand and accept their own and others’ identities as they develop.
Keep books and images that feature LGBTQIA+ people (and other forms of diversity) in the daycare/classroom.	See links for book lists on other side. Display family photos in daycare/classroom. Display other photos of all kinds of families (adoptive, LGBTQIA+, multiracial, varying ages and physical abilities, etc.).	Children feel accepted and inspired when exposed to diverse positive role models that reflect their identities. Such exposure also fosters acceptance (and not bullying) of children who are “different.”
Provide a variety of inclusive toys and materials.	Dolls, figures, puppets, images, art supplies, etc. that allow children to select and explore types of people, cultures, abilities, and families that reflect their own or their friends’.	Same as above.
Include LGBTQIA+ and other diversity in stories, songs, and creative activities.	Tell stories, adapt songs, ask questions, and use art and writing prompts that enable children to see and ask about diversity.	Same as above.
Respectfully stop anti-LGBTQIA+ assumptions, words, and behavior.	Let’s stop and talk for a minute. In our community, we respect all people. [Respond as you would for racism, ableism, etc.]	Children open their eyes to diversity and see that homophobic, transphobic actions are unacceptable.
Display “safe space” symbols.	Rainbow and trans ribbons/flags, safe space stickers (e.g., https://www.glsen.org/safespace), etc.	Children (or their families) feel safe and let go of stressful vigilance; they view you as an ally.
Support children who question their identities or come out.	Listen, focus on the child (not your reactions), and respond and ask questions respectfully. Check out resources (on other side) and consider offering an in-service on LGBTQIA+ identities.	Students will remember your first reaction forever. Reacting respectfully will help them develop trust and explore their identities at a comfortable pace.

Glossary

Sex assigned at birth	Sex (male, female, intersex) assigned to an infant at birth based on visible sex organs, including genitalia and other physical characteristics.
Intersex	Born with both male and female or ambiguous physical characteristics that appear neither typically male nor female; often assigned a gender and subjected to surgery to create appearance of that gender.
Gender expression	External appearance of gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut, or voice.
Gender identity	Deeply held sense of being a girl/woman, boy/man, some of both, or neither; might or might not align with sex assigned at birth.
Cisgender	Having a gender identity that aligns with sex assigned at birth.
Transgender	Having a gender identity that does not align with sex assigned at birth; encompasses trans male, trans female, and terms below.
Nonbinary	Having a gender identity that is neither girl/woman or boy/man, or is some fixed or shifting combination of both. Also called genderqueer.
Genderqueer	See nonbinary.
Genderfluid	Having a gender identity that shifts throughout the day, week, month, or year.
Agender	Not identifying with any gender.
Sexual orientation	Inherent emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people.
Lesbian	Woman emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.
Gay	Emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.
Bisexual	Emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to two genders (usually male and female) to varying degrees.
Pansexual	Emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of any sex or gender, including cis, trans, and nonbinary.
Asexual	Not sexually attracted to anyone (of any gender).
Aromantic	Not romantically attracted to anyone (of any gender).
Queer	Having any type of LGBTQIA+ identity. Used to reclaim the term from pejorative use to self-identify with the LGBTQIA+ community.

LGBTQIA+ Friendly Book Lists

American Library Association: <http://gbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/rainbow-books-lists>

Welcoming Schools: <http://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/books/lgbtq-inclusive-schools/>

The Conscious Kid: <https://medium.com/@katieishizukastephens/21-childrens-books-uplifting-lgbtqia-voices-history-and-culture-3b16acc4beb>

LGBTQIA+ Friendly Toys and Materials

MyFamilyBuilders: <https://myfamilybuilders.com/>

Other diverse dolls, figures, blocks, family counters, etc. Multicultural crayons, paints, play doh, people kits, play foods, musical instruments, etc.

Other Resources

Lexington Pride Coalition: <https://www.lexpridema.org/>, lexpridema@gmail.com

Greater Boston PFLAG: Resources (<http://www.gbpf.org/resources/>), Training (<http://www.gbpf.org/trainings-and-workshops/>), Glossary (<https://www.pflag.org/glossary>)

Welcoming Schools: <http://www.welcomingschools.org/>

Teaching Tolerance / Speak Up At School: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/speak-up-at-school>

GLSEN: Educator Resources (<https://www.glsen.org/educate/resources>), Professional Development (<https://www.glsen.org/educate/professional-development>)