Good Practices for LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Schools

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Because an affirming, safe school environment improves academic and mental health outcomes for LGBTQIA+ students.

Good Practice	Examples	Why?
Use non-gendered language to refer to students as a group.	Good morning, class. Welcome back, everyone. Hey students, listen up. I love working with your children. *(Not boys and girls, your sons and daughters, etc.)*	Some students are (or will eventually recognize themselves to be) intersex, nonbinary, or genderfluid: they are neither male nor female, or they are both male and female to varying degrees.
Use non-gendered language to refer to students' parents/guardians and other family members.	Your parents and guardians. Your grown-ups. Your siblings. Your relatives. *(Not your mom and dad, your sisters and brothers, your aunts and uncles, etc.)*	Some students have LGBTQIA+ parents, guardians, siblings, and relatives. They might feel embarrassed or avoid talking about family if you assume heterosexual, cisgender 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 Ms. Doe, and my pronouns are she/her/hers. My name is Ryan, and my pronouns are they/them/their. You can work with Ryan; they are working on the same lesson. If you misgender someone, simply apologize and move on.	Using correct names and pronouns is respectful. Intersex and trans students feel hurt by misgendering and may withdraw or act out as a result. *Too much focus on pronouns can "out" or embarrass students.*
Keep books and images that feature LGBTQIA+ people (and other forms of diversity) in the classroom.	See links on other side.	Students 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."
Use an inclusive curriculum or supplement with inclusive resources.	Use LGBTQIA+ people in examples and word problems. Include LGBTQIA+ topics in health education, biology, and all other subjects (see links on other side).	Same as above.
Display "safe space" symbols.	Rainbow ribbon, bracelet, etc. Pride month displays. Safe space stickers (e.g., https://www.glsen.org/safespace).	Students feel safe and let go of stressful vigilance. Students view you as an ally to whom they can talk.
Stop anti-LGBTQIA+ words and behavior.	Stop. In this school we respect all people. [Use same strategies that you would for racism, ableism, sexism, etc.]	Students see that homophobic, transphobic bullying is unacceptable. LGBTQIA+ students feel safer.
Support students who come out.	Listen, focus on student (not your reaction), respond and ask questions respectfully, connect student to resources (supportive counselor, school GSA, etc.), and respect student's privacy if not out to family/friends.	Students will remember your first reaction forever. Reacting respectfully will encourage them to develop trust and take positive steps for their wellbeing.
Accommodate physical/psychosocial needs.	Allow students to use bathrooms / locker rooms aligned with identity. Offer alternatives if students are uncomfortable with a task (e.g., recording voice, displaying old photos).	Students feel affirmed and supported, so they use their energy for academics and healthy decisions instead of dealing with anxiety and depression.

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 and trans.

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://glbtrt.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-3b16accc4beb

LGBTQIA+ People Who Changed The World

GLSEN: https://www.glsen.org/article/lgbtq-history-1?gclid=CjwKCAjwmqHPBRBQEiwAOvbR86_Sf1CYkVI4tppVA_a-9awylMHl9g_tYJ9jXvt6gUUqwDxxhtsKfhoCUCsQAvD_BwE

Advocate: https://www.advocate.com/world/2016/7/08/20-lgbt-people-who-changed-world

Other Resources

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

Greater Boston PFLAG: Resources (http://www.gbpflag.org/resources/), Training (http://www.gbpflag.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)