9 WAYS TO BE AN ALLY TO YOUR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS

CREATING A GENDER-INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT BEGINS WITH THE REALIZATION THAT THERE ARE LGBTQ+ STUDENTS IN YOUR SCHOOL

BE A LEARNER

- Realize you might not understand
- Recognize the importance of humility
- Get clear on new (to you!) terminology

HELPFUL MINDSET: I'M ALL IN WHEN IT COMES TO LEARNING!

CREATE AN INCLUSIVE CLIMATE FROM THE START

- Use language and strategies that welcome diverse gender-identities from day one
- Respond to student name/pronoun preference with a resounding YES: "I'm so proud of you— of course I can."
- Avoid grouping of students by gender (e.g. boy/girl)
- Avoid creating labels /names (e..g bins, cubbies, folders, etc) until student shares preferred names and pronouns
- Create a Gender-Free Bathroom Pass/Sign-Out sheet
- Provide diverse materials, toys, costumes that all students are encouraged to use
- Include books that feature LGBTQ+ characters, families and topics in classroom library. Integrate the books rather than create a separate "Diverse or LGBT" section or bin.

HELPFUL MINDSET: I CAN'T EXPECT A STUDENT TO GIVE 100% IF THEY AREN'T ALLOWED TO FEEL AND BE 100% THEMSELVES!

CREATE INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

- LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum means you are always visibility, acceptance and rights
    History: include LGBTQ+ rights, activists, legislation
    English: writers, artists, characters, films
    Health: gender identity, sexuality, expression
    Counselors: display LGBTQ+ friendly materials
    Math/Science: include LGBTQ+ examples throughout your curriculum (e.g. math story problems, famous scientist profiles etc.)

LANGUAGE MATTERS

- Avoid gender binary (e.g. boy/girl) language so that all students can find a place for themselves.
- Use inclusive greetings: class, folks, everyone, earthlings, kids, young adults, etc.!
- Create inclusive forms and letters to families
    Ue "your child/student" instead of "your daughter/son"
    Avoid heteronormative family references "mom & dad"
    Include examples of diverse family constellations /configurations

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BE CAREFUL WITH INFORMATION

- Just because someone is out to YOU doesn't mean they are out to everyone
- Engage in a supportive conversation with the student about what information they are comfortable and safe with you sharing with family/ teachers/peers

Need support collecting information? Download our Inclusive First Day of School survey here!

CONSIDER THE AGE OF THE STUDENT

- Start the conversation early!
- The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that children have a solid under standing of their gender identity at the age of 4 years old.
- Break the cycle of preconceived notions of gender

SUPPORT GSAS (GENDER AND SEXUALITY ALLIANCE)

- Student participation in GSAs is related to stronger school connectedness and improved academic achievement for LGBTQ+ youth
- GSAs improve school climate for LGBTQ students even if they student doesn't participate in the GSA!
- GSAs exist at elementary, middle and high school

CHALLENGE STEREOTYPED BELIEFS

- Ask questions to challenge and trouble Stereotypes
- Bring positive, safe, kind energy to the conversation with the student.
- Keep the conversation OPEN even when it is hard.

> Student: Boys can't wear pink!
> You: Of course they can! Why do you think that?
>
> Student: "That's so gay!"
> "In our school, gay means love and kindness. What does it mean to you? How do you think that might make someone feel?"

Helpful Mindset: Practice staying calm and having open conversations with students rather than shutting down a word/phrase/ste-

YOU CAN'T BE WHAT YOU CANT SEE

- When you create an inclusive classroom students can SEE themselves in the space, curriculum, language, climate. This helps them to feel a sense of safety and belonging.
- If necessary, separate your personal and professional values in order to support your LGBTQ+ students. If you are in the field of education, your job is to educate every single student, including LGBTQ+ students.

Helpful Mindset: Every human needs to feel safe, seen, soothed, and secure to learn.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS & RESOURCES

• **LGBTQ+: An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer."**

• **LGBTQ+ ALLY: a person actively supportive of LGBTQ people.**

• **GENDER BINARY: A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.**

• **GENDER NON-BINARY: An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories.**

• **GENDER IDENTITY: One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.**

• **GENDER EXPRESSION: 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 either masculine or feminine.**

• **BIRTH NAME: the name an individual was named at birth.**

• **DEADNAME: the birth name of someone who has changed their name. Please do not ask a student what their deadname is as it can feel unsafe /harmful for the student.**

• **HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN https://www.hrc.org/**
The Human Rights Campaign envisions a world where every member of the LGBTQ family has the freedom to live their truth without fear, and with equality under the law.

• **GSA NETWORK https://gsanetwork.org/**
trans and queer youth uniting for racial and gender justice.

• **THE TREVOR PROJECT https://www.thetrevorproject.org/**
The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) young people under 25.

• **THE IT GETS BETTER PROJECT https://itgetsbetter.org/**
The It Gets Better Project's mission is to uplift, empower, and connect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) youth around the globe.