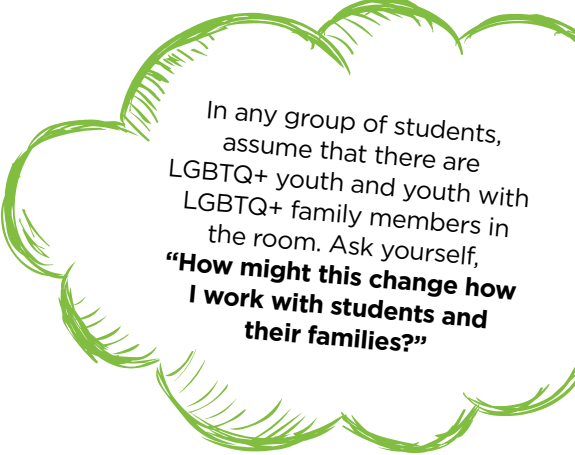


Best Practices for Supporting LGBTQ+ Students as They Return to School

LGBTQ+ YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Coming back to school from summer vacation can be challenging for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and other identities (LGBTQ+). While it is often a return to supportive friends and teachers, it can also be a return to harassment, indifference, and exclusion. The Dane County Youth Assessment and the Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey show that LGBTQ+ youth have higher rates of anxiety, depression, suicide attempts, and other mental health disparities. LGBTQ+ youth also report feeling less connected to school, including not having trusted people they can talk to while there. In order to mitigate some of these factors, we hope this resource can help you make the transition back to school comfortable and safe for your students.



In any group of students, assume that there are LGBTQ+ youth and youth with LGBTQ+ family members in the room. Ask yourself, **“How might this change how I work with students and their families?”**

SETTING UP YOUR CLASSROOM


It is important to create a physical atmosphere that demonstrates your support of LGBTQ+ students. Here are few ways you can do this:

- **SIGNS:** place a “Safe Zone” or “Safe Space” sign on your door or near your desk. This signals a readiness and commitment to address harassment as well as support and protect LGBTQ+ students.
- **POSTERS:** when decorating with posters and stickers make sure that they represent LGBTQ+ people of various races, ethnicities, abilities, and genders.
- **BOOKS:** when stocking your library add books that have LGBTQ+ themes and characters of various races, ethnicities, abilities, and genders.
- **BROCHURES AND RESOURCE CARDS:** place brochures from local and national resources in a public location in your classroom where you have other resources for students.
- **DISTRICT POLICY:** if there is a non-discrimination policy that protects LGBTQ+ students...put it up for all to see in your classroom!

Source: GLSEN


ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

- Say, “I expect respect for all people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students.”
- Read your school's nondiscrimination policy. Tell students they have the right to be free from and report anti-LGBTQ+ bullying and harassment to you and/or school administration.
- Announce school clubs like the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) and other LGBTQ+ friendly clubs.
- Hand out and collect a card that allows students to share preferred name, pronouns, and other information.
- Check in with students who have previously been targets of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying. Tell them it's good to see them. Remind them you're here for them if they need it.



Name:	
Preferred name:	
Birthdate:	
The pronouns I use are:	
Two things I want to learn this year:	
1	
2	
Something interesting about me:	

DID YOU KNOW?



Wisconsin's Pupil Nondiscrimination Law protects LGB students from harassment. Title IX prohibits discrimination against transgender and gender nonconforming students.

WORRIED A STUDENT MIGHT BE SUICIDAL?



Learn the warning signs and more at:
<http://tinyurl.com/widpisiuideresources>

LANGUAGE AND GENDER PRONOUNS

Language is very important when working with LGBTQ+ students. It is important to allow students to self identify their sexual orientation and gender identity, and then to follow their lead on how they want to be addressed in their identities, names, and pronouns. **Pronouns = Safety** for many transgender and gender non-conforming students. While it's good practice to ask everyone their name and pronouns, if you're not sure, ask. Consider privacy concerns before asking.

Here are some ways to ask someone their pronouns:

- What pronouns do you use?
- How would you like to be addressed?

When you make a mistake, you could say:

- Her books are - I'm sorry, *hir* books are over there.
- I'm sorry. I used the wrong pronouns earlier.

If someone uses the wrong pronouns for someone who isn't present, you could say:

- I think Sam uses she & her pronouns. And yes, I'm going to her house later too!

	NOMINATIVE (SUBJECT)	OBJECTIVE (OBJECT)	POSSESSIVE	POSSESSIVE PRONOUN	REFLEXIVE
Traditional Pronouns					
She	She laughs	I called her	Her pony	That is hers	She likes herself
He	He laughs	I called him	His pony	That is his	He likes himself
Gender Neutral Pronouns <i>Here are just two examples sometimes used by transgender, gender non-conforming, and other people</i>					
They	They laugh	I called them	Their pony	That is theirs	They like themselves
Ze and hir	Ze laughs ("zee")	I called hir ("heer")	Hir pony	That is hirs ("heers")	Ze likes himself ("heerself")
If you mess up someone's pronouns, apologize, correct your mistake and move on. You will make mistakes. Making a big deal out of it publicly usually makes it worse.					Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison LGBT Campus Center

ADDRESS ANTI-LGBTQ+ BEHAVIOR

Directly address anti-LGBTQ+ behavior from students and adults - including colleagues. Assure students that they have the right to address hurtful language and behavior whether from students or adults. Help them plan and practice what they want to say.

- **NAME IT:** say what you heard (example: I think I heard you say "That's so gay")
- **CLAIM IT:** explain why the behavior is offensive or wrong (example: That is hurtful language because it sounds like you are saying gay is the same as stupid)
- **STOP IT:** let the person know that you want them to stop doing what they are doing (example: That's not okay. Here are some other things you can say instead)
- **WALK AWAY:** leave the situation or turn your attention elsewhere to enable the person to start anew.

If you cannot address behavior immediately, it is okay to come back to it. Also, look for educational moments. Ask, "what did you mean by that?" and "what impact do you think that has on LGBTQ+ people?"

Source: Kevin Berrill and Daryl Cummings-Wilson

FOR MORE RESOURCES ON BULLYING, VISIT:
www.stopbullying.gov

DOES IT REALLY GET BETTER?

Resist telling students, "It gets better." "Better" might be a long way off or out of reach. **Instead, ask students, "How can we work together to make it better now?"**

IF A STUDENT COMES OUT TO YOU...

- Thank them for trusting you.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Offer support but don't assume a student needs help.
- Assure them that you won't share information with their classmates, colleagues, or parents without permission.
- Don't assume they want to educate their classmates about LGBT issues.
- Be a role model of acceptance.
- Remember that the student has not changed.
- Continue learning about LGBTQ+ topics.
- Be prepared to provide resources.

STATE AND NATIONAL RESOURCES:

- GSAFE (WI) - www.gsafewi.org
- Rainbow Alliance of Youth (WI) - www.tinyurl.com/raywisc
- The Trevor Project (national hotline) - www.thetrevorproject.org
- Wisconsin Pupil Nondiscrimination Policy Brochure <http://tinyurl.com/wiscnondiscrim>
- Department of Education Title IX Guidance <http://tinyurl.com/titleIXguidance>

Resource created by:

