

# TALK AND TAKE ACTION:

## EDUCATORS' GUIDE TO COMBATING LGBTQ+ DISCRIMINATION

**nickelodeon**<sup>TM</sup>

**GLSEN**<sup>®</sup>

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# Introduction

Throughout history, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and more **(LGBTQ+)** people have often been bullied, teased, or discriminated against because of how they dress, what they look like, or who and how they love. Learning this history helps us understand all that queer and trans people have overcome and shows the beauty and strength of the LGBTQ+ community.

This guide, focused on combating LGBTQ+ discrimination, has been written in partnership with GLSEN. GLSEN is the leading national education organization working to ensure that LGBTQ+ students are able to learn and grow in a school environment free from bullying and harassment. The guide is designed to provide teachers and educators with the content, tools, and tips they need to talk with students about discrimination and hate directed at the LGBTQ+ community in the United States and how to support LGBTQ+ students and families.

We recognize having conversations focused on discrimination and hate can be challenging at any age. We hope this guide will help educators feel supported as they navigate these tough topics with their students.

Finally, we want students to leave these conversations empowered to make change. This guide provides simple, but significant, action steps classes can take together to create a more inclusive world.

# TALKING WITH STUDENTS ABOUT LGBTQ+ DISCRIMINATION: BEFORE YOU BEGIN

When preparing to talk about topics around identity, gender, and sexuality with students, it's important to frame those discussions in ways that maximize opportunities to learn, while at the same time ensuring that students don't leave the encounter confused, afraid, or traumatized. This guide delves into misgendering, discriminatory acts, and other forms of discrimination the LGBTQ+ community has endured, which can be challenging for all of us to read and talk about. Here are tips you can use to support student learning.

**An important note:** You may have students in your classes who are learning about and exploring their own identity or who have caregivers or family members who are members of the LGBTQ+ community. Talking about issues related to discrimination and hate against the LGBTQ+ community can unlock personal connections and experiences to trauma. Please allow your students to contribute at a level that feels comfortable for them. Avoid putting them on the spot by asking or expecting them to “carry the weight” of these conversations.

**1. Check in with yourself first.** Take stock of your own feelings and perceptions related to the information included in these guides.

- If you hold personal or religious beliefs that make this conversation challenging to prepare for, begin simply with universal values of kindness, fairness and equality. Take some time to examine how your beliefs and values may impact LGBTQ+ students' academic success and sense of belonging in your classroom or how you talk about them with your students.
- If you identify as LGBTQ+ or have been personally impacted by discrimination due to your multiple identities (race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, home language, etc.), it may be difficult to revisit those painful experiences. Be aware of emotions that may arise. As an educator, you may need to notice what comes up for you, before you engage with your students. Consider sharing your thoughts with another trusted adult.

**2. Review the guides.** As an educator, creating a safe space to discuss tough topics like discrimination and hate sends a powerful message to your students. However, these topics are challenging, and you may need help in preparing for these conversations. If that's the case, look through the Talk and Take Action Guides. Each guide will provide you with an introduction to its topic, a historical and contemporary context for why these conversations need to take place, and discussions to support your students' learning. Focus on the information that you feel is most meaningful and relevant to your students' lived experiences and your specific conversation's focus.



**3. Lay the foundation.** Before having conversations about difficult topics like discrimination, bias, and hate, it's important to lay the foundation for respectful dialogue. With children, set the tone by establishing age-appropriate *community agreements*. Community agreements help set the tone and build/deepen rapport between caring adults and children.

**4. Prepare to be transparent.** Talking honestly and openly about difficult topics models behavior that fosters open lines of communication with children. In fact, acknowledging that some topics are difficult to talk about encourages kids to express their feelings, even when it's not easy.

**5. Gauge what they know.** Kids gain information implicitly, or informally, through what they see, hear, and experience. Asking students what they already know about a topic is a great starting point for conversation. Expand on what they bring up to deepen their understanding and fill in their knowledge gaps. Children often notice and absorb much more than we expect.

**6. Lean in and listen.** In a world full of distractions, now is the time to give students your undivided attention. Encourage them to ask questions and revisit the community agreements that guide these conversations. Pay attention to the questions they ask and any emotional responses that may be evoked or suppressed by the information being presented. Look out for body language cues, as well as what they are saying. The goal is for students to feel safe and secure.

**7. Validate their feelings.** Ask students to name their feelings—afraid, frustrated, excluded—and encourage them to explain why they feel the way they do.

- If misinformation is involved, share the proper and accurate information with them.
- If the student is demonstrating a lack of empathy or having a hard time “seeing” the perspectives of others, ask them to think of the issue from the perspective of another person.
- Some students may be more likely to suppress their emotions due to learned gender, social, or cultural roles.

**8. If you don't know, just say so.**

Answer questions as clearly and honestly as you can, using developmentally appropriate language and definitions. If you don't know the answer to a question, just say so. Be sure to follow up afterward.

**ACTIVITIES: ESTABLISHING  
COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS**

1. Share lesson objective(s) with students: Today we are going to think about how we want to treat and talk with each other as we learn about \_\_\_\_.
2. Briefly explain “the how.” We are going to develop a list of norms. Briefly describe that norms are shared expectations of acceptable behavior by groups.
3. Ask students to brainstorm the following prompt: What would help us work together best as we learn about \_\_\_\_?
4. Encourage students to answer the prompt by providing an example to begin the discussion: “What would help us work best together is not interrupting each other when we are speaking.” Develop 3 to 5 community agreements based on children's responses.

**9. Help them frame the situation.** Providing students with context is useful when helping them make sense of acts of bullying, hate, or violence. If they ask why someone would direct hate at someone based on their identity, you could say, “Some people wrongly believe that certain identities are better than others. They may have gotten these wrong ideas from stereotypes we see and hear in the media. Without the correct information, they sometimes commit acts of violence against other people and think it’s OK based on their beliefs.”

**10. Empower them to make a difference.** Tackling tough topics can sometimes leave us feeling sad, angry, or hopeless. While these feelings are valid, we can use them to engage in meaningful actions to fight against hate and discrimination. For example, learning about and standing in solidarity with others or volunteering time to a cause. If you need support, each guide includes a list of actions you can take as a classroom to leave the conversation feeling empowered and prepared to build a more just and compassionate world.



# TALKING WITH PARENTS/CAREGIVERS ABOUT THIS GUIDE

It can be helpful to remind parents that students are paying close attention to issues related to social justice, bullying, bias, and discrimination—even those who we think are too young to see or understand what’s going on. By sharing with parents your commitment to being proactive around these issues, you are helping students gain the competency to discuss tough issues and the ability to approach uncomfortable or inequitable situations with thoughtfulness and sensitivity. If your school utilizes *social and emotional learning (SEL)* curriculum and that information has already been communicated to parents, emphasize how this guide supports and enhances SEL.

**Communicating with parents and caregivers:** There are caregivers who may push back and assert that their children don’t need to learn about bullying, hate, and discrimination, or express concerns about what their kids will be learning. If this happens, acknowledge the fact that addressing these topics will be uncomfortable. By being transparent about what will be discussed and the goal of supporting an inclusive learning environment that acknowledges important challenges impacting their kids, you can demonstrate the importance of creating an awareness of these issues and model a willingness to work together.

## A SAMPLE NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Students are paying close attention to issues related to social justice, bias, and racism — even those we think are too young to understand what’s going on. Racist and discriminatory images that appear on social media and in the news, news stories, discussions, and events are happening all around them.

As an educator, I am responsible for ensuring that my students have access to fact-based sources of information and the ability to ask questions about things that may be confusing. I’m often in the position to field those questions, and I also have the responsibility to ensure that students are engaging each other in a respectful manner.

It is also in students’ best interest to create a classroom that is positive and inclusive. These conversations will foster respect, communication, and a safe space for our diverse classroom.

Starting on \_\_\_\_\_, our class will be discussing the tough topics of discrimination, bias, and hate using a few resources from recognized organizations such as The Conscious Kid, USC Shoah Foundation—The Institute for Visual History and Education, GLSEN, and the Hispanic Heritage Foundation to develop an understanding of how historical events have shaped and influenced some of the challenges we see today. The guides are designed to support students’ social emotional learning while teaching difficult concepts in a safe and caring environment.

As a parent or caregiver, here are a few resources you can use if your child has questions:

[APA LGBTQ Youth Resources](#)

[GLSEN LGBTQ History Coloring Book](#)

[GLSEN Rainbow Library](#)

If you have questions about our discussions, please feel free to contact me at \_\_\_\_\_.

# ADDRESSING LGBTQ+ DISCRIMINATION AND ITS ROOT CAUSE

## LGBTQ+

is the inclusive term used to represent the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer community. The plus sign (+) encompasses people who identify themselves in others ways like agender, nonbinary, or genderqueer. Although we may hear or see this term used frequently today, it was only created within the last 30 years by LGBTQ+ activists to unify, empower, and give voice to a group of people who have been judged and mistreated by larger society for hundreds of years.

## Gender Identity

is someone's internal, or inner, sense of their own gender(s) or no gender. It is how they feel on the inside. Someone may identify as a girl or a boy, woman or man, or they might identify as agender, genderqueer, nonbinary, or just as a person. People can choose not to use any specific term to identify with or use a term that shifts or changes over time. Gender identity, the internal sense of self, is indisputable.

Societies have reinforced strong, deep-seated gender roles and **norms** that have developed over centuries around the world including in the United States. The gender binary was constructed to determine only two genders (male and female) and how they should act, look, like, love, and feel based on that gender. When someone doesn't look like or act like what society thinks they should, they can be viewed by others as "weird," "different," or "wrong."

Some people believe that it is wrong to be a part of the LGBTQ+ community because of what they have learned through their own experiences and interactions with others. Misconceptions, or untrue ideas, people hold about identity are rooted in how gender roles and norms have been learned over time. Throughout history, people who didn't fit society's ideas of gender and sexual orientation faced **bias, discrimination,** shame, and violence.

Today, the fight for LGBTQ+ rights and respect is a response to the hate and fear people have experienced because of who they are, how they live, and who they love. People's identities, sexual orientation, and what makes them who they are, shouldn't be shamed, hated, or hidden. We all have the right to express ourselves and should feel safe, supported, and celebrated in being exactly who we are.



# HISTORY OF ACTIVISM AGAINST LGBTQ+ DISCRIMINATION

Throughout time, LGBTQ+ people have often been teased, harmed, or discriminated against because of how they dress, what they look like, or who and how they love. To combat this hate, there have been many meaningful acts of LGBTQ+ **activism**. Learning this history of activism helps us understand all that queer and trans people have overcome, and shows the beauty, strength, and resilience of the LGBTQ+ community.



## EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Create an Activist Museum. Invite students to pick an activist to research. Have them write a biography and print or draw a picture of them. Hang the portraits around the classroom, and host a gallery tour where students share their activist's story.
- Have the students pick one event from the timeline below and have the students draw an activist and how they think they felt or write about the impact that person had on the LGBTQ+ community and the United States.
- To activate prior knowledge and enhance learning, tie the history of activism here to other types of activism (i.e., AAPI, African American, etc.) if it's something that you've already discussed with your students.



## 1969: Stonewall Riots

- The LGBTQ+ community in New York City was tired of being treated badly by the police, who were allowed to arrest trans people or **drag queens** just for the clothes they were wearing.
- On June 28, 1969, customers at the Stonewall Inn, an LGBTQ+ nightclub and place many people went to because it was safer to be with other LGBTQ+ people, came together to fight back for their rights during a regular police raid, which started the Stonewall Riots.
- Today, we honor known Black and Brown trans women like Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and Miss Major Griffin Gracy as the godmothers of this act of protest and the following movement.

## 1966: The Compton's Cafeteria Riot

- Compton's Cafeteria was a popular place for queer and trans youth in San Francisco to come together, have a meal, and feel safe to be themselves.
- In 1966, the police went to Compton's Cafeteria often, and arrested the queer and trans people who ate there because of how they dressed or what they looked like.
- One night, the "street kids" at Compton's decided to fight back against police harassment they faced. This was one of the earliest recorded acts of LGBTQ+ resistance in the United States.



### 1996: Day of Silence

- In 1996, students at the University of Virginia organized the first Day of Silence as a project on nonviolent protests assigned by their professor, Dr. Julian Bond.
- This transformed into a student-led national event where LGBTQ+ youth and their allies take a vow of silence to highlight the erasure of LGBTQ+ topics in schools. Today, millions of students in all 50 states participate.



### 2020: Grimm v. Gloucester County School Board

- Gavin Grimm sued his Virginia high school when he was not allowed to use the bathroom simply because he is transgender.
- The school forced Grimm to use a separate bathroom, sending a message that something was wrong with him.
- Even after Grimm got his gender and name legally changed, the school would not change his paperwork, which hurt him even after he graduated.
- In 2020, Grimm won his case against his school. They were wrong for not letting him use the boys' bathroom and not changing his paperwork.

#### Resource

[GLSEN LGBTQ History](#)

### 1996: Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)

- In 1996, the United States decided to only recognize marriages between one man and one woman in the Defense of Marriage Act. Many states went on to recognize other types of marriages in their own laws, but many LGBTQ+ people were still excluded from marriage.
- Edie Windsor, an activist and engineer, decided to challenge these unequal rights in 2009 when her wife, Thea Spyer, passed away. Even though their marriage was recognized in the state where they lived, Windsor was not given the same rights as other married people because she was a lesbian.
- Windsor sued the United States, and eventually won. This paved the way for marriage equality to pass in all 50 states, in a 2015 court case.

### 1998: East High Gay Straight Alliance v. Board of Education of Salt Lake City School District

- In 1998, a group of students at East High School in Utah decided to form a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA), a club for students to show their support for the LGBTQ+ community.
- School leaders tried to keep the GSA from meeting by saying they were going to ban all student groups, but they continued to allow other clubs to meet. This made it clear that the only reason the GSA was not allowed to meet was because the club's members supported LGBTQ+ people.
- The GSA student leaders brought the school leaders to court and won, giving students the right to celebrate LGBTQ+ identity at school.

#### DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What impact did these activists have on LGBTQ+ rights and history?
- Why do you think safe spaces for the LGBTQ+ community are so important? What would you tell someone who thinks differently?
- Do you have any safe spaces for the LGBTQ+ community in your school? Why or why not? Can you make one if not?
- Are you contributing to make your school a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community? How? If not, why not?
- Are there any aspects of your school that do not feel welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community or others? What are some ways you can activate change?

# LGBTQ+ DISCRIMINATION TODAY AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO TAKE ACTION

LGBTQ+ people have taken action to get equal rights throughout history but the fight isn't over! Today, we still see anti-LGBTQ+ **bias** and inequity in everyday interactions and language, in politics, our health care system, and in work, schools, and even sports. A 2013 GLSEN research paper revealed that one-third of the LGBTQ+ students reported that they avoided gym class because they felt uncomfortable and unsafe.

More recently, the 2019 GLSEN National School Climate Survey found that more than half of **transgender** students said they were prevented from using bathrooms or locker rooms that align, or match, with their gender identity. Even in schools with more open and inclusive transgender policies, less than half of transgender and **nonbinary** students reported that their school had specific policies that allowed them to participate in sports that align with their gender identity. Preventing equal access to these opportunities is a form of discrimination and prohibits, or stops, LGBTQ+ kids from feeling safe, welcome, and comfortable in their own schools.

In addition to feeling unsafe or unwelcome in their environment, those who face discrimination may also feel many difficult internal, or inside, emotions including fear, anxiety or worry, shame, sadness, anger, self-doubt, or loneliness. These feelings can take a toll on their mental and physical health, relationships, school or work life, and self-esteem.

Bullying adds to these feelings of isolation. In the 2019 GLSEN survey mentioned above, the majority, or most, of the respondents reported experiencing harassment or physical violence within the last year because of their personal characteristics like sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. LGBTQ+ students of color reported experiencing not only identity harassment but racism, as well. Because of this, they were the most likely to skip school (due to feeling unsafe) and had the highest instances of depression, or sadness. All students, no matter how they identify, deserve a welcoming and safe learning environment.

As a society, we are still learning about how to find our commonalities and accept and celebrate our differences. Recognizing and respecting people's perspectives, cultures, beliefs, and identities is a great first step. Right now, young leaders around the world are starting to use their voices to make change, stick up for others, and do what is right.

Here are some ways we can work toward building an accepting, inclusive classroom environment:

- Include more books by LGBTQ+ authors in your class library and read them together.
- Do not assume that you know someone's gender based on their appearance.
- Use inclusive language. Inclusive language means using people's correct pronouns and steering clear of words and phrases that overlook people's individual identity like "guys" or "boys and girls."
- Ask your classmates and new people you meet what their pronouns are and use them.
- Start a [Gender and Sexuality Alliance](#) at your school.
- Participate in GLSEN's Day of Silence.
- Say something if someone is being bullied or picked on. Tell an adult or tell the person being mean that they are saying hurtful things and it is not OK.
- Research historic people in the LGBTQ+ community and their contributions.
- Find events near you that celebrate the LGBTQ+ community.
- Express and share your identity!



### EDUCATOR TIPS:

Discuss ways you as a class want to foster an inclusive classroom. Create a poster and hang it in a place where students can always see it. Display additional LGBTQ+ inclusive materials, art, and flags in your classroom.





# GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

## Kindergarten to 3rd Grade (ages 5-8)

**Bisexual:** Someone who is attracted to two or more genders (such as men and women), but not necessarily all possible genders.

**Drag Performer:** A person who wears the clothing of another gender, often involving showing exaggerated, stereotypical gender characteristics. Individuals may perform as drag kings (in drag presenting as male) or drag queens (in drag presenting as female) when performing gender as an imitation, art or entertainment. A drag performer is not the same as someone who is trans, although some trans people are drag performers.

**Femininity:** A set of socially constructed attributes, behaviors, and roles generally associated with women and girls.

**Gay:** Someone who is generally attracted to someone of the same gender.

**Gender:** A person's sense of being a boy, girl, neither, or something in between.

**Identity:** The many different pieces that fit together to shape our experiences and ultimately make us who we are.

**LGBTQ+:** An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and more.

**Lesbian:** Someone who generally considers themselves a girl who is attracted to other girls.

**Masculinity:** A set of socially constructed (or made up) attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with men and boys.

**Nonbinary:** People who identify as a gender other than boy or girl.

**Pronouns:** Words like she, he, and they that you use to talk about somebody. It is best to always ask someone their pronouns if possible and to not make a guess.

**Social Construct:** Shared ideas that exist because people in a society made them up and agreed on them.

**Stereotype:** A widely believed and oversimplified idea about a type of person or group that is not true of the whole group.

**Transgender/Trans:** A term for people whose gender does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

## 4th Grade and 5th Grade (ages 9-11)

**Agender:** Some agender people define their gender as being neither a man nor a woman, while others understand themselves as not having any gender.

**Allosexual:** Someone who experiences sexual attraction.

**Asexual/Ace:** A person who does not experience sexual attraction.

**Assigned Gender at Birth/AGAB:** This refers to what gender someone was assigned at birth. This may or may not match up with someone's current gender identity.

**Cisgender:** Someone who is not transgender. Cisgender people identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

**Gender Binary:** The social system that tells us there can only be cisgender men and women, and that there can be no alternatives in terms of gender or expression.

**Gender Expression:** How one can express their gender outwardly.

**Gender Identity:** An individual's internal sense of their own gender(s) or no gender.

**Gender Neutral:** Something that's not only for a specific gender. Instead, it's for all genders.

**Gender Nonconforming:** Someone who does not fully conform to the expectations and expression around their gender that their society enforces.

**Gender Roles:** Socially constructed expectations about behaviors, appearance, and roles within a family, community or job, based on gender that reinforces the gender binary. For example, the belief that only boys should play video games and girls should play with dolls. how to dress, speak, and act, and what to like.

**Gender Stereotypes:** Socially constructed, oversimplified ideas of behaviors, interests, and abilities based on gender.

**Genderfluid:** Someone whose gender varies at different times. Sometimes they identify as masculine, other times as feminine, or neither.

**Genderqueer:** A gender that is neither man nor woman, possibly a mix of genders, and possibly fluid.

**Pansexual:** Pansexual is a sexual orientation where the individual has the capacity to be attracted to any person of any gender identity or sexual orientation.

**Queer:** This term is intentionally hard to define. It does not typically include straight identities, rather, it is connected to LGBTQ+ sexual orientation and trans including nonbinary gender identities.

**Sexual Orientation:** The gender(s) a person is attracted to. Examples of sexual orientations include bisexual, asexual, lesbian, gay, and pansexual.

**Two-Spirit:** A North American indigenous identity that is directly linked to certain indigenous spiritual and/or religious belief systems.

## 6th Grade and Up

**Autigender:** Autigender is an umbrella term to describe when someone's gender is somehow linked to their neurodivergence.

**Dysphoria:** When someone is uncomfortable or not connecting with their body or gender. It can sometimes feel like wanting to escape or move away from things that are connected to a particular gender.

**Intersex:** People who are born with physical characteristics that do not align, or fit, with one specific "typical" gender. This can include reproductive organs, genitals, hormones, chromosomes, or any combination thereof.

**Neurodivergent:** A person whose brain works in a different way than what is thought of as "normal." This could be from a social, learning, attention, mood, or other function setting.

# TAKING ACTION! DISCUSSION GUIDES

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to define **stereotypes**.
- Students will be able to explain how **stereotypes** lead to **discrimination**.
- Students will be able to distinguish between she/her, he/him, and they/their **pronouns**.
- Students will be able to name three different characteristics that help make up their **identity**.
- Students will be able to explain why it's important to demonstrate respect for others around issues related to **identity**.

## THAT'S A (GENDER) STEREOTYPE!

From the time kids are very young, gender roles and stereotypes are unconsciously shared with them through implied and overt gender roles.

How many times have you heard someone say that certain things were “only for boys” or “only for girls”? Comments like these are the result of gender roles and gender stereotypes. This means that it has been taught that everyone has to behave a certain way based on their gender. These kinds of thoughts keep people from doing things they enjoy, want, or need to do because they’ve been told those things are not OK for their gender. It can also erase, or overlook, people who may identify or express themselves outside of the binary of **masculinity** and **femininity**, or gender altogether. Finally, these types of beliefs can make some people feel bad or think something is wrong with them, which can negatively impact their sense of worth and well-being.

**Gender stereotypes** are ideas that many people believe about a specific gendered group of people that are not true for everyone in that group. Some people believe that only certain genders can perform certain jobs, wear certain clothes, or like certain toys or certain colors. Remember, people of any gender can like pink or blue, play with dolls or trucks, and wear dresses or pants.

Below is a list of sentences. Share these with your class and have them raise their hands if they think it demonstrates a stereotype.

- Some students like recess.
- Girls like to wear dresses.
- Some girls like to draw.
- All of the boys like to play with trucks.
- Teachers are all girls.
- Some students like playing tag.
- Nurses are all girls.
- Some boys like to play with trucks.
- Some students like to dance.

- Boys don't cry.
- All children identify as boys or girls.
- Girls like dolls.
- Some girls like to play with LEGOs.
- All children like to draw.
- Some boys like to play with LEGOs.
- Girls like the color purple.
- Some children like the color yellow.
- Some boys like the color pink.
- Boys like video games.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What are your own likes and dislikes? Do you see people who you identify with sharing those likes?
- What are some examples of gender stereotypes of boys, girls, and children?
- Think about the clothes in the section you shop in, what colors do you most see? Why do you think that is?
- What toys or activities are you drawn to? Do you see people who identify with other genders participating? Do you think there is a reason why or why not?



### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Ask students to write down their favorite color, activity, sport, toy, subject, etc. Collect the results, then tally how many boys, girls, and nonbinary students have the same favorites. Ask students to share a gender stereotype they have heard about the above (e.g., “Have you heard a gender stereotype about favorite colors?”). Share the findings of your class (e.g., Boys, girls, and nonbinary students said their favorite color was blue), showing them that stereotypes are not true.
- Showcase individuals who do not adhere to traditional gender stereotypes throughout your classroom and lessons.

## Resources

[GLSEN Gender Triangle Education Guide](#)

[That’s a \(Gender\) Stereotype! Lesson Plan](#)



# GENDER IDENTITY AND PRONOUNS: LITTLE WORDS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

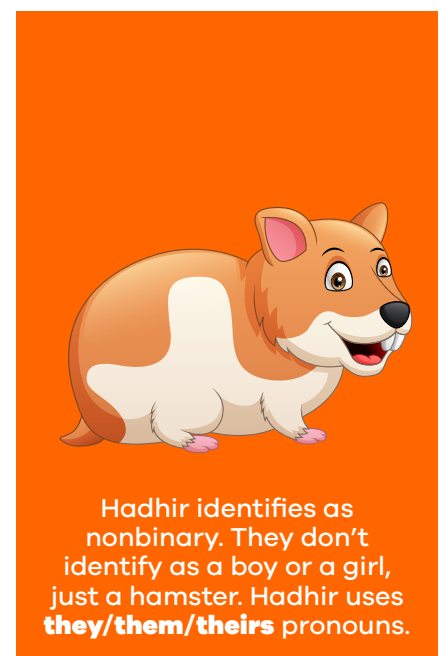
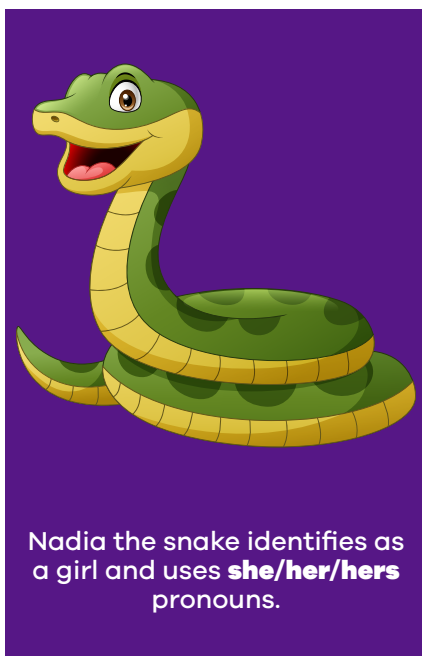
When we're born, we are probably labeled male, female, or **intersex**. For some people, these labels line up with their gender identity, and we refer to these people as **cisgender**. For others, these labels may not fit their **gender identity**, and we refer to them as trans or transgender. For example, someone might be assigned male at birth, but identify as a girl. They would be a transgender girl. You can never know someone's gender identity based on their appearance, so if you're curious, you can ask: "What gender do you identify as?" or "What are your pronouns?"

We use pronouns like she, he, or they all the time! Pronouns make it easy for us to talk about people without having to use names. For example, you could say, "Molly likes dogs," or "She likes dogs." Pronouns can sometimes be a signifier for someone's gender identity but not always. We do not want to assume people's gender identity based on their physical expression (like their clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms etc.). By providing an opportunity for people to share their pronouns, you're showing that you're not assuming that their gender identity is based on their appearance.

People can choose pronouns for what they want others to call them by when they're not using their name. To show respect for people, we use the pronouns that they want to be called. By not assuming gender identity and providing welcoming spaces, LGBTQ+ students are given equal opportunities as their friends and classmates to participate and belong.

When we do not know someone's pronouns, it is best to use their name. Remember: Everyone gets to choose their own pronouns, and to decide how they identify their gender.

Share the below animals and their pronouns with your class. Then have them answer the questions.



**For each statement, fill in the missing name or pronoun based on each character.**



\_\_\_\_\_ went to the park. They rode their bike and picked flowers.



Nadia can't wait for recess. \_\_\_\_\_ wants to see \_\_\_\_\_ friends.



Sebastian is so hungry \_\_\_\_\_ could eat all day.



\_\_\_\_\_ loves \_\_\_\_\_ art class where \_\_\_\_\_ paints and draws.



Hadhir's parents love \_\_\_\_\_ very much.



\_\_\_\_\_ likes to go to the beach with \_\_\_\_\_ friends and family.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

- How do you think Hadhir the hamster would feel if someone refused to use the pronouns they want to be called? How do you think Sabrina or Sebastian would feel? How would you address Hadhir, Sabrina, and Sebastian as a group?
- What are gender neutral ways to address your classmates?
- Why do you think it's important to use the pronouns that other people want to be called?
- A new student joins your class and you are unsure of their gender. What can you do if you are unsure of which pronouns to use?

### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Because it can be a challenge when learning to refer to a singular person as "they" or "them," have students practice using they/them/theirs pronouns. Write sentences on the board, then have students update the pronouns to they/them.  
**Example:** Jade went to the store. → They went to the store.  
Cooper forgot his homework. → They forgot their homework.
- To prime students for this lesson, consider introducing yourself to the class using your own pronouns ("My name is Mr. Jones and my pronouns are he, him, his.")
- Use gender-neutral language in your everyday teaching. Use words like students, friends, people, everyone, folks, etc.
- If you have a substitute, make sure you inform them of your students' pronouns. Consider keeping the pronouns on their desk name tags for the entire school year.



### Resources

[GLSEN Pronouns Guide](#) | [GLSEN Pronoun Form](#) | [GLSEN Pronoun Lesson Plan](#)

# IDENTITY

The word **identity** describes the many different pieces that fit together to shape our experiences and ultimately make us who we are. Identity consists of one's gender, race, culture, ability, neighborhood, school, family, sexual orientation, and many other attributes.

**Ability** has to do with the different ways that people move or learn or communicate. Think about the tools that you need. Some people need glasses to see, a walker or wheelchair to get around, a computer or sign language to communicate, or a bumpy seat or movement break to help them learn.

- **Invisible disabilities** have to do with differences in other people that we may not see, such as medical conditions (i.e., Crohn's disease, celiac disease) or learning disabilities (i.e., dyslexia, dyscalculia).

**Culture** is a way of living that is passed down in your family or communities. This includes the food you eat, the beliefs you have, the holidays you celebrate, the languages you speak, and more.

**Family** is made up of the people around you who help you grow up. (e.g., if you are a sibling, sibling, nephew, niece, etc.).

**Gender identity** is how you identify and see yourself. You may identify as a girl or a boy, or you may not.

- REMEMBER: What students were labeled at birth might not align with their gender identity.

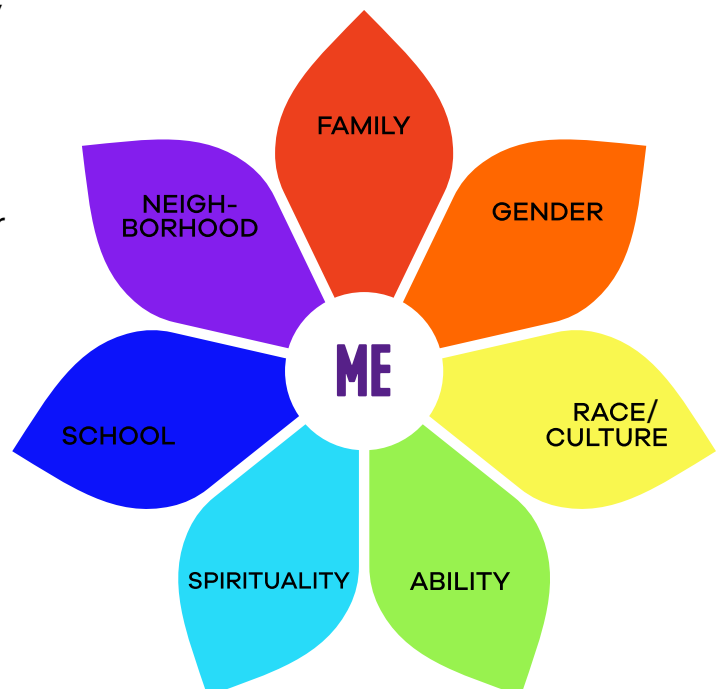
**Neighborhood** is where you live (e.g., what state you are from).

**Race** is a **social construct** and is used as a way to group people, usually based on skin color, hair texture, and places, countries, or lands that your family (grandparents and great-grandparents and before!) came from.

**School** is where you learn (e.g., what grade you are in and where you go).

These components interact with each other in various ways, making everyone unique. Identity can evolve over time and your students are probably exploring parts of their own. Remember, no two people identify exactly the same way.

To conceptualize identities, have your students draw a flower and write each component of their identity on a petal. Then, have them imagine their face in the center. Each petal is a distinct part of them, but they would not be a full flower, or full individual, without each piece.





## EDUCATOR TIPS:

- On a blank sheet of paper, complete your own identity flower. After sharing your flower, answer the discussion questions below along with your students. This is a great way to build rapport with them!
- Allow students to pick how they want to fill in their identity flowers—cut out images from magazines, print out pictures online, paint, draw, etc.
- Students may not want to share all parts of their identity—they may still be exploring or not feel comfortable. That is OK! Do not pressure them. For those uncomfortable, provide the option to create an identity flower for their favorite character.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

- How do you think Hakhir the hamster would feel if someone refused to use the pronouns they want to be called? How do you think Nadia or Sebastian would feel? How would you address Hakhir, Nadia, and Sebastian as a group?
- What are gender-neutral ways to address your classmates?
- Why do you think it's important to use the pronouns that other people want to be called?
- A new student joins your class and you are unsure of their gender. What can you do if you are unsure of which pronouns to use?

## Resource

[GLSEN's Identity Flower Lesson Plan](#)



# CELEBRATING DIVERSE FAMILIES

Everyone's family looks a little different, but all types of families are amazing and real. Some students grow up with a mom and a dad, while others may be raised by two moms, two dads, two nonbinary parents, parents who are transgender, single parents, other family members, or members of their community. Not all families are related by blood and some are chosen through friendships. There are all kinds of different ways families come together, but what matters is that everyone is loved, supported, and cared for and we remember all families are beautiful.

There is a lack of representation of LGBTQ+ families and people in the media and school curricula. According to a GLAAD research report of the 2020-2021 TV season, only 9.1% of regular characters on primetime TV were LGBTQ+. The 2019 National School Climate Survey from GLSEN showed that the majority of students (66.8%) are not exposed to LGBTQ+ people, history, or events in their lessons. Representation in these areas teaches everyone about diverse people and families while promoting respect and acceptance. It also provides LGBTQ+ youth with a sense of belonging and belief in themselves.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

- What does family mean to you?
- What does your family look like? Does your family and your neighbor's family look the same? What about your family and your friend's family?
- Do you see families like yours in books, movies, or TV shows? Why or why not? How does that make you feel?

### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Have your students bring or draw a picture of their family and share with the class who they are, what they do with family members, and why they love their family. This can also be journaled.
- Have your students discuss their families in groups. Then, have them look at five books and see what type of family unit is shown. Write down and discuss their findings. If there is a lack of representation, ask why and how they think a person with that family unit may feel.
- Have your students audit your classroom library for diverse families and keep track of what they find. Add books with representation of family units where they find holes.



# EDUCATOR'S REFLECTION JOURNAL

As you consider having discussions about the LGBTQ+ community in your own classroom, take stock of what implicit biases and experiences you may have. Below are some questions to ask yourself.

Note: Hate-based discrimination are not unique to the LGBTQ+ community. While the focus of this particular toolkit is on the LGBTQ+ experience, it may be helpful for all educators to reflect on their own experiences and consider how much they want to share as a way to help students bridge the gap between various communities (e.g., African American, Indigenous, disabled, etc.).

1. How do I identify today? Has this identity changed or evolved since I was my students' age?
2. Have I ever heard a stereotype about my identity (e.g., my religion, race, gender, and/or beliefs)? How did I feel and react? What would I change? What do I wish the other person knew?
3. What was the last LGBTQ+ character I saw? How were they portrayed—positively or negatively? What stereotypes (if any) were used?
4. What books do I have in my classroom written by LGBTQ+ authors? Who was the last LGBTQ+ historical figure I taught about? Can I include more representation in my future lessons?
5. How do we celebrate our identities in our classrooms? If we don't, why not?
6. When I introduce myself to my students, do I share my pronouns? Do I ask students their pronouns when they introduce themselves?
7. Do I showcase diverse family groups in the books, images, and examples I use?
8. Am I aware of mental health resources in our local community that are available to LGBTQ+ youth?
9. Do I use inclusive language like "friends" or "students" when I refer to my class? Why or why not?
10. How do I build trust with my students? Do I show interest in their stories and empathize with them?

# UNPACKING THE EDUCATOR'S REFLECTION: THREE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO BUILDING TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR STUDENTS

Students start to explore and come into their identity at different stages in life. In order to best serve their individual needs, it is important to foster open lines of communications and build trust with your students. Listed below are three pedagogical approaches to building trust with your students.

## 1. ATTUNEMENT

- This is a teacher's ability to understand the varying lived experiences of their students.
- It requires that teachers notice implicit interactions between students and stay cognizant of their own interactions with students.
- It requires that teachers get to know their students and themselves! One way to do this is icebreaker/getting-to-know-you activities throughout the school year.

### EDUCATOR TIP:

Have a dedicated weekly or monthly day where you have lunch with different groups of your students.



## 2. AUTHENTICITY

- Be transparent and position yourself as a fellow thinker and contributor to the classroom community. Be vulnerable about your own learning around issues related to various identities.
- Verbally acknowledge that you are a cultural being with biases and privileges.
- Model vulnerability, encouraging students to share more freely.

### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Research questions with your students if you do not know the answer.
- Be cautious of the personal stories you share. Sharing may help students relate to or open their minds to different mindsets, but first, make sure you have processed the events with other adults or professional mental health providers and are not looking for emotional support.



### 3. POWER SHARING

- Recognize power and the ability to redistribute it.
- Ensure students who speak often make space for students who do not. Center and uplift the voices of students who are directly impacted by systemic oppression.

#### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Explicitly state to your students that hearing different points of view is important. Ensure sure you make eye contact with all students and actively show you are listening when they speak (nodding, smiling, etc.). Thank students for contributing to classroom conversations.
- Before the guides are introduced, set the expectation that you expect participation from all students as a classroom norm. However, be prepared to allow students to contribute in different ways (i.e., anonymously). Not all students may be comfortable sharing.



Evenly distribute class time to varying perspectives.

#### EDUCATOR TIP:

If certain students are dominating conversations, step in and ask for others to contribute (to the extent they feel comfortable doing so).



Be a purveyor of an alternative viewpoint: If students are having a difficult time understanding the perspective of someone else, provide that alternative viewpoint. This encourages students to think about viewpoints other than their own.

#### EDUCATOR TIPS:

- Come up community guidelines with your students and have them anonymously vote on which ones should be implemented.
- Take note of what students you are calling on and which ones you are not. Make sure to say a student's name first then ask them the question to prepare them to answer.





# RESOURCES

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Book Resources

[Rainbow Collection](#)

[Rainbow Library](#)

### Music

[Trans and Nonbinary Kid Mix](#)

[Queer Kid Stuff Songs](#)

### Websites

[The American Psychological Association LGBTQ Youth Resources](#)

[Coming Out Resource](#)

[Family Acceptance Project](#)

[Gender Spectrum](#)

[Gender Triangle Education Guide](#)

[GLSEN's Day of Silence](#)

[GLSEN Educator Resources](#)

[GLSEN LGBTQ-Visibility and Integration in Elementary Schools](#)

[GLSEN Pronouns Guide](#)

[GLSEN Supporting LGBTQ+ Black, Indigenous, and Youth of Color](#)

[HealthyChildren.org Powered by The American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

[LGBTQ+ History Cards](#)

[LGBTQ National Help Center](#)

[PFLAG](#)

[To the Parents \[And Guardians\] of LGBTQ+ Youth](#)

[Trans Action Kit](#)

[The Transgender Language Primer](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[When a Student Comes Out to You Today or Any Day](#)

## CHILDREN'S READING LISTS



### Elementary School Books

*Neither*, by Arlie Anderson

*Keesha's South African Adventure*,  
by Cheril N. Clarke

*Sam*, by Dani Gabriel

*Prince & Knight*, by Daniel Haack

*I am Jazz*,  
by Jazz Jennings and Jessica Herthel

*Julián Is a Mermaid*, by Jessica Love

*When Aidan Became a Brother*, by Kyle Lukoff

*A is for Activist*, by Innosanto Nagara

*And Tango Makes Three*,  
by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell

*Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag*,  
by Rob Sanders

*Introducing Teddy*, by Jessica Walton

### Middle School Books

*Hazel's Theory of Evolution*, by Lisa Jenn Bigelow

*Hurricane Child*, by Kacen Callender and Kheryn Callender

*Felix Ever After*, by Kacen Callender (*Content Warning: Transphobia, Allusions to Homophobia, Allusions to Deadnaming, Assorted Bullying, Catfishing*)

*King and the Dragonflies*,  
by Kacen Callender

*Me, My Dad and the End of the Rainbow*,  
by Benjamin Dean

*George*, by Alex Gino (*Content Warning: Transphobia, Mild Violence*)

*Out! How to Be Your Authentic Self*,  
by Myles McKenna

*Beyond the Gender Binary*, by Alok Vaid Menon

*All Out: The No-Longer Secret Stories of Queer Teens Throughout the Ages*, by Sandra Mitchell

*The Stars Beneath Our Feet*,  
by David Barclay Moore

*The Best at It*, by Maulik Pancholy

*Rainbow Revolutionaries: Fifty LGBTQ+ People Who Made History*, by Sarah Prager

*The Deep and Dark Blue*, by Niki Smith (*Content Warning: Transphobia, Mild Violence*)

*Drama*, by Raina Telgemeier

*How to Be Remy Cameron*, by Julian Winters

## KIDS' SECTION

No two people identify exactly the same. The LGBTQ+ community has fought for acceptance throughout history but we are still working to make an inclusive world for all. Here are some ways you can take action to support and show solidarity with your LGBTQ+ classmates, friends, and family members!

### Take Action! Steps to Combat LGBTQ+ Discrimination

- Start a [Gender and Sexuality Alliance](#) at your school.
- Ask for more books by LGBTQ+ authors in your school library and read them!
- If someone is being bullied or picked on, say something. Tell an adult or tell the person being mean that they are saying hurtful things and it is not OK.
- Do not assume that you know someone's gender based on their appearance.
- Ask your classmates and new people you meet what their pronouns are and use them.
- Research historic people in the LGBTQ+ community and their contributions.
- Find events near you that celebrate the LGBTQ+ community.
- Express and share your identity!

## KEY TERMS AT A GLANCE

### **LGBTQ+**

An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and more.

### **Bisexual**

Someone who is attracted to two or more genders (such as men and women), but not necessarily all possible genders.

### **Gay**

Someone who is generally attracted to someone of the same gender.

### **Gender**

A person's sense of being a boy, girl, neither, or something in between.

**Gender Expression**

How one expresses their gender outwardly.

**Gender Identity**

An individual's internal sense of their own gender(s) or no gender.

**Identity**

The many different pieces that fit together to shape our experiences and ultimately make us who we are.

**Lesbian**

Someone who generally considers themselves a girl who is attracted to other girls.

**Nonbinary**

People who identify as a gender other than boy or girl.

**Pronouns**

Words like she, he, and they that you use to talk about somebody. It is best to always ask someone their pronouns if possible and to not make a guess or make assumptions about a person's pronouns.

**Stereotype**

A widely believed and oversimplified idea about a type of person or group that is not true of the whole group.

**Transgender/Trans**

A term for people whose gender does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

**Queer**

An orientation that is neither straight nor gay, but definitely LGBTQ+ and possibly fluid.

# KIDS' REFLECTION GUIDE

Take some time to reflect on what you can do and say to make change, break stereotypes, and stand with others. Use the questions below to prompt, or start, your thinking!

What actions will you take to make the world a more safe, welcoming, and inclusive place for those who face discrimination or bias? Take a look at the list above if you need help brainstorming!

Think of two phrases you can use when you meet someone new to make sure you know what personal pronouns they go by. Practice them with a partner.

Make a short list of common gender stereotypes you've heard, learned about, or experienced. You can include things about activities, colors, and behaviors.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Think about all the things that make you, you. How you dress, what you like, and what you don't like. What are some gender stereotypes normally linked to your gender that you break, or go against? Draw a picture of you breaking a stereotype in the space below. It can be one you already break or one you want to break in the future!



What stood out to you most about what you learned, heard, or saw from your discussions about identity and gender? What would you say to someone being bullied or picked on because of who they are, what they like, or how they dress? Write them in the space below.



# REFERENCES

[2013 National School Climate Survey](#), **GLSEN**

[2019 National School Climate Survey](#), **GLSEN**

[Changing the Game: Game plan for Parents, Caregivers and Families](#), **GLSEN**

[Elementary School Booklist](#), **GLSEN**

[LGBTQ History](#), **GLSEN**

[Middle School Booklist](#), **GLSEN**

[The Trans Language Primer](#)

[Where We Are on TV](#), **GLAAD**

*Journal of Legal Education*, Volume 67, Number 3, 780-801. "[Racialized Interactions in the Law School Classroom: Pedagogical Approaches to Creating a Safe Learning Environment](#)," **Erin C. Lain**.

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