

Back-to-School Guide for Creating LGBT-Inclusive Environments

A new school year provides each of us with the opportunity to do things differently, make changes and grow! Why not make this the year to focus on helping your students feel safe, respected and included in your classroom? Here are some important steps you can take right now to make your classroom or even your whole school more inclusive and safer for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students.

SET THE TONE

Set Expectations that Cultivate Respect

Work with your students to set community expectations and agreements for the year so all students feel safe and included in your classroom. Make sure to specifically address the negative impact of bias-based language and behavior related to a student's race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, socioeconomic status, language, ability or any other part of their identity. Ask students to hold each other accountable to their agreements and refer back to them often.

Create LGBT-Inclusive Learning Environments

GLSEN's National School Climate Survey tells us that a vast majority of LGBT students were not taught positive representations of LGBT people, history or events in any of their classes. You can change that by including LGBT content in your curriculum throughout the school year, no matter what subject you teach. Your LGBT students will benefit from seeing themselves reflected in the curriculum and non-LGBT students will learn more about the people and communities around them. Get started with GLSEN's guide to Developing LGBT-Inclusive Classroom Resources.

And don't forget the importance of how your classroom looks. Help your students feel safe and included by displaying LGBT-related visuals, such as Safe Space posters or stickers, inclusive books and decorations, LGBT pride flags, LGBT historic figures and diverse families and faces.

Support Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)

GSAs, and similar student clubs, can have a huge impact on LGBT students and the entire school. If you already have a GSA, find out how you can help. Check out GLSEN's webinar for educators, Supporting Your GSA. No GSA at your school? Encourage interested students to visit GLSEN.org/students for information, resources and guidance.

CONNECT

Get Up-to-Date Info in Your Inbox

Sign up for GLSEN's Educator Network at action.glsen.org/ednetwork for the newest resources, research findings, policy initiatives, youth programs and professional development.

Connect with Like-Minded Educators on Facebook

Did you know that GLSEN has an Educator Forum of Facebook? It's true! The closed and moderated group allows educators, like you, to ask questions, share resources, get inspired and find support. Join us!

Find a GLSEN Chapter Near You

We have 35+ chapters in 23 states bringing GLSEN programming to local educators and students. Connect with these local advocates at glsen.org/chapters for resources, technical assistance, professional development, student programming and more.

REFRESH YOUR SKILLS AND LEARN MORE

Be an Ally to Middle and High School LGBT Students

Check out GLSEN's Safe Space Kit, providing step-by-step instructions on how you can support LGBT students, educate about anti-LGBT bias in your classroom and advocate for changes in your school. It's a great place to start if you're new to this topic or need a refresher at the beginning of the year.

Create Respectful Elementary Classrooms

Foundations of respect and valuing diversity are key themes in most elementary classrooms. Make sure your efforts in this area are inclusive of LGBT issues and families in age-appropriate ways and take advantage of teachable moments. Ready, Set, Respect! GLSEN's Elementary School Toolkit provides tip sheets, resource lists and lesson plans focused on examining name-calling, gender roles and family diversity.

Change the Game with the GLSEN Sports Project

If you're a coach or PE teacher, you can also work towards making your school a safe space for LGBT students. Visit sports.GLSEN.org for resources and lesson plans addressing LGBT issues in K-12 school-based athletic and physical education programs.

PLAN AHEAD

October: Encourage Your Students to be Better Allies

During this year's Ally Week (October 13-17, 2014), students across the country will stand shoulder to shoulder with LGBT students against anti-LGBT language, bullying and harassment. Help your students get involved and get organized at glsen.org/allyweek.

January: Celebrate Kindness in Your Classroom

On January 19-23, 2015, schools across the country will celebrate kindness by participating in GLSEN's No Name-Calling Week (NNCW). Whether you're a teacher, student, guidance counselor, coach, librarian or school bus driver, show you care by organizing a week of activities at your school aimed at ending name-calling once and for all. Check out glsen.org/nonamecallingweek for free lessons, resources, planning advice and more.

April: Support one of the Largest Student-Led Days of Action in the Country

Silence can be deafening. That's why on April 17, 2015, tens of thousands of students across the country will pledge to remain silent for one whole day during GLSEN's annual Day of Silence. They will call attention to the stifling effects of anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in their schools and communities. And they will need your support. Find out what you can do at glsen.org/DOSeducator.

