

# HOW TO SUPPORT LGBTQ STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS

**Eli and Alex  
Now just Alex :)**

# DEFINITIONS

Biological sex: The arrangement of anatomy often sorted into “male” and “female”, but those are not the only kinds of bodies

- Often decided at birth by a doctor or midwife

Gender: The social role that somebody fills that can, but does not always, match the one expected of their biological sex

- Created as one learns about society and is personal

Gender Expression: A combination of clothing, mannerisms, and other forms of personal expression that may or may not appear to match traditions of one’s expected social role

- Example(s): women wearing dresses or suits, men wearing skirts or cute accessories, women using “boku” or “ore”, drag queens, kabuki

Sexuality: What kind of people somebody is or is not attracted to

# BASICS / SMALL ACCOMMODATIONS

These are small ways to let students know they can trust the school and/or specific schools staff (such as you!). While you may already know some of these things, they make a big difference. Even if you remember nothing else, remember these! They are useful in a variety of other contexts as well.

# 1. UNIFORM CHOICE FREEDOM

- Allowing students to choose their uniforms benefits both students and high school administrators.
- Why?
- By allowing all students to wear skirts and pants, students are able to be their most comfortable selves. As a result, students will be able to focus more on their studies (instead of their discomfort).



## 2. ALLOW LGBTQ SCHOOL CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS

- Allowing students to create their own safe spaces such as as clubs and organizations further supports students.
- Some students do not have safe spaces at home, so allowing them to create these spaces for themselves at school can help provide security.
- Clubs also help unify students and give them voices to express their opinions and start dialogues.



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### 3. "OUTING" STUDENTS/DISCLOSING SEXUAL IDENTITY

Do not ask a student if they are LGBTQ or tell anyone else without their permission, even if they are "out"\*

- If necessary do in private\*
- For students who want to disclose this information, suggest pins for their clothing/backpacks, or stickers for laptops and phones.

## 4. LGBTQ STUDENTS ARE JUST LIKE OTHER STUDENTS

- As stated before, being queer is not a disorder. Thus, queer students are just as capable as other students.
- The only precaution to take is ensuring school environments and teachings are inclusive to show that they are welcome just like everyone else.

## 6. BE AN ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE



- If you feel your school policies are excluding students, try, within reason, to work with your school to change those policies.
- Creating safe and inclusive LGBTQ environments is a continuous effort, so it's important to recognize that there is always room for improvement.



# SELF-ESTEEM / BULLYING

Self-esteem issues and bullying affect LGBTQ students at a higher rate than other students. This is not something any student should have to handle on their own, and part of a teacher's job is to make sure students are in an environment where they can focus on learning.



# 1. SIGNS OF LGBTQ-RELATED BULLYING

- Mocking uniform choices, hair styles, or other non-normative choices.
- Addressing someone by a gender they do not identify as (“misgendering”)
- Mocking same-sex friendships or relationships
- Mocking students’ perceived sex organs or sexual anatomy
- Using “gay” as an insult (more on this later)

## 2. IN-GROUP BULLYING

- Bullying can come from other LGBTQ students, but it should be taken just as seriously.

### 3. BULLYING NON-LGBTQ STUDENTS

- What does this have to do with LGBTQ students? The answer is the way students are bullied.
- Non-LGBTQ students who may look or act outside of the norm are sometimes bullied with the same tactics used against LGBTQ students.
- For example, students may use gay as insult to straight students to describe them as “less than”. This is harmful to witnessing LGBTQ students as it implies their identity is inherently weaker than a straight person’s.



# ACCESS TO HISTORY / REPRESENTATION

One of the biggest things teachers can do is let LGBTQ students know that they have always had a place in the world. This can be done in all subjects, even math. This makes LGBTQ students feel less isolated while encouraging critical thinking and open-mindedness in all students.

# 1. CURRICULUM-BASED CHANGES

- Including non-normative people and relationships in your curriculum and the classroom is a great way to show support for sexual minorities.
- One very easy way to do this is by including same-sex relationships in examples.

# 1. CURRICULUM-BASED CHANGES CONT.

- Including non-normative people in history and encouraging students to explore ambiguities aids in both creating an inclusive environment and stimulating critical thinking among students.
- Examples:
  - Historical figures with different relationships/ “ special friendships”
  - People who often dressed or acted as an unexpected gender
  - Gender expression in other cultures
  - Religious figures with varying genders, sexes, and roles

For example: Frida Kahlo, famous Mexican artist, was an open bisexual!



## 2. CONSIDERING ASSUMPTIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

- We make assumptions about gender identity all the time.
- Some of these assumptions have negative impacts or implications for sexual minorities. Thus, being aware of our word choices and reducing expectation-setting assumptions can help create a more inclusive environment.



# SEX EDUCATION

This topic is a harder to navigate, but if your school provides sex education, including non-normative relationships and bodies without being explicit helps students. This ensures all students can make safe and informed decisions about their sexual health.



## EXAMPLES:

- Use terms that don't assume a male/female relationship.
- When referring to biological sex, use bodily terms on their own instead of referring to "male" and "female" bodies.
  - For example: \_\_\_\_\_
- Abstinence education can isolate LGBTQ students more than other students due to a lack of outside resources.

## MORE EXAMPLES:

- For transgender or intersex students, being split into gendered groups for sex education may be stressful or even dangerous. In these cases, ask students for their preference to ensure their comfort and safety.
- Provide students with outside resources for LGBTQ students to look at on their own.



QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTIONS!