

A person with short, curly brown hair is seen from behind, holding a large rainbow flag that is billowing in the wind. The flag features the traditional six colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The person is wearing a dark-colored top and light-colored pants. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and a white fence.

Preparing to Teach LGBTQ+ Affirming Lessons

A step by step guide including a curated list of professional learning resources to support teachers in creating LGBTQ+ affirming classrooms

CREATED BY

**STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT
PARTNERS**

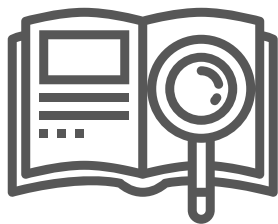
Step 1: Know Your Own "Why"

We have shared our reasoning and rationale, what brings us to this work. Before teaching a lesson or engaging in conversations with your students about LGBTQ+ identity, it is important to know your own why.

There are four areas to engage in to help you establish your own why.



Reflect



Research



Reach Out



Reassure

After Step 1: Engage in a quick-write to capture your thoughts.



REFLECT

Take some time to consider what your relationship is to the LGBTQ+ community, what this diversity brings to your world, and why you think it is important to teach about LGBTQ+ affirmation in your classroom.

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[SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM](#)
[MODEL LAWS AND POLICIES](#)

RESEARCH

➔ Policy



Research and find more information about your state, district, and school policies.

It is important to know what protections you and your students have in terms of anti-bullying policies and policies specific to LGBTQ+ people.

➔ Curriculum



Does your state have any standards or mandates for LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum?

Are there any district mandates for teaching about LGBTQ+ history or identity? Are there any state or district restrictions currently in place?

➔ Anti-Bullying



What does your school currently have in terms of anti-bullying policies?

What protections does your school have for trans and nonbinary students? What supportive policies exist for LGBTQ+ educators and families in

REACH OUT

You do not have to do this work alone! Find allies and advocates in your school from colleagues to families. This work is best done with whole-school or grade-level inclusion.

- How can you connect to other educators or families in your school to share and explore learning about or advocating for LGBTQ+ affirmation?
- Set up a meeting with your administration to advocate for this work and to find out more about their position on LGBTQ+ affirmation.
- GLSEN's [LGBTQ-Visibility and Integration in Elementary Schools](#) report explains why this work is so critical in elementary schools, and gives some helpful suggestions for beginning this work. This language can help you and your school to craft or further develop your own mission-aligned rationale.

Share the [OUT for Safe Schools](#) program with your school and district leaders as a concrete resource and next step for more visible and trained LGBTQ+ supportive educators.

REASSURE

Know that your next step or Pride action could be starting these conversations with administration, hosting an optional group discussion, or helping to arrange professional learning for your school.

Quick Write:

After reviewing this resource, how would you explain your own “why”? Take some time to write out your why. How might this explanation be adapted when you are writing for yourself, students, colleagues, families, and administrators?

Step 2: Know the Basics for Yourself

You don't have to be an expert on all things LGBTQ+ to be a safe and supportive educator. Knowing your why and the basics is a great place to start!

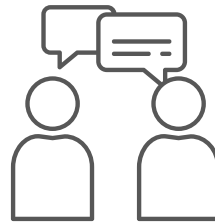
There are four areas to engage in to help you get to know the basics.



Terms & Definitions



Classrooms as Safe Spaces



Student Sharing



Questions & Teachable Moments

After Step 2: Engage in a quick-write to capture your thoughts.



TERMS + DEFINITIONS

Language around sexual orientation and gender is constantly evolving. Many terms can have multiple definitions or interpretations. It is important when considering terminology to center the root community, or the people first connected to the term.

For example, while the term “Two-Spirit” may feel relatable to many people, it is a term created by and with roots in the native and indigenous community.

If you have a resource or source that you use for updated terms, please share it with us [here!](#) We would love to know what you are using.

For the basics, check out the Center’s [Defining Terms](#)

For a more in-depth list of terms check out [HRC’s Glossary.](#)

Resources/infographics

- GLSEN: [Pronoun Guide](#)
- GLSEN: “Know the Issues” section of the [Safe Space Kit.](#)
- TSER: [Gender Unicorn](#)
- Gender Inclusive Classrooms: [Introducing Pronouns \(K-5 Edition\)](#)

MAINTAIN YOUR CLASSROOM AS A SAFE SPACE

- Know that LGBTQ+ affirming teaching can happen at any time and does not have to be contained to specific lessons.
- Adding supportive visuals like pride flags or LGBTQ+ books are signs for your students that your classroom is a safer space.
- Consider your start of the year classroom set up and “get to know you” activities. Where can you add an awareness of LGBTQ+ people and families to these activities?

WHEN A STUDENT SHARES

- As you do this LGBTQ+ affirming work, your students are more likely to share with you about their own identities or family structures.
- Know that your role in that moment is just to listen and affirm what has been shared, and to **ask the student** what they would like for you to do as a support. They may not want to share identities, relationships, or chosen names/pronouns with others at this point, and respecting that is in the best interest of the student. “Student right to privacy” varies by state and sometimes district, so be sure you know the policies and practices of your school/district.
- Know the other LGBTQ+ affirming educators and mental health professionals in your school who specialize or have been trained in LGBTQ+ student support, and offer students to spend time with those adults if desired.

RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS AND TEACHABLE MOMENTS

One of the tips for success when teaching about LGBTQ+ identity is to be prepared for your students to ask questions in their own evolving language.

Before you begin, we recommend that you read this [list](#) from Welcoming Schools for examples of quick responses to give in the moment that help you to “**stop it,**” “**do not ignore it,**” and “**educate**” along with ideas for being proactive!

Check out this [guide](#), also from Welcoming Schools, to help prepare you for questions and put-downs specifically around gender!

For deeper learning for your students, consider teaching or adapting this [lesson](#) from Learning For Justice.

GLSEN’s [Inclusive Curriculum Resource](#) shares tips for responding in the moment and suggestions for advocacy around the benefits of LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum.

Remember that you do not have to have all of the answers. Be prepared to take a beat or a breath before responding to questions, and know you can always say, “thank you for that question; I will get back to you.”


Modeling for students that you are also learning about LGBTQ+ people, history, or identity is a great way to create a welcoming and supportive learning environment.

Quick Write:

As elementary school teachers, we are helping our young people learn about themselves and the world around them. Consider your Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum: **What opportunities can you add for students to expand their social and emotional learning with affirmation for LGBTQ+ identities?**

- Consider PBS's [Webinar for SEL Supports for LGBTQ+ Students](#).

THANK YOU!



“When you are doing something that is right, you just do it and take care ... Someone has to do this.” – Alice Nkom



HAVE FEEDBACK?
SHARE YOUR IDEAS,
FEEDBACK, AND QUESTIONS
[HERE](#)