

# DEVELOPING LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM RESOURCES

## BEST PRACTICE: INCLUSIVE AND AFFIRMING CURRICULUM FOR ALL STUDENTS

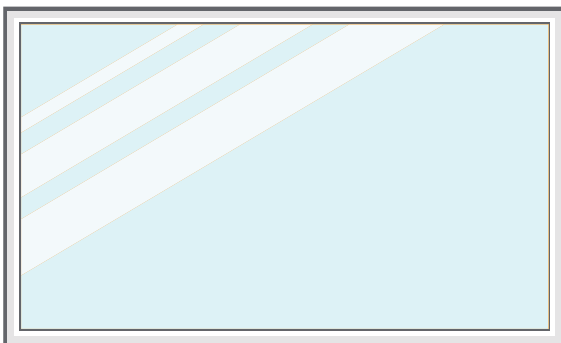
One way that educators can promote safer school environments is by developing lessons that avoid bias and that include positive representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people, history, and events. For LGBTQ students, attending a school with an inclusive curriculum is related to less-hostile school experiences and increased feelings of connectedness to the school community. Inclusive curriculum benefits all students by promoting diversity and teaching them about the myriad of identities in their communities.

**REFLECTION**  
How inclusive is my curriculum of LGBTQ people, history and events?

## THEORY: CURRICULUM AS WINDOW AND MIRROR

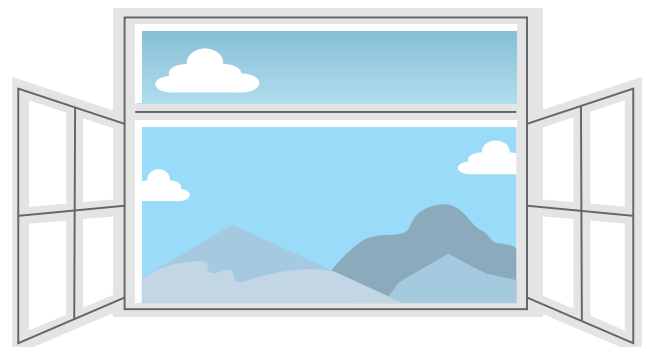
Curriculum can serve as a mirror when it reflects individuals and their experiences back to themselves. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. At the same time curriculum can serve as a window when it introduces and provides the opportunity to understand the experiences and perspectives of those who possess different identities. These windows can offer views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. Applied to LGBTQ-inclusive curricular content, these mirrors and windows can help create a more positive environment and healthy self-concept for LGBTQ students while also raising the awareness of all students. Inclusive curriculum supports students' abilities to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, skills that are of increasing importance in our multicultural, global society.<sup>1</sup>

**REFLECTION**  
How can I ensure that my lessons provide “mirrors” and “windows” for all my students?



### LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM BENEFITS ALL STUDENTS BY:

- Exposing them to more inclusive and accurate accounts of history.
- Helping them have better understanding of LGBTQ people.
- Encouraging them to question stereotypes about LGBTQ people.
- Promoting acceptance



### LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM BENEFITS LGBTQ STUDENTS BY:

- Validating their existence and experiences.
- Reinforcing their value and self-worth.
- Providing space for their voices.

<sup>1</sup> Rudine Sims Bishop (1990)

**CONSIDERATION: ENSURING COHERENT CURRICULUM**

At times, educators' efforts to be inclusive and supportive can lead to curricular "fragmentation," or "isolation." This occurs when topics are taught without context and/or are positioned in such a way that they fail to connect to the big ideas of the topic being studied, such as when LGBTQ themes are only introduced during LGBTQ History Month (October) or LGBTQ Pride Month (June). Additional fragmentation occurs when educators include only lesbians or gay men to the exclusion of bisexual and transgender people, or when lessons fail to represent ethnic, racial and other forms of diversity that exist among LGBTQ individuals.

**REFLECTION**

Who am I including from the LGBTQ community? What identities do they hold?

**CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT****Responding to Anti-LGBTQ Language and Behavior**

LGBTQ-Inclusive lessons and discussions are best introduced in a supportive school environment. Introducing school-wide days of action and visibility, such as GLSEN's Ally Week (September), No Name-Calling Week (January), and the Day of Silence (April) are great ways to shift school culture to be more affirming of LGBTQ people. Additionally, ensuring that you, as educators, can also create a safer classroom environment by interrupting anti-LGBTQ remarks or comments is critical to the success of teaching LGBTQ-inclusive lessons and discussions.

**REFLECTION**

What other pedagogical practices do I need to consider to make my classroom a safe, respectful and inclusive learning space for all students?

Follow these steps when you witness anti-LGBTQ name-calling, bullying or harassment.

- 1. Address Name-Calling, Bullying or Harassment Immediately.** Concentrate on stopping the behavior in that moment. Sometimes it's a simple response to hearing a derogatory term like, "That language is unacceptable in this classroom." Remember: no action is an action.
- 2. Name the Behavior.** Describe what you saw and label the behavior. "That word is derogatory and is considered name-calling. That language is unacceptable."
- 3. Use the Teachable Moment (or Create One).** Make sure to educate after stopping the behavior. Decide if you are going to educate in the moment or later, and if it will be publicly or privately. If you decide to educate later you will need to create the teachable moment. You can then take this opportunity to teach one class, the entire grade or the whole school about language and behaviors that are acceptable and those that are not.
- 4. Support the Targeted Student.** Support the student who has been the target of the name-calling, bullying or harassment. Do not make assumptions about what the student is experiencing. Ask the student what they need or want. You will have to decide whether to do this in the moment or later, and if it will be publicly or privately.
- 5. Hold Students Accountable.** Check school policy and impose appropriate consequences. Make

sure disciplinary actions are evenly applied across all types of name-calling, bullying and harassment. For more information and support refer to GLSEN's Safe Space Kit at [www.glsen.org/safespace](http://www.glsen.org/safespace).

### **ADVOCACY: ADDRESSING QUESTIONS AND PUSHBACK**

When introducing LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, it is best to do so as a school, led by the administrators and school leaders. We recommend this decision be communicated through LGBTQ-specific professional development for educators, and to families at the start of the year on curriculum or Back to School night. Frontloading with the schools' responsibility to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all students along with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, can be a strong start to the school year and a time to address any misconceptions or apprehensions about this inclusion. If your state, city, or district has a policy mandating inclusive curriculum, you can use this language in your rationale.

The following talking points can support this advocacy:

- LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum benefits *all* students by promoting acceptance and respect, and teaching them more about the diverse people and families in the world.
- Anti-LGBTQ bias hurts all children, both those directly affected and those who learn in an atmosphere of fear and tension, afraid to explore their own lives because of worry about disapproval and rejection.
- Beginning these conversations in elementary school will help young people develop empathy for a diverse group of people, and to learn about identities that might relate to their families or even themselves. It is never too early for schools to set up a foundation of understanding and respect.
- Students of all ages must be given an opportunity to learn that the words “gay,” “lesbian,” and “transgender” are adjectives that should be used with respect to describe people in their community, not words used in a negative way to hurt, insult, and degrade.
- Inclusive curriculum supports a student's ability to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers, and encourages respect for all.
- All students deserve to see themselves in their curriculum, including students who identify as LGBTQ and come from LGBTQ-headed families.
- Teaching LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum acknowledges the reality that many students come from LGBTQ-headed families, are being taught by LGBTQ-educators, and are, increasingly, identifying as LGBTQ themselves even in elementary school.
- LGBTQ students with inclusive curriculum have better academic and mental health outcomes, and are less likely to miss school ([GLSEN's National School Climate Survey](#)).

Supportive administrators can support this work by addressing families directly. They should be open to hearing their questions, and be careful to distinguish questions or concerns from negative pushback. Inviting families to a panel, coffee, or film screening to discuss diversity initiatives has helped many schools to invite families into this work, to address questions directly, and to identify which families in the school community are allies in this work as well.

- › Example statement from administration: We are conscious of providing age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate lessons and activities that meet all of our students where they are when

addressing LGBTQ-visibility and inclusion. Our goal is to work together as one community through this practice. **We encourage you to reach out to us or our teachers throughout the year if you have any questions or would like further information as we support our students in this important work.**

## PLANNING: FINDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LGBTQ VISIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Educators should spend time identifying the extent to which LGBTQ-related content is present in their current curriculum. Care should be taken to fill gaps while looking for opportunities to deepen student understanding of their world and identities. LGBTQ people, history, and events can be easily inserted into most content areas. Teaching about identity at any age is valuable for students, and can be considered part of social emotional learning (SEL). Curriculum should provide students with opportunities to reflect on their own identities, including gender identity and expression, family diversity including LGBTQ-headed families, and the types of relationships they may want to build.

**REFLECTION**  
What do I need to do to make the lessons I teach more LGBTQ-inclusive?

## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL): SUGGESTED LGBTQ-INCLUSIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

**Early Elementary:** Ensure that family studies show examples and use language that includes a variety of family structures including LGBTQ-headed families. Address identity and reflections around gender stereotypes using [Ready, Set, Respect!](#), inclusive read-alouds, and GLSEN’s lesson *I Am Me: Talking About Identity*.

**Upper Elementary:** [GLSEN’s Identity Flowers](#) lesson encourages students to explore their own identities and personal experiences with race, culture, ability, family structure, religion or spirituality, and gender identity and expression. Find more lessons for elementary students in our No Name-Calling Week program at [www.glsen.org/nncw](http://www.glsen.org/nncw).

**Middle School:** [GLSEN’s Challenging Assumptions](#) lesson provides students an opportunity to experience what it’s like to be labeled in a negative way, and as a result, develop empathy for those who others label, even though those labels don’t fit.

**High School:** [GLSEN’s Learning Empowerment and Self-Identification](#) encourages students to explore how self-identification can be empowering, and have discussions about what it means to be proud of the labels and identities that we all hold. They will also explore the damage that can be done when someone applies labels to another person without that person’s permission (consent).

## SCIENCE & SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

When teaching science it can quickly get very binary (sperm/egg, male/female, XX/XY) the most important thing is to dismantle this polarizing way of thinking and giving ample examples of ways that nature is not binary. science class can be a place where a very complex world can be, incorrectly,

summarized in binaries.

**Elementary:** In science, elementary students can explore informational texts about animals that highlight their diversity in gender and family structure. Health educators can use these [Principles of Gender-Inclusive Puberty and Health Education](#) for more information and best practices.

**Grades 6-8:** Educators are mindful of vocabulary and use visuals such as GLSEN’s Gender Triangle to distinguish between gender identity, gender expression, and bodies. Educators teach about biology and the human bodies in ways that does not reinforce gender binaries, and includes intersex people. For example, when having conversations involving chromosomes, highlight how not all people born with XX chromosomes identify as women to distinguish between sex, gender, and gender identity. LGBTQ identities are present when discussing healthy relationships, boundaries, and consent.

**High School:** From learning about meiosis to talking about natural selection, students learn about sex, gender, and gender identity using a diverse representation. Educators can acknowledge how western culture traditionally views reproduction (between cisgender men and a women) and how many stories are different from that “traditional view.” Include the identity and history of scientific figures in relevant lessons, such as [Alan Turing](#) in biology lesson or Sally Ride in a physics lesson around velocity and trajectory. Sexual health educators check in with students to answer questions and ensure that they are receiving information and is relevant to them. Word problems in Chemistry and physics can be another opportunity to highlight LGBTQ people, families, and relationships.

For more information, videos, and resources go to [www.glsen.org/health](http://www.glsen.org/health) and read our blog: [6 Ways I Make My Science Class LGBTQ-Inclusive as a Trans Teacher](#).

## COMMON CORE: CONNECTING CURRICULUM TO STANDARDS

Implementation of the [Common Core State Standards](#) is one way that many states and school districts are making efforts to ensure a quality education for all students. The examples below demonstrate how an examination of the standards and themes can lead to locating opportunities for the natural inclusion of LGBTQ-related content in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, and Mathematics.

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ELA AND LITERACY: ELEMENTARY INCLUSION

[GLSEN’s Ready, Set, Respect!](#): GLSEN’s elementary toolkit has common-core aligned lessons that focus on name-calling, bullying and bias, LGBTQ-inclusive family diversity and gender roles and diversity.

[Reading the Rainbow: LGBTQ Inclusive Literacy in the Elementary Classroom](#): This book offers comprehensive resources, curriculum development, resource materials, and a pathway between existing literature and current LGBTQ resources.

[Pronouns: Little Words that Make a Big Difference](#): In this lesson, students will learn about pronouns,

how they are used, and their importance. They will learn that pronouns are connected to people's gender identity, and that everyone gets to choose which pronouns work for them. Students will practice using gender neutral pronouns, such as they/them/ theirs, by writing about Hadhir the hamster (they/them).

### **WRITING CORE STANDARD FOR GRADES 6-12**

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**Suggested LGBTQ-Inclusive Learning Opportunity:** [GLSEN's LGBTQ History Timeline Lesson](#) facilitates a much needed discussion about the erasure of LGBTQ history in what is considered American history, and the value of critical thinking in history classes. After examining the LGBTQ visibility (or invisibility) in their current history curriculum or textbooks, students proactively create newspaper articles to highlight the stories of LGBTQ leaders and bring them into the classroom.

### **Writing Core Standard for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects 9–12**

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating, understanding of the subject under investigation.

**Suggested LGBTQ-Inclusive Learning Opportunity:** Students use [GLSEN's National School Climate Survey](#) or [Local School Climate Survey](#) to examine LGBTQ student experiences at school. They can also use resources from [GLSEN's No Name-Calling Week](#) to examine school climate, bullying and harassment at school.

### **ELA Standard: Reading and Literature for Grades 9-10**

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

**Suggested LGBTQ-Inclusive Learning Opportunity:** Students read *Simon vs. the Homo sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli and watch the movie *Love, Simon*. Use GLSEN's [Love, Simon: Coming Out and Invisible Identities](#) to conduct a character study of the main characters.

### **COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES**

**Elementary:** Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

**Suggested LGBTQ-Inclusive Learning Opportunity:** Students learn about critical events in LGBTQ History through the living timeline and resources at [www.glsen.org/lgbtqhistory](http://www.glsen.org/lgbtqhistory). Students explore read-aloud books such as *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* by Rob Sanders (Grades 1-3) or *The Stonewall Riots: Coming Out in the Streets* by Gayle E. Pitman (Grades 4-6).



**Grades 6-8:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

**Suggested LGBTQ-Inclusive Learning Opportunity:** Students listen to and read the primary sources of individuals who bore witness to or helped shape LGBTQ history in our country through [GLSEN's Unheard Voices](#), developed in partnership with ADL and StoryCorps. Students research additional textual evidence to support and provide more context to these stories.

**High School:** Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

**Suggested LGBTQ-Inclusive Learning Opportunity:** Students chose a historic event related to an LGBTQ leader from [GLSEN's LGBTQ History Flash Cards](#). Students research the event through multiple sources with differing points of view to present their own assessment. Find more activities at [www.glsen.org/historycards](http://www.glsen.org/historycards).

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR MATHEMATICS

**Elementary:** Use multiplication and division within 100 to solve word problems in situations involving equal groups, arrays, and measurement quantities.

**Suggested LGBTQ-Inclusive Learning Opportunity:** Ensure that word problems are inclusive, and use this opportunity to highlight diversity in names, gender, and family structure. For example, "Anqelique and her moms bought fifteen apples from the market." or "Miguel and their dads love to draw with chalk." Consider the activities that are highlighted and use this as an opportunity to explore a range of gender expression and activities. Encourage students to write story problems with characters who break gender stereotypes, and have their peers solve them.

**Grade 7 — Statistics and Probability 7.SP:** Use random sampling to draw inferences about a population. Understand that statistics can be used to gain information about a population by examining a sample of the population; generalizations about a population from a sample are valid only if the sample is representative of that population.

**Suggested LGBTQ-Inclusive Learning Opportunity:** Share statistics or informational posters from [GLSEN's National School Climate Survey](#) with students to demonstrate population samples as they relate to the experiences of LGBTQ students. If available, use a [State Snapshot](#) of this survey results to allow students to explore the experiences of LGBTQ youth in their state. Students can also use [GLSEN's Local School Climate Survey tool](#) to collect their own sampling and draw inferences from the results.

### High School - Statistics and Probability Interpreting Categorical and Quantitative Data:

Summarize, represent, and interpret data on a single count or measurement variable.

Summarize, represent, and interpret data on two categorical and quantitative variables.

**Suggested LGBTQ-Inclusive Learning Opportunity:** Assign students to analyze LGBTQ demographic trends as reflected in [GLSEN's National School Climate Survey](#) executive summary, graphics or informational posters. Assign small groups to create a chart or graph illustrating national trends based on one of the areas covered, such as GSAs, inclusive curriculum, policies, etc.

For more ideas and best practices, read GLSEN's blog [How Do We Make Math Class More Inclusive of Trans and Non-Binary Identities?](#)

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Inclusive Curriculum Lessons:** All of GLSEN's resources and lesson plans for inclusive curriculum can be found at [www.glsen.org/curriculum](http://www.glsen.org/curriculum).

**Changing the Game:** Resources for PE teachers, coaches, and athletic directors can be found at [www.glsen.org/sports](http://www.glsen.org/sports).

**Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) Resources:** Find more activities and discussion topics at [www.glsen.org/gsa](http://www.glsen.org/gsa).

**No Name-Calling Week:** For lessons on addressing name-calling and bullying go to [www.glsen.org/nncw](http://www.glsen.org/nncw).

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS ACTIVITY? TELL US HOW IT WENT AND WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER!  
EMAIL US AT [STUDENTS@GLSEN.ORG](mailto:STUDENTS@GLSEN.ORG) OR [EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG](mailto:EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG).