

10 High Leverage Practices for Supporting LGBTQ+ Students



Equity is achieved when student success is no longer predicted based on race, ethnicity, family economics, mobility, language, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or initial proficiencies.

The path to equity and excellence begins with each caring adult in the district. The *10 High Leverage Practices for Supporting LGBTQ Students* are research-based and created by students. While some are reflective in nature and others are action-based, each practice is a necessary step in creating an environment for our LGBTQ+ students to feel safe and succeed in school.

- Practice 1:** Know yourself. Be clear about your own attitudes and biases on topics of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- Practice 2:** Understand the differences between sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- Practice 3:** Support and respect your student's identity and take them seriously.
- Practice 4:** Respect privacy and confidentiality. Never reveal a student's sexual orientation or gender identity without the student's permission, even to the student's family.
- Practice 5:** Post safe zone stickers and posters in your classroom, office, cafeteria, gym, or hallways.
- Practice 6:** Use inclusive, gender-neutral language.
- Practice 7:** In get-to-know-you surveys, include preferred name and gender pronouns. Refer to students with their preferred name and gender pronouns.
- Practice 8:** Speak up against every biased remark—every time, in the moment, without exception. Think about what you will say ahead of time so you are prepared to act instantly. This demonstrates and fosters trust.
- Practice 9:** Include LGBTQ+ people, history, events, and perspectives in your curriculum.
- Practice 10:** Advocate for gender-neutral bathrooms.

Glossary of Terms

LGBTQ+ people use a variety of terms to identify themselves, not all of which are included in this glossary. All language is constantly evolving; new terms are introduced, while others fade from use or change their meaning over time. This remains true for the following terms and definitions. Always listen for and respect a person's self-identified terminology.

Asexual: Often called "ace" for short, asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and asexual people may experience no, little or conditional sexual attraction.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to people of more than one gender.

Bisexual+/Bi+: An umbrella term that includes all people who experience any kind of attraction to more than one gender.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity and expression are aligned with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gender Expansive: A person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.

Gender Expression: The multiple ways (e.g., behaviors, dress) in which a person may choose to communicate gender to oneself and/or to others.

Gender non-conforming: A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. While many also identify as transgender, not all gender non-conforming people do.

Gender Identity: How an individual identifies in terms of their gender. Gender identities may include, "male," "female," "androgynous," "transgender," "genderqueer" and many others, or a combination thereof.

Intersex: Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of difference among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.

LGBT/LGBTQ/LGBTQ+: An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community.

Nonbinary: An umbrella term for people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman or masculine/feminine. Nonbinary people are often included under the trans umbrella, but not all may identify as transgender. Other genders that may be included under the nonbinary umbrella are genderqueer, genderfluid, and agender.

Pansexual: A person who is attracted to all genders and/or regardless of gender.

Queer: An umbrella term used to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms. The term can be perceived as inclusive, expansive, and fluid, and can also be divisive due to its negative historical use and association with political radicalism.

Questioning: A person who is in the process of understanding and exploring what their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and gender expression might be.

Same-Gender Loving (SGL): A term used by some members of the Black community or people of African descent, to express sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.

Sexual Orientation: The inner feelings of who a person is attracted to emotionally and/or physically, in relation to their own gender identity. Some people may identify as "asexual," "bisexual," "gay," "lesbian," "pansexual," "queer," "straight," and many more.

Two Spirit (2S): A term used within some Indigenous communities, encompassing cultural, spiritual, sexual and gender identity. The term reflects complex Indigenous understandings of gender roles, spirituality, and the long history of sexual and gender diversity in Indigenous cultures. Individual terms and roles for Two-Spirit people are specific to each nation. Due to its cultural, spiritual, and historical context, the concept of "Two-Spirit" is to be used only by Indigenous people.

Transgender: A person whose gender identity and/or expression are not aligned with the gender they were assigned at birth. "Transgender" is often used as an umbrella term encompassing a large number of identities related to gender nonconformity.