



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. Do not reveal a student's sexual orientation or gender identity to others without the student's permission.
- Practice 5: Foster safe and affirming spaces. 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: Support and engage with families on the needs of LGBTQ+ students.

Definition of Terms ([Oregon Department of Education LGBTQ2SIA+ Student Success Plan p.7](#))

LGBTQ2SIA+: A term that encompasses multiple gender identities and sexual orientations including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit, Intersex, and Asexual. The plus sign (“+”) recognizes that there are myriad ways to describe gender identities and sexual orientations. It is also important to recognize that the challenges and barriers for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer can be different from the challenges and barriers faced by students with diverse and/or expansive gender identities and expressions.

Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction, but could still experience other forms of attraction (e.g. emotional, intellectual).

Agender: A person who does not identify with a specific gender or feels neutral when it comes to their gender identity.

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

Cisgender: A person who feels their gender identity and expression align with the sex they were assigned at birth or by society.

Gay: A person who is attracted to a person of the same gender.

Gender Expression: The way a person expresses their gender in ways that make them feel more comfortable and aligned to who they are. Some forms of expression could be clothing, voice, cosmetics, or mannerisms.

Gender Identity: A person’s deeply held knowledge of their own gender, which can include being female, male, another gender, or no gender. Gender identity is an innate and largely inflexible part of a person’s identity. One’s gender identity can be the same or different than the gender assigned at birth. The responsibility for determining an individual’s gender identity rests with the individual.

Gender Nonconforming: A person who does not identify with a specific set of traits (behavioral, cultural, community roles) on the male to female spectrum.

Intersex: Intersex is an umbrella term for unique variations in reproductive or sex anatomy. Variations may appear in a person’s chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs like testes or ovaries. Some intersex traits are identified at birth, while others may not be discovered until puberty or later in life.

Lesbian: A female-identified person who is attracted to women.

Non-binary/Genderqueer: These terms are often used to describe people whose gender is not exclusively male or female, including those who identify with a gender other than male or female, as more than one gender, or as no gender.

Pronouns: The pronoun or set of pronouns that a person identifies with and would like to be called when their proper name is not being used. Examples include “she/her/hers,” “he/him/his,” ze/hir/hirs,” and “they/them/theirs.” Some people prefer no pronouns at all, or some combination such as “she/they.”

Queer: A person who does not subscribe to dominant social norms to define their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. While it is used as a neutral, or even a positive term among many LGBTQ people today, historically “queer” has been used as a derogatory slur. It is sometimes still used as a slur by those who do not identify as part of the community.

Sexual Orientation: A person’s romantic and/or physical attraction to people of the same and/or another gender, such as being straight, gay, bisexual, or asexual. Transgender and gender nonconforming people may have any sexual orientation.

Transgender: A person who feels their gender identity and expression do not align with the sex they were assigned at birth or by society.

Two-Spirit: 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.