

What Can One Teacher Do?

Develop knowledge and awareness. Examine your own attitudes and beliefs about sexuality and consider your own biases. Learn about LGB issues, culture and current issues by reading books, journals and periodicals.

Examine the language you use

Assume there are LGB youth in all of your classes and consider whether the language you use on a daily basis reflects that reality. Remember that one out of 10 students are non-heterosexual. Use the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered as part of your regular classroom vocabulary. Use inclusive language that allows for LGB possibilities. For example, partner instead of girlfriend or boyfriend.

Take a close look at your classroom

Consider the posters or images on your walls or the materials on your bookshelves. Are there opportunities for you to display to students that you value diversity, including diversity concerning sexual orientation and gender identity? If posters become defaced or removed, put new ones up and consider this an opportunity to engage students in a discussion about intolerance and discrimination.

Challenge homophobic jokes or remarks

Make an effort to create an atmosphere in your classroom in which students can talk about the impact of discrimination they have faced. Draw parallels among sexism, racism and heterosexism and talk about oppression in all its forms. Take the opportunity to challenge stereotypes and binary thinking. Try to correct false assumptions or misinformation about LGB persons.

Develop inclusive material

Consider whether you are able to include a unit related to sexual orientation in a course you teach. Identify knowledge, skill and attitude outcomes in your subject area that address LGB issues. Provide for inclusive education in everyday lessons that honour and respects diversity and difference.

Invite LGB speakers into your classroom

Provide resources in your school library and on bulletin boards. Sponsor a "diversity day" in your school to discuss gender, ethnicity, ability, class and sexual orientation issues.

Advocate directly for LGB youth

Speak up for LGB youth and for straight youth who are targeted or harassed. Volunteer to provide staff facilitation to form a gay/straight alliance and/or support group for LGB and questioning youth. Educate other staff members about the needs of LGB youth. Encourage your school to provide professional development workshops for teachers and parents on LGB health, safety, and educational issues.

Develop a support network

Develop a broad base of support among students, teachers, administrators and parents/carers. Find people who can help you locate and access school- and community-based LGB information and resources. Find people to whom you can turn for emotional support.

