



Hello!

Thank you for your recent participation in HiTOPS Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression (SOGIE) workshop. I realize I covered a lot of material in a short amount of time, and that you may still have questions and/or need additional resources to help make your environment a safe place for all youth. This guide provides an overview of the workshop topics I reviewed, as well as resources and best practices for adults.

Here are some statistics to illustrate the kinds of challenges LGBTQ+ students are currently facing in the United States:

#### **Did you know...?**

- "86% of LGBTQ+ students were harassed or assaulted at school
- 84% of trans students felt unsafe at school because of their gender
- 2 in 5 LGBTQ+ students of color were bullied or harassed based on race or ethnicity
- This kind of discrimination leads to more missed school, lower GPAs, and lower self-esteem"

*(The 2019 National School Climate Survey. Retrieved November 02, 2020, from <https://www.glsen.org/research/2019-national-school-climate-survey>)*

These statistics are from the 2019 GLSEN National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools. GLSEN (formerly the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) is an American education organization working to end discrimination, harassment, and bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and to prompt LGBTQ+ inclusion and awareness in K-12 schools. The statistics above are one part of the story. The other part is that **support at school (actually, support across all environments) makes a difference.**

LGBTQ+ students feel safer with:

- Comprehensive anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies
- Teachers and school staff who are supportive of LGBTQ+ students
- Gender and Sexuality Alliances
- An LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum

*(The 2019 National School Climate Survey. Retrieved November 02, 2020, from <https://www.glsen.org/research/2019-national-school-climate-survey>)*

The main theme of our workshop is how to become more affirming to people of all identities. Affirming means accepting and acknowledging a person's truth. One of the critical first steps towards becoming affirming is self-awareness and knowledge of identities. During our workshop, we focused on the SOGIE identities. Below is a brief review of the SOGIE identities and their relevant terminology.

**Sexual orientation:** A person's sexual, emotional, physical, and psychological attraction to other people. Sexual orientation does NOT revolve solely around sexual relationships. Examples include same gender attraction (e.g., lesbian, gay), opposite-gender attraction (e.g., straight), and attraction to other genders (e.g., pansexual, bisexual).

**Gender identity:** Gender identity is made up of two components: assigned sex at birth and inside identity.

- 1- Assigned Sex at Birth:** A person may be assigned female at birth (AFAB), assigned male at birth (AMAB) or assigned intersex at birth. A person who has an intersex condition has anatomy or genetics at birth do not correspond to the typical expectations for either sex.
- 2- Inside Identity:** A person's deep seated, felt sense of gender, or how a person feels on the inside, regardless of what their body looks like. People may identify in the binary (e.g., transman, transwoman, cisman, ciswoman) or in the non-binary (e.g., genderqueer, gender fluid, agender).

**Gender expression:** The ways in which people communicate their gender to others. This may include, for example, clothing choice, hairstyle, vocal pitch, and walking gait.

### **WHAT CAN I DO?**

The good news is that there are small changes you can make that make a BIG impact. Here are some ideas:

**Normalize sharing pronouns:** Include your pronouns in your email signature, your business card, name tags, in online meetings, etc. You can even change your name in Zoom calls to show your pronouns. Normalizing pronouns is an important example of modeling inclusivity! Feel free to attach the link below to your email signature 😊

*[Why I Include Pronouns](#)*

**Learn others' pronouns:** Begin by disclosing your pronouns first in each class, workshop, meeting, or even in casual conversations. When you disclose your pronouns consistently, you are opening up the space for people to share their own: "Hi, I'm x and I use x/x pronouns." If you are not sure of someone's pronouns, it is best to use "they" until the person indicates otherwise. Many classes, workshops and meetings will begin with introductions – try asking people to state their names and which pronouns they use. If a person introduces themselves using different pronouns than you are used to, trust that those are the pronouns they wish to use in

the context of the group. You may want to follow up with a discreet conversation that clarifies things for you – we don't want to accidentally "out" anyone. Mistakes happen; correct yourself, apologize, and move on: "Thank you for correcting me. I apologize and will make every effort to use your correct pronouns from now on."

**Honor personal histories:** It is not recommended to use or inquire about a transgender person's previous name, often called a "dead" name, even when you've known them an extended time and are telling a story about them pre-transition. Many transgender people have strong, negative associations with their previous names and have worked hard to put those names behind them. If you accidentally use the wrong name, as with pronouns, apologize, correct yourself, and move forward.

**Try to use gender neutral language whenever possible:** Pay attention to when and how gendered language is used - "boys and girls" or "ladies and gentlemen" can easily change to "children," "class," or "friends." When talking to or about parents or guardians, "mom" and "dad" can become "parents", "grownups", or "trusted adults". Many stories, role plays, and examples use unnecessarily gendered language and can be easily altered with "they" or gender-neutral names. In order to understand the use of gendered language around you, spend a few days listening and observing the gendered language people are using; from there, you can determine how you will introduce new gender-neutral terms into your world.

**Cultivate a safe space:** Show off your knowledge and support of all people (particularly in school settings) by hanging pride flags, posters, and safe space stickers (link below). This is an excellent way to communicate to youth in need of an understanding adult that you will support them. In addition to the physical space, make sure you offer affirming resources, including those we have supplied below. Commitment to being a supportive adult involves care and concern for all youth and a willingness for ongoing learning.

## RESOURCES

### Language-related:

[Gender-neutral pronouns](#) to practice

[Gender-neutral family terms](#) to address families

### Visuals:

[The Gender Unicorn](#) by Trans Student Educational Resources

[Universe Model](#) from Liat Wexler

[The Gender Galaxy](#) from Action Canada

<https://amaze.org/> Excellent videos for young people on all sex ed topics

**How to tell family that your child is trans/non-binary:**

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/transgender-children-and-youth-talking-to-grandparents-and-other-adult-fami>

**Books to enhance your understanding:**

[My Gender Workbook: How to Become a Real Man, a Real Woman, the Real You, or Something Else Entirely](#) by Kate Bornstein

[The Gender Book](#) by Mel Reiff Hill

[S.E.X.: The All-You-Need-To-Know Progressive Sexuality Guide to Get You Through High School and College](#) by Heather Corinna

**Websites:**

[HiTOPS](#)

[The Trevor Project](#) guide to being an ally

[Intersex information](#) from interACT

[GLSEN School Climate Survey](#)

[Safe space kits from GLSEN](#)

You are not alone on this journey. In addition to the resources listed above, HiTOPS encourages you to reach out at any point with questions, comments and concerns (my email is below). It was a pleasure meeting you and I hope to see you at another workshop!

Sincerely,

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