



LGBTQ+ Inclusive Health Education Guidance & Resources

Health education provided through schools can be one of the few sources of reliable information on sexuality and sexual health for youth. Hundreds of studies show that well-designed and well-implemented education can decrease risk behavior, strengthen interpersonal communication skills, and support positive health outcomes among youth, such as enhanced self-esteem and reduced rates of teen pregnancy. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) youth, also known as sexual and gender minorities, to experience comparable health benefits to their non-LGBTQ+ peers, health education programs must be inclusive of LGBTQ+ issues.

A comprehensive health curriculum should include discussions of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. It should also include examples of LGBTQ+ people throughout both health and sexual health education. All classes are likely to have some LGBTQ+ students that need to be represented in the material.

A health education curriculum that frames material, including topics such as pregnancy prevention, from a strictly heterosexual or cisgender point of view creates gaps in information that put LGBTQ+ youth at increased risk. The effects of a non-inclusive curriculum are compounded when considering the various forms of minority stress experienced by LGBTQ+ youth.

Minority stress is a chronic stress condition experienced due to stigma; contributing factors include being bullied or harassed or rejected by family and friends. Inclusive education around sexuality and gender will combat these added stressors, as will the cultivation of a safe space for open dialogue and education. Such efforts will normalize diversity and inclusion.

Sexual Minority Youth

More likely to have begun having sex at an early age and to have multiple partners compared to their heterosexual peers

More likely to have sex while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs

Less likely to report using condoms or birth control at last sex

More likely to be the victim of sexual violence

LGB youth are **2-3X** more likely than non-LGB youth to have ever been or gotten someone **PREGNANT**¹

LGBTQ+ Inclusive Health Education Should...²

1. Include information for all students about sexual orientation and gender identity that is medically accurate and age-appropriate.
2. Be designed with the needs of LGBTQ+ students in mind and implemented with awareness that all classes are likely to have some LGBTQ+ students.
3. Depict LGBTQ+ people and same-sex relationships in a positive light in stories and role play exercises.
4. Use gender-neutral terms like “they/them” and “partner” whenever possible.
5. Ensure that prevention messages related to condom and birth control use are not taught in a way that suggest only heterosexual youth or cisgender male/female couples need to be concerned about unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted illness prevention.
6. Avoid making assumptions about students’ sexual orientation or gender identity.

EXPLORE!

Go find your school's health education textbook or online sex education module.

- Do you have access? Who at your school is charge of the health education curriculum?
- Look through the info quickly. Do you see any pictures of **same-sex couples**?
- Find the **pregnancy prevention** section. Does the information address a wider demographic than just heterosexual couples?
- What about the **sexually transmitted infections** section?
- Is there any **non-gendered language** present, like "they/them" or "partner" or does the material only use words like she/he, women/men, and girls/boys?

What message might the presence or absence of these elements in health education convey to the LGBTQ+ youth in your school?

- Is there a **separate part** of the curriculum **about LGBTQ+ topics** or **issues**?

By separating sexual and gender minority health issues from the rest of the curriculum, what message does this placement convey to the LGBTQ+ youth in your school?

PRACTICE!

Find another adult to practice a few language exercises. **Everyone is learning. It will feel weird at first!**

- Tell each other a story about two people going to the zoo together. You can give the two people names, but you don't know their genders identities. **Practice telling the story using only they/them pronouns.**

Did it feel weird to talk like this? Did you slip up and assign one of them a gender?

That's okay: Apologize, correct yourself, and move on.

- Pick a topic in the health or sexual education curriculum that feels a bit uncomfortable. **Practice talking out loud about this topic until you both feel more comfortable.**

This is difficult at first – but keep practicing!

- Make a list of words or content in the curriculum that you are unfamiliar with. **Practice asking your school nurse or other health professionals questions about these areas.**

It will be extremely helpful in the future to know how to ask questions to increase your own knowledge.

Resources

The Responsible Sex Education Institute

<https://responsiblesexedinstitute.org/want-learn-teach-sex-ed/>

Pregnancy Risk Among Bisexual, Lesbian, and Gay Youth: What Does Research Tell Us?

http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_lgb-prg_0415.pdf

Why LGBTQ Inclusivity Matters for Teen Pregnancy Prevention & How to Get Started:

https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/sites/default/files/lbgtq_inclusivity_webinar_slides.pdf

What Works in Youth HIV: Inclusive Sex Education:

<https://www.whatworksinyouthhiv.org/youth-hiv/youth-sexual-health/inclusive-sex-education>

Making Room for Gender Diversity in School Health Services and Sex Education Webinar:

<http://www.sbh4all.org/events/making-room-for-gender-diversity-in-school-health-services-and-sex-education/>

Healthy Teen Network Tip Sheet: Gender, Sexuality & Inclusive Sex Education:

<https://www.healthyteennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/TipSheetGenderSexualityInclusiveSexEducation.pdf>

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¹Lindley, L. and Walsemann, K. (2015) Sexual Orientation and Risk of Pregnancy Among New York City High-School Students. *American Journal of Public Health* 105(7), 1397-1386.

²Advocates for Youth. A Call to Action: LGBTQ Youth Need Inclusive Sex Education. Accessed November 13, 2018 from:

<http://advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/a%20call%20to%20action%20lgbtq%20youth%20need%20inclusive%20sex%20education%20final.pdf>