



LIFTING UP
MAINE'S
QUEER YOUTH

LGBTQ+ Identities and Health Class: Navigating the Hard Questions

Language and
Terminology

Creating affirming
classrooms

Interrupting Bias,
Answering Questions

Q & A

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Introductions

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OUT Maine

OUT Maine's mission is to build welcoming and affirming communities for Maine's LGBTQ+ youth.

The only statewide organization focused exclusively on LGBTQ+ youth for the last 28 years.



What we do

Direct Youth Support

Online Weekly Groups for Ages 9-22



Weekend Retreats & Rainbow Ball



Informed and supported families



Family events to connect families in communities
One-on-one consulting

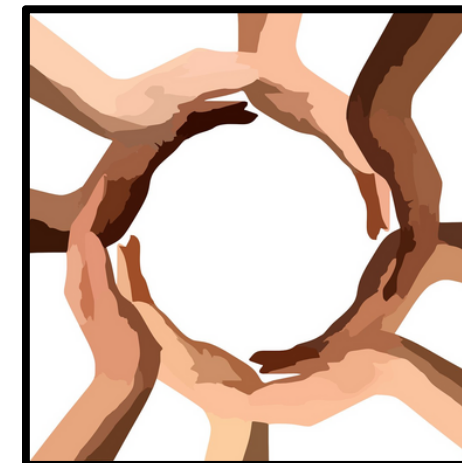
Safe and affirming schools

Strengthening policies/procedures
Staff & student training/education and supports
Safe Spaces - Gay Straight Trans Alliances
Consulting with administration/staff



A strong, educated provider safety net

Regional training
Individual school/organization training
Online self paced training



Why are we learning about this? Data from Maine Students

25.7% of Maine high school students identify as LGBTQ+

7.1% of Maine high school students identified as transgender or questioning their identity

LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to face mental health challenges

LGBTQ+ students experience more violence and discrimination at school than non-LGBTQ+ students

LGBTQ+ students are less likely to feel as though they matter to their community



Why are we learning about this? Specific to Sex Ed!

Of LGBTQ+ students who had received sex ed in school, only 8.2% report that it was inclusive of LGBTQ+ topics

Only 4% of youth in middle and high school report having any positive discussion of LGBTQ+ people or issues in their health class

Lack of relevant sex education relates to higher health risks for LGBTQ+ youth and adults, particularly related to HIV and STI risk



Protective Factors: Health and Sexuality Classes

Students whose health and sexuality classes expressed support for LGBTQ+ people were less likely to report bullying based on sexual orientation and gender expression.

PROTECTIVE: School Support



LGBTQ+ students who indicated they felt people at their school cared about them and encouraged them were less likely to report mental health challenges and substance use.

Among **LGBTQ+** students:

Feels people at school care

Does not feel people at school care



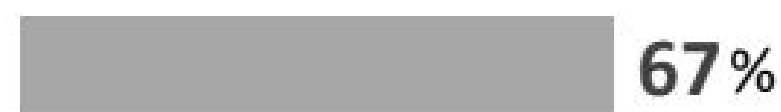
Considered suicide past year



2021: School Supp, 27%;
No School Supp, 46%



Felt sad/hopeless 2+ weeks in a row



2021: School Supp, 50%;
No School Supp, 70%



Current Marijuana Use (Past 30 Days)



2021: School Supp, 17%;
No School Supp, 29%

$p < .0001$

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Creating safe and supportive supportive environments

Representation matters!

Intervene on any homophobic or transphobic language or actions.

Expand options on **forms**.

Confidentiality

De-gender **language**.

Use **anatomical** language.

Ask and use preferred **names** and **pronouns**

Ensure that prevention messages related to condom and birth control use are **inclusive of LGBTQ+ youth**

Safe and accessible **bathrooms/locker rooms** that reflects students' gender

Boys and Girls	Everyone, Students, Kids, Folks
Mom and Dad	Parents, People you live with
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	Date, Partner, Crush, Significant Other
Boys Room and Girls Room	Bathrooms, Restrooms

Degendering Language Specific to Sex Ed

What does degendering language in Sex Ed classes sound like to you?

*Handout

Instead of...	Try this
Male bodies Boy's body A man's penis	<i>Avoid gendering anatomy - not all boys have penises</i> Bodies with penises, testicles, bodies that produce sperm, etc.
Female bodies Girl's bodies A woman's vagina	<i>Avoid gendering anatomy - not all girls have vaginas</i> Bodies with vaginas, uteruses, ovaries, bodies that menstruate, etc.
Female or male reproductive system	<i>Avoid discussing anatomy or reproductive systems as a binary. Acknowledge intersex people.</i> Internal sexual/reproductive organs
When a woman is pregnant When a girl starts menstruating When a boy has an erection	<i>Not all women can get pregnant, and not all pregnant people are women.</i> When a person is pregnant <i>Not all people who menstruate are girls, not all girls menstruate.</i> When a person starts menstruating <i>People with clitorises and penises experience erections.</i> When a person experiences an erection
Heteronormative example names	<i>Include a wide variety of example names including gender neutral, affirmatively same sex or queer couples, and culturally relevant names</i>

Instead of...	Try this
Girls and boys Ladies and gentlemen	<i>Acknowledge non-binary students.</i> Students Friends All/everyone
Opposite gender Opposite sex	<i>Avoid the gender binary.</i> Different gender/sex Other gender/sex Gender/sex assigned at birth
Girlfriend Boyfriend	<i>Avoid gender binaries. Not everyone identifies as a boy or a girl.</i> Significant other Romantic partner Sexual partner
Normal Natural	<i>Many students ask questions like "Am I normal...?". We want to make sure to reassure students by underscoring that they don't need to be concerned about normative development. However, using the term "normal" may send the message that some students are "abnormal" if they don't fit that definition.</i> Common Frequent Often
Mom/Dad Motherhood/ Fatherhood	<i>Mix it up to include many family configurations.</i> Supportive adults Trusted adults Parents/Guardians/Caregivers Grown-ups in your life

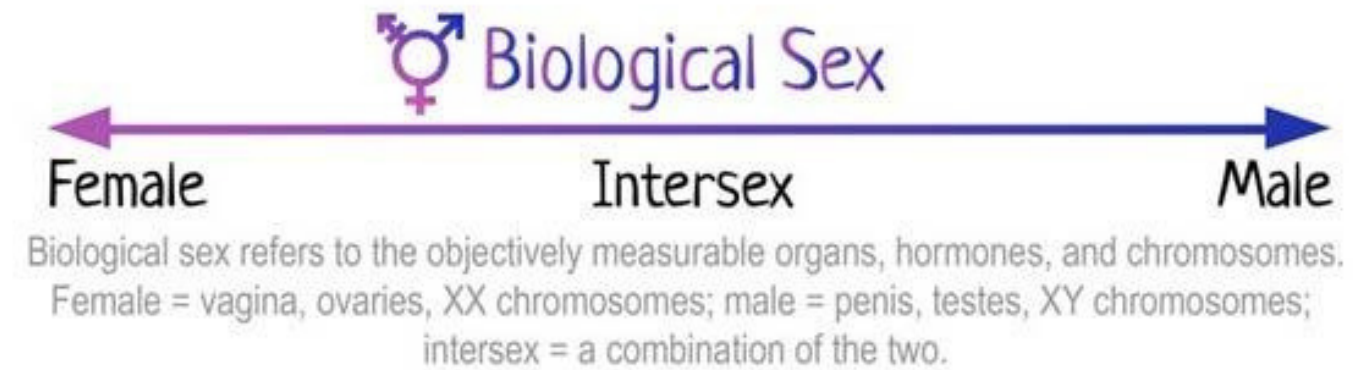
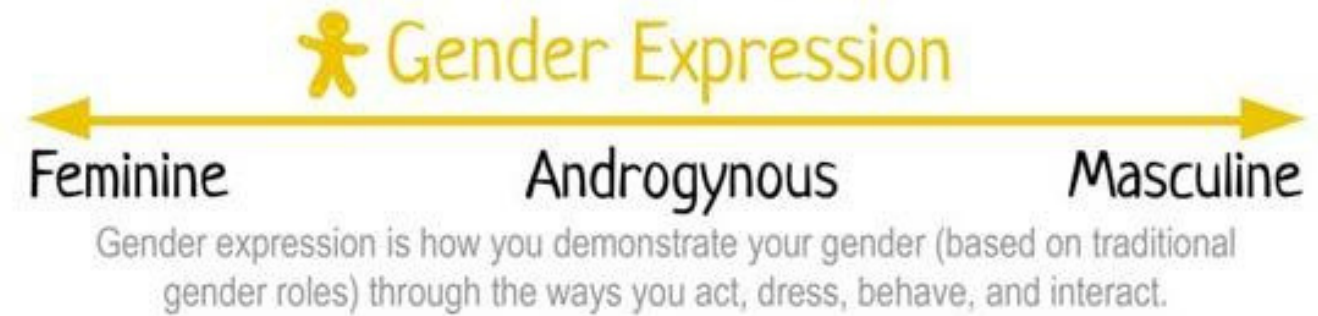
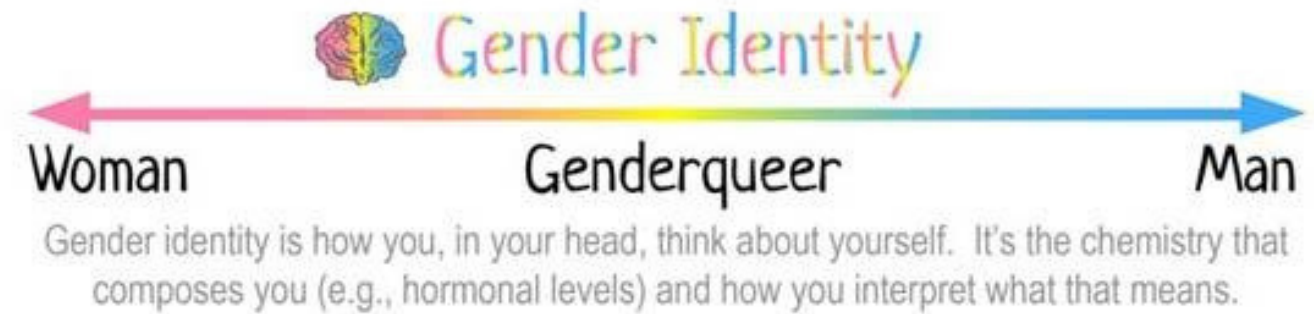
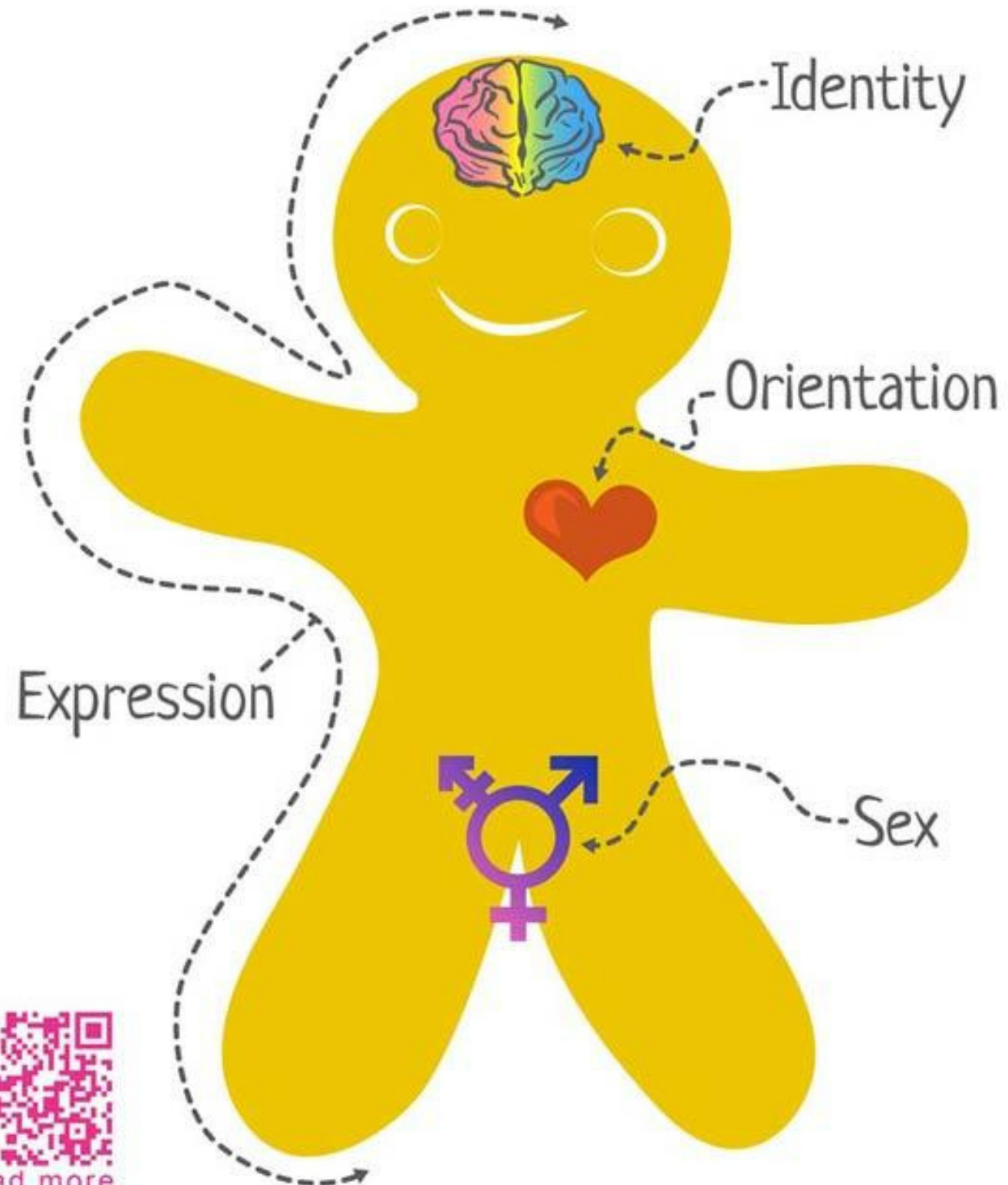
“Some of the ways that I will be talking about bodies in this unit might sound a little strange to you at first. For the most part when I talk about bodies I’ll talk about bodies with a penis and testicles or bodies with a vulva and ovaries. You might wonder why I’m doing this instead of just saying male bodies or female bodies. As we’ve discussed, there aren’t just two kinds of bodies. I also want everyone to get used to using accurate language for body parts and functions without assuming that there are only two sexes and that everyone within a particular sex is the same. It’s important to be able to communicate about our bodies in accurate ways.”

Commonly Asked Questions

- **What does LGBTQ+ stand for?**
- **What is the difference between Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity?**
- **What is the difference between Gender Identity and Gender Expression?**

The Genderbread Person

by www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com



What is a pronoun? Why are they important?

Pronouns

The words we use to refer to someone instead of using their name. Everyone has pronouns, just like everyone has a gender.

Many people are finding that typical pronouns don't encapsulate their experience of gender; pronouns such as they/them or ze/zir are able to denote neutrality and other forms of gender expression not already represented by conventional pronouns.



“Transgender and nonbinary youth who report having their pronouns respected by all or most of the people in their lives attempted suicide at *half the rate* of those who did not have their pronouns respected”

The Trevor Project, 2021



Asking someone their pronouns

When do you need to know someone's pronoun?

And what can I get for him? Oh, is him the right word for you?

Defaulting to "they" or "your child" or "that person over there" is OK!

Creating easy ways for people to share their pronouns with you

Share your own pronouns on name tags and when introducing yourself for the first time

Options on registration forms

Have pronoun pins and stickers available for use

Countering Misinformation

People who teach inclusive sex ed are grooming children

Teaching about diversity and inclusion leads to more students identifying as LGBTQ+

Schools/teachers are indoctrinating our youth

Sex Education is pornographic

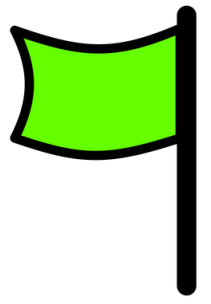
How would you respond?

Countering Misinformation

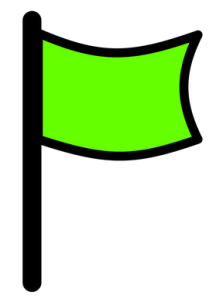
Disinformation	The Meaning Behind this Language	Respond with Truthful Information about Inclusive Sex Ed
People who teach inclusive sex ed are <i>grooming</i> children.	The term <i>grooming</i> refers to tactics used for the purpose of exploitation, abuse and in sex trafficking.	Sex education promotes safe boundary setting and self advocacy and is an important tool in child sexual abuse <i>prevention</i> .
Schools/teachers are <i>indoctrinating</i> our youth.	The term <i>indoctrination</i> is a process of teaching a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically and without question. Often used as a tool of oppression.	Sex education does the opposite by promoting critical thinking, providing accurate information so people can make healthy decisions, explore and act on their own personal and family values, and better understand the world around them.
Talking about sexual health just <i>sexualizes</i> children.	There are many examples of <i>sexualization</i> - including sexual harassment, advertising, and media messages - that makes people feel their value comes from their sexual appeal to others.	Sex education helps young people understand the broad nature of sexuality of which sexual behavior is only a small part. Sexuality includes body image, health and wellness, experiencing intimacy in ways that aren't just sexual, knowing medically accurate terms and information about one's body, and developing safe and healthy practices.
Sex education is <i>pornographic</i> .	The definition of <i>pornographic</i> includes images and material created for the purpose of experiencing sexual excitement or pleasure. Many young people are exposed to pornography through media online.	Sex education helps young people understand their body parts and functions so they can become healthy adults. During the teen years, sex ed teaches young people about sexual behaviors that can put them at risk of sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. Sex education helps young people identify healthy and unhealthy relationships and understand that sexual experiences should be pleasurable, mutual, and consensual.

Countering Misinformation

Myths & Misinformation	Respond with these Talking Points
Sex education has nothing to do with school / is not academic.	Health education is science based - it promotes social and emotional learning and leads to improved academic achievement, fewer truancies, reduced risk taking, and healthy relationships.
Teaching sex ed gives teens the idea to go out and have sex and promotes sexual activity.	Research shows that when sex ed is taught: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teens wait longer to engage in sexual activity - When sexually active, they are more likely to use protection (barriers and/or birth control) - Fewer teens experience unintended pregnancy
Teaching about abstinence AND protection is confusing for youth and sends mixed messages.	Providing space for students to identify when they might be physically and emotionally ready to engage in sex does not conflict with having information about protection/prevention for when they might need it. This messaging is not confusing for young people, and is akin to saying don't drink, but if you do, use these safety measures (don't drink and drive; call someone if you need help or a ride home, etc.)
Teaching sex ed in schools takes away parental rights/autonomy to raise their children and teach them their own values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents are the primary educators of their children. - Schools are in partnership with parents in the education process. - Parents always have the right to not have their children read certain books or attend certain classes on topics, such as sex ed, that they prefer to teach to their children themselves. - Parents do not have the right to restrict this education from other students or take those rights away from other parents.
Teaching about diversity and inclusion leads to more students identifying as LGBTQ+/GNC, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing information on diversity and inclusion helps students understand the world around them which includes the many ways people identify themselves. - This includes the make up of families and how families are formed. - Understanding diversity helps build empathy for others and reduces bullying and violence. - Teaching about diversity and inclusion helps students feel seen and accepted. - Inclusive sex ed is suicide prevention and creates a safer school climate for everyone.



Interrupting Bias is a green flag



- **Interrupt:** stop the conversation
- **Question:** Ask simple questions "What did you mean by that?"
- **Educate:** explain the harm done by the action or words
- **Echo:** If someone else interrupts the bias before you, agree with them out loud.



INTERRUPT.

Let's pause for a moment to talk about what you just said.

What did you mean or how were you trying to make them feel?

QUESTION.



EDUCATE.

The word gay is part of someone's identity. It should not be used as an insult.

Thank you for saying something. I'd like to add...

ECHO.



Share and practice with your group

You are teaching a lesson about the difference between gender and sex, and a boy comments loudly to a friend that there are only two genders, and anyone who thinks otherwise is “crazy.”

Write what you could say for each step in the speech bubbles below.

*Handout



INTERRUPT.



QUESTION.



EDUCATE.



ECHO.



Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender

It is important to practice how to respond to questions related to gender and how to interrupt gender based teasing and bullying. Being prepared will help you embrace teachable moments with your students to foster a gender inclusive school.

“Why does Martin like pink?” (Martin identifies as a boy.)

- ✦ Here at (name of school) we all get to like what we like. What is your favorite color? Why do you like that color?
- ✦ There are so many beautiful colors, we can all like different ones.
- ✦ There is no such thing as boy colors or girl colors. Colors are colors. All people like different colors.
- ✦ It is not okay to tease people for the colors that they like. We are all different and we can like different colors that make us happy.

“Why is her hair so short? She looks like a boy.”

- ✦ People of all genders can have long hair, medium hair or short hair. And some people do not have any hair.
- ✦ That’s just how she likes it. How would you like your hair to be?
- ✦ Hair is hair. That is how she likes it.
- ✦ There is no such thing as “boy” hair or “girl” hair. Here at (name of school) we all get to have our hair the way that makes us happy.
- ✦ You cannot tell someone’s gender from how they have their hair.

“Juan plays with dolls. That’s weird.” (Juan identifies as a boy.)

- ✦ It’s true that some boys don’t like to play with dolls but some boys do! Just like some of you like to draw and some of you don’t. Some of you like to play kickball and others don’t. No one should have to pick and choose what they do just because of their gender.
- ✦ The dolls are for all children in this classroom.
- ✦ Sometimes this is confusing. We get messages about some toys being for boys and some toys being for girls. They are just for kids!

You overhear a student say to another student who identifies as a girl, “You look like a boy.”

- ✦ Why do you say that?
- ✦ There is no one way for girls or boys or people of any gender to act or look.
- ✦ Those are the kinds of clothes that she likes to wear. Why do you like to wear what you’re wearing?
- ✦ Here at (name of school) we all get to wear what makes us happy and comfortable for learning and playing.

“But he’s a boy, why does he dress like a girl?”

- ✦ There are lots of different ways that boys can dress and lots of different ways that girls can dress. There are lots of ways that people of any gender can dress.
- ✦ Some boys like to wear pink or to have long hair. All of these things are OK in our school.
- ✦ There are many ways of being a boy (girl), and all are okay ways of being a boy (girl).

- ✦ Those are the kinds of clothes that he likes to wear? What kinds of clothes do you like to wear?

“Dominic is always hanging out with girls. Why?”

- ✦ Here at (name of our school) we want everyone to play together with lots of different friends.
- ✦ Dominic hangs out with friends who he likes to spend time with, just like you do with your friends. We all like to spend time with people who share our interests.
- ✦ We can all be friends with people of many genders.
- ✦ Do you want to play with Dominic? Do you want me to help you feel included? I am sure they would love to play with you too.
- ✦ Here at (name of our school) all children can play and do things together. He’s a boy who likes to play with girls and that’s OK.

You overhear a student call another student who identifies as a boy, a “girl” in an insulting way.

- ✦ That’s not OK at our school to call someone a “girl” to insult them or make them feel bad. We don’t use gender as a put-down.

You overhear a student say, “Boys are better at sports than girls.”

- ✦ Some boys are good at sports and some are not, and some girls are good at sports and some are not. All kids have different things that they are good at.
- ✦ Some people are good at sports and some are not.
- ✦ People of all genders are good at different things.

You overhear a student say, “Girls are better at art.”

- ✦ “No group is best. Some people are good at art. Some people are not.”

You see that some children who are playing soccer at recess are excluding others because of their gender.

- ✦ We don’t exclude any gender in play. Here at (name of school) we include everyone.

Questions?