



# PROMOTING SAFETY FOR LGBTQIA+ STUDENTS

According to GLSEN's 2021 National School Climate Survey, schools remain hostile environments for a majority of LGBTQIA+ students. 81.8% of LGBTQIA+ students surveyed felt unsafe in school because of at least one of their actual or perceived personal characteristics. Creating safer spaces for LGBTQIA+ students in Ohio's schools is everyone's responsibility. Here are some tips that might help!

## TRUST YOUTH

Youth are the experts in their own experiences. Whatever their identity is today is what matters, regardless of their identity yesterday or tomorrow.

Coming out can be a rocky process, and can include serious safety and security concerns for young people. Generally speaking, youth know when it's safe to come out and when it's not. Follow their lead, and never "out" a youth to anyone without their express permission.

## LISTEN

For many youth, the hardest part of being closeted is not being seen, heard, respected, or listened to. When youth come out, you don't have to have all the answers. Just having someone to talk to might be all the support a young person needs. Make yourself available in an open-ended way.

## LEARN + USE SHARED LANGUAGE

- Refrain from using gendered language like "boys and girls," or "ladies." Be creative: they are readers, scientists, artists, and more!
- Practice using gender neutral terms like partner, parent, significant other, sibling, and avoid assumptions about relationships
- Normalize pronoun usage
- Consider language on forms, flyers, etc.
- Respond to abusive language immediately and consistently
- Remember that it's okay to not know it all!

## PROVIDE EDUCATION

All students need to learn about the diverse people around them in order to be safe classmates and community members. Young people who are outside of the LGBTQIA+ community will benefit from learning about identities different than their own. This can include learning about the various family structures of their classmates, relevant identities of historical figures, and how to engage in conversations respectfully.

## RESOURCES

Have comprehensive LGBTQIA+ resource lists and information ready for your students should the need arise. You'll want to know where you can suggest your students go for support, whether it's a website, a book, a school counselor in your own building, a community center like KYC, a school GSA, a therapist at a local agency, or another affirming teacher or administrator!