

Best Practices for LGBTQ+ Inclusive Classrooms

Education in the Family Spirit

The University delivers programs, services, and support for all students and employees in the Catholic and Marianist tradition, which challenges us “to take up the hard work necessary to build the intellectual, spiritual, religious, moral, physical, and social dimensions of our educational community” ([University of Dayton Commitment to Community](#)). Marianist family spirit is characterized by a community that invites and accepts each person into a community with intentionality. LGBTQ+ students, faculty and staff should feel welcomed, respected, safe and valued as full members of the University of Dayton community.

Read more about our institutional commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion here: [Framework for LGBTQ+ Inclusion](#).

Why Inclusion Matters in the Classroom

It is important to recognize and respect the identities of our students and support their success and wellbeing. LGBTQ+ students face discrimination for their identities everyday, both in and out of the classroom. When we create a safe and welcoming classroom environment, we can improve student learning and sense of belonging.

Whether it be in formal interactions with students or casual conversations, there is evidence that having supportive faculty or staff is associated with higher rates of student success and wellbeing (Leung et al. 2022). Whether faculty are being active on campus as allies or are inclusive in the subjects that they teach, many LGBTQ+ students appreciate and welcome faculty and staff support for their identities and benefit from inclusive communities and relationships with their instructors (Linley et al. 2016).

Chosen Names and Pronouns

The University of Dayton’s [Chosen Name Policy](#) allows students, employees, and alumni to change their name in university systems, regardless of their legal name. This policy is especially important for transgender and non-binary students, international students, and students who use a nickname. Sometimes students may opt to not use the chosen name policy, so a best practice is for faculty to invite students to share the name they would like to use in class at the beginning of the semester. By using a student’s chosen name, whether from the University’s policy or not, we can create a

more welcoming learning environment. Recognizing chosen names also improves student wellbeing. A 2018 study of transgender youth found that when a student's chosen name was used in key settings, including their classrooms, they reported a 59% decrease in symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation (Russell et al. 2018).

Pronouns are also an important part of how we refer to the people around us. By respecting students' pronouns we invite them to feel more comfortable to be their true, authentic selves in the classroom. When someone tells us their pronouns it is important to use them appropriately so that the person can be affirmed and feel that we respect them and their identities.

The first day of class is a great time to set a precedent of allyship and respect towards students' identity. Here are some tips:

- Faculty can include their pronouns when introducing themselves, for example: "Hello, I am Professor Rudy and my pronouns are He/Him."
- If classroom size permits, faculty can invite students to share their pronouns when they introduce themselves. It is important to invite students to share their pronouns only if they are comfortable. Some students may choose not to share pronouns for a variety of reasons, so by not forcing students to share their pronouns we are potentially helping them feel more comfortable in the classroom.
- Use inclusive language by replacing phrases like "boys and girls," "guys," and "ladies and gentlemen" with "folks", "everyone", or "all." This practice helps to include all people in the classroom, rather than just those who identify within the gender binary.
- Don't assume students' gender based on appearance - instead, faculty can use gender neutral pronouns, such as They/Them, when they don't know what someone's pronouns are.

Faculty as Allies and Advocates for Students

Students may hear negative remarks about their identities in the classroom from other students, faculty, and staff. By actively seeking to address and correct the discriminatory behavior, faculty can create a teaching moment for the student who spoke out and support students who were affected by it. Whether you seek to educate right after the remarks were made, or by reaching out later, make sure to do so in a respectful way that invites the student to not only correct their behavior but also learn to respect those around them.

One of the easiest things a faculty or staff member can do to support LGBTQ+ students is to engage in symbolic allyship. By having the Ally+ logo or an LGBTQ+ symbol in your email signature or hanging a small pride flag in your office or classroom, you can reassure students that you are an ally and put them at ease. This, of course, must be followed up by practical actions of allyship, and not just the performance. Symbolic allyship is important in creating an inclusive campus climate, but must be backed up by practical allyship. Examples of this could include:

- Standing up for students when their identities are questioned.
- Patiently explaining a term in the LGBTQ+ community to someone who was unfamiliar.
- Asking students to share their name and pronouns, if comfortable, at the beginning of the semester.

Students have varying degrees of trust in faculty and staff because of previous experiences at the institution and with other adult figures. It is the responsibility of faculty and staff to affirm this trust when a student chooses to disclose a piece of their identity. There are varying degrees of “out” that a student may be. They might be out to their family and friends but not to faculty or staff, or they could be out to one or two of their faculty and friends but not to their family. A few key points:

- In the classroom and other public settings, it is essential that instructors not put students in a position where they may be “outed” or have their gender identity disclosed when they don’t want it to be. In these situations, students should be able to share about their identities but faculty/staff should not disclose it to the group.
- There is a gray area between protecting the full confidentiality of students and preventing them from receiving the help they need. For example, if an LGBTQ+ student is in crisis, it is important to not only connect them with the counseling center but also to the LGBTQ+ resources at The Brook Center.
- A student’s gender identity and sexual orientation is considered private information. Treat information that students share with you as protected and *ask them about the settings in which they want this information shared*. This includes a student’s chosen name and pronouns - if a student shares these with you, clarify the settings in which they want their name/pronouns used.

Inclusive Curriculum

One of the most effective ways to learn is by relating material to ourselves. When we include examples that highlight an LGBTQ+ person that shows students that they also have the potential to achieve things and have success in their lives. By sharing examples of the great achievements that LGBTQ+ have made in our world, we show students that they are allowed to be proud of who they are and allow them to integrate their identity into their studies and eventually their work.

In classes that do not relate directly to gender and sexuality (for example, a math course) there are still opportunities for highlighting different aspects of inclusivity. For example, a math instructor can use gender neutral pronouns (ex. they/them) in example questions or highlight the fact that a certain mathematician was a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

Sometimes in our pursuit of inclusivity we can hit a roadblock where the inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics can feel fragmented from the true content of the course. It is important to always use correct context when creating inclusive content, if not it can feel disingenuous to the students. One resource that can be helpful for this is a site called GLSEN. They make guides for educators on how to be more inclusive and are an excellent resource for many different topics surrounding the LGBTQ+ community.

Faculty and staff should continue to educate themselves on the different aspects of LGBTQ+ language and culture to continually be up-to-date on the most accurate ways of representing the LGBTQ community on our campus and in our respective communities.

- [GLSEN](#)
 - While mainly focusing on K-12, GLSEN is a regularly updated site that has many guides on professional development and activities focused on LGBTQ+ education.
- [Them](#)
 - Them is a site that focuses specifically on LGBTQ+ current events and stories of people in the LGBTQ+ community.
- [GLAAD](#)
 - GLAAD is focused on research and publications of the LGBTQ+ community and is an excellent resource for the changing terminology of the community.

On-Campus Resources:

- Q*mmunity Leaders- Peer Educators from The Brook Center
 - Student peer educators can speak to classes
 - Extra-Curricular activities on education and Inclusion
- The Brook Center
 - Kristen Keen, Assistant Dean of Students and Director of the Brook Center
- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
 - Anya Galli-Robertson, Fellow for LGBTQ+ Inclusion
- Campus Ministry
 - Sabina Marroquin, Campus Minister of LGBTQ+ Inclusion

Sources:

1. [GLSEN Inclusive Curriculum](#)
2. Leung, Enoch et al. "Social support in schools and related outcomes for LGBTQ youth: a scoping review." *Discover education* vol. 1,1 (2022): 18.
<https://doi:10.1007/s44217-022-00016-9>
3. Russell, Stephen T., et al. "Chosen Name Use Is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation, and Suicidal Behavior among Transgender Youth." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 63, no. 4, 30 Mar. 2018, pp. 503–505,
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.02.003>.
4. *A Guide for Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students*, GLSEN, Seattle, WA,
https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Know%20Your%20Rights_0.pdf.
Accessed 12 Aug. 2023. Pg. 7.