

**Names and Pronouns:  
Supporting and Respecting Our  
LGBTQ+ Students**

**Walsh Middle School  
PD Session 3 - January 4, 2022**

# Why is it important that we are inclusive?

- Only 24% of LGBTQ youth can “definitely” be themselves as an LGBTQ person at home.
- 67% of LGBTQ youth hear their families make negative comments about LGBTQ people.
- 48% of LGBTQ youth out to their parents say that their families make them feel bad for being LGBTQ.
- Trans youth are over 2x more likely to be taunted or mocked by family for their LGBTQ identity than cisgender LGBTQ youth.
- LGBTQ youth of color report hearing family express negativity about LGBTQ people more frequently than their white peers.
- Only 13% of LGBTQ youth report hearing positive messages about being LGBTQ in school

# Why is it important that we are inclusive?

- “Being in the closet as trans/non-binary, I’m always scared of my parents finding out or others not accepting me.”
- “I’m not out to my parents for safety reasons. If they found out I was gay, they would kick me out or force me into conversion therapy.”
- “Because of the way many LGBTQ+ people are treated, many of us suffer from a range of mental illnesses, myself included.”
- “A stranger, even a school counselor, is very dangerous to [us]. They can ruin your entire life, get you kicked out of your home by your parents, or make other teachers treat you awfully and make your school experience miserable. They can even get you killed by outing you without your permission, which they are usually ‘expected’ to do.”

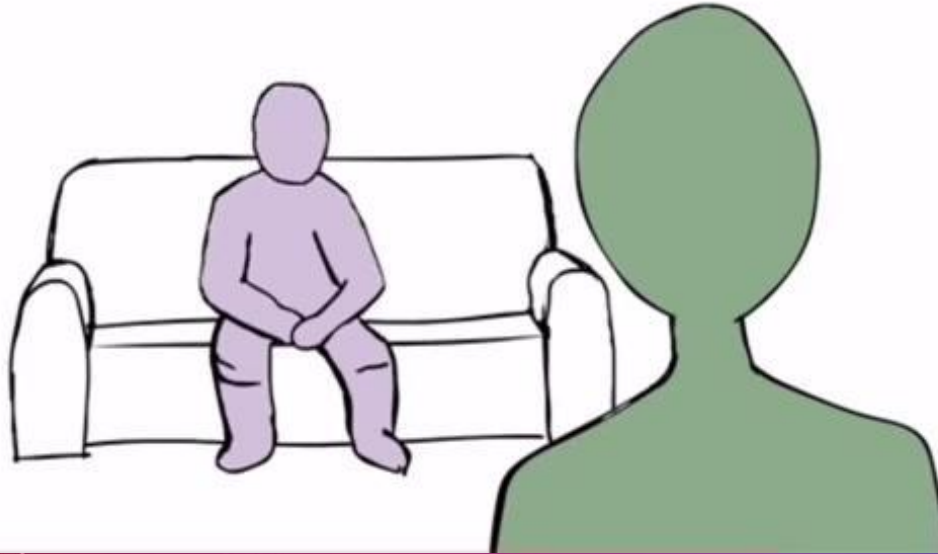
# Why is it important that we are inclusive?

LGBTQ students who experienced higher levels of victimization based on their gender expression:

- Were almost three times as likely to have missed school in the past month than those who experienced lower levels (59.0% vs. 21.8%);
- Had lower GPAs than students who were less often harassed (2.98 vs. 3.36);
- Were twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education (e.g., college or trade school; 11.1% vs. 5.4%);
- Were more likely to have been disciplined at school (46.8% vs. 27.2%), and
- Had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.

They / Them

# Dysphoria



**Some people have dysphoria.**

**By misgendering or dead-naming someone, it reminds them of their dysphoria.**

**Show respect by using the gender pronouns and name that the person asks you to use.**

# Handout - Gender Neutral Pronoun Practice

## Gender Neutral Exercises

Practice changing the phrases into sentences using gender neutral pronouns indicated whenever possible. Then, read the sentence out loud, adding more sentences after if you like.

Example: Jamal / came with me to the movies but forgot wallet (They)

Written: Jamal came with me to the movies but **they** forgot **their** wallet.

Spoken: *Jamal came with me to the movies but **they** forgot **their** wallet, so I bought **their** ticket for **them**. Otherwise **they** would have missed the movie!*



# What To Do

**What do I do if a student comes out to me as transgender or non-binary?**



## **Responses:**

- **“Thank you for sharing your identity with me.”**
- **“What is your chosen name and pronouns?”**
- **“Should I call you by this name and pronouns in-front of your parents?”**
  - **“....in-front of other students?”**





# What To Do

**What do I do if a student comes out to me as transgender or non-binary?**



**It might also be a good idea to tell them of good ways to remind you if you use the incorrect name or pronouns such as a hand signal or something non-obtrusive to the class.**

**It is ok to tell them that you may have a little difficulty in the beginning about remembering but with repetition and time it will become natural.**

**You should correct students in your class who use the incorrect name or pronouns as well. Explain that your classroom is a place of mutual respect and refer to your social contract.**



# What NOT To Do

What do I do if a student comes out to me as transgender or non-binary?



You should not out trans students to other students or staff members. You may have been the first person they felt comfortable with and you do not want to break that trust with them.

**DO NOT contact their parents and out them to their families.**

**\*It is potentially dangerous and could be long-term damaging for the student.**

# WHAT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE AND MISGENDER SOMEONE?



We all make mistakes, and you likely will the first handful of times you're referring to someone by pronouns you're not familiar with. It's okay!

Briefly apologize, correct yourself, and continue the conversation.

Apologizing profusely can draw unnecessary attention to or cause embarrassment for someone who uses gender-neutral pronouns. Quickly acknowledge your mistake and correct yourself, and then continue on with the conversation.

**"I think it's perfectly natural to not know the right words to use at first. We're only human"** *Rodrigo Heng-Lehtinen, deputy executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality*

# Pronoun Tips

- 1) Meet up with a teacher who also has the same student and practice. Talk about the student. Exposure makes things much easier.
- 2) Practice pausing before you respond to someone else, in any conversation, regardless of why.
- 3) Practice. Use “they” to refer to a single person, or try to refer to people with names only, etc. You can strike up conversations with someone wherever you feel comfortable and make this a little project. How long can you go in a conversation without using or needing to use a gendered pronoun? Can you notice when other people use gendered pronouns? How do people react to singular they?
- 4) Once you have some conscious practice and experimentation under your belt, do a self-audit. When do you make mistakes, or what kinds of structures (questions, off-the-cuff remarks, descriptions) catch you up? How can you remind yourself to be mindful? What are some situations in your life where you need to refer consistently to your loved one in the third person when they’re around? Can you prepare for these in advance, or get ready to use the pausing or conscious-listening you’ve practiced?

# Scenarios for Practicing Pronouns

Creating Supportive Environments for LGBTQI2+  
Students and Staff In Schools

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# Mya (they/them)



Mya is running for student council, and you need to introduce them before they make their presentation. Share what you would say. (make up things like extracurricular involvement, etc)

# Samantha (she/her)



Samantha is a sixth grader in your school. She transitioned during the summer break, and the adjustment has been hard. You are talking with your Assistant Principal on how you have been trying to support Samantha, and your Assistant Principal is asking how they can help.

# Mx. Branson (he/they)



Mx. Branson teaches in the classroom next to yours. It's the first day of school and students keep mistaking your classroom for his. Help redirect the students.



# Kevin (she/her)



Kevin is a new student, and is adamant about her pronouns being she/her. The sixth graders in your class are having a hard time accepting this, and Kevin is starting to be teased. You are chatting about the situation in the teachers lounge while eating lunch trying to get support from fellow teachers.

# Advice for Teachers of LGBTQ Students





# Comments Questions

If you have any questions about any of the subject matter in this PD or any topic related to LGBTQ+ please reach out to Sharon Eskenazi, April Travis. Collie Roland or any of our awesome Walsh Counselor Team!

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# Extra info



# Pronoun *Dos* and *Don'ts*:

When someone asks you to use a different pronoun:

**DON'T**

What?  
'Zie' isn't a real pronoun.  
Don't you have something  
more **normal** that you use?



WHY?

**DON'T**

But it's not grammatically  
correct to use 'they' as a  
singular pronoun.



You are not the being asked to evaluate this person's  
gender identity or preferred terminology.



We know you will. Everyone does at first.

But it's boring to be reminded right up front about how difficult and inconvenient our genders are to you.



I'm not familiar with those pronouns.

Could you go over them with me so I know I'm using them right?

DO ✓

Oh, of course. I'll do my best!



DO ✓



When you accidentally misgender someone:

**DON'T**



She - I mean he! **He.** Oh my god...

I am so SO SO sorry!

Don't worry about it.

I didn't mean it you know  
I'm the LAST person who-

It's ok.

It's FINE.



**WHY?**

Your mistake should not turn into a weird self-flagellation 'make me feel better' moment. It's really not about you.



She - sorry, I mean **he** - he and I used to...

DO ✓



DO ✓



*(if necessary, probably in private)*

Hey man, I know I keep messing up this pronoun thing,  
I promise I'm doing my best.  
Thanks for your patience so far.





**DO** ✓ Practice!

Greg is my friend, I've known him for 7 years.  
He works in landscaping and he has 3 dogs...



When someone asks you your pronouns:



WHY?

This person is trying to show you respect and courtesy by not making assumptions about how you identify, don't be rude in return.

