

Supporting our LGBTQ+ Students and Colleagues Tool

Scenario & Response

The purpose of this tool is to provide you with potential responses to scenarios that may arise as we support our LGBTQ+ students. Use your discretion on whether these are appropriate for you to use and whether the situation or space allows it. It's okay to say, "we can talk more after class"

Contents

1. Scenarios and responses to Parents re: Transgender Students
2. Scenarios and responses to Students re: Transgender Students
3. Responding to staff re: Transgender Students
4. Ways to respond to "That's so gay" and actions to

1. Scenarios and Responding to Parents

Scenario: *This child should not attend this school*

Response:

- We are a neighborhood school dedicated to educating all kids in the community. We do not pick and choose between who can and cannot attend. As a public institution, it is our responsibility and expectation to welcome and educate all students in our building.

Scenario: *I don't want my child in the same group or sitting near the student. I don't want my child in this classroom.*

Response:

- Okay, help me understand your concern. Switching classes is a last resort and something we do not do very often. If you feel very strongly, I am happy to set up a meeting with the Principal to discuss your concerns.

Scenario: *What is going on with that student? My child said she/he/they is/are actually a boy/girl.*

Response:

- Just like I would not discuss your child with other parents, it's really not my place to discuss this student like this. Thank you for understanding. Here are resources, however, to learn more about our LGBTQ+ community and how DPS supports all students.
- This student has the right to privacy. Discussing___with you would violate this child's FERPA rights

Scenario: *What should I say to my kids? How do I explain transgender to them?*

Response:

- We want to make sure that you know that we respect your family's beliefs as a family. We recognize that you will want to address these circumstances as parents. Here at school, we are not in a position to tell kids what to believe. We are expected to create a learning environment that is safe and inclusive for all students. If you would like more specific guidance or support on how to explain transgender to your child I can connect you with these resources.

Scenario: *A child is found to be harassing the student within the school environment*

Response:

- Support the targeted student, offender, and bystanders. See this resource

Scenario: *Any threats to go to the media*

Response:

- Notify the principal and AP. Do not speak with the media.

2.Scenarios and responding to students

Scenario: *Why is/are she/he/they acting like a girl/boy?*

Responses:

- At our school it is important that our students are allowed to express themselves free from harm.
- What do you mean? What does it mean to dress like a girl or a boy? How do you know? Who makes those rules?
- People at our school can wear what makes them feel good
- How does a boy/girl act? Who made those rules? Why do you think only boys/girls can dress/act that way?

Scenario: *My parents say that dressing like a boy/girl is wrong. I think it's weird that she/he/they dresse/s like a girl/boy.*

Responses:

- We all have certain beliefs. We may each come to school with different shoes, socks and shirts. And we may not always like someone else's shirts, shoes or socks. But here at our school we still respect them because that is what leaders do.
- Your family may think one thing, but that doesn't mean all people feel that way.
- The way this person is dressed doesn't have any impact on you.
- How does a girl/boy dress? People should wear what makes them feel comfortable.

Scenario: *What bathroom does/do she/he/they use?*

Responses: She/he/they uses the restroom like all students. We don't discuss what others do in the restroom. Let's take care of ourselves and not worry about what others are doing.

Scenario: *Why was/were she/he/they in that bathroom?*

Responses:

- Probably using the restroom. We don't discuss what others do in the restroom. Let's take care of ourselves and not worry about what others are doing.

Scenario: *My mom and dad said that I am not allowed to play (recess) with him/her/them*

Response:

- You have the choice to play alone or with others at recess.
- You can play with whoever you want, but we don't exclude others in games, group activities, etc....
- You get to choose your own friends during recess, make the best choice for you.

Scenario: *A student may say to the student, "you are not a girl, you're a boy!"*

Response:

- At this school, we respect the way others want to be addressed. If ___ says ___ then we respect that. (follow-up with the student experiencing the harm and circle back in a few days)
- Can you tell me why you think that? ___ has said they are ___ so what difference does it make to you?

- You can think what you want, but if ____ says ____ we are going to respect that.

Scenario: *Is/are she/he/they a boy or a girl?*

Response:

- Respond using the correct name and pronouns for the student in question.
- ____ name is ____ and you can refer to them as he/she/they

Scenario: *A comment that is made that references anatomy*

Response:

- We don't make comments about other people's bodies, its none of our business and doesn't impact you at all.
- School is not the place to discuss anyone's private parts.

3. Scenarios Responding to Staff re: Transgender Students

Scenario: *I don't feel comfortable not telling ____ parent's they identify as transgender*

Response:

- The student has the right to come out in a way that is most comfortable for them. One of the best ways to support a transgender student is to not out them to anyone, even their parent/guardian.
- Parents are not always accepting of their transgender child, outing this student could put them in serious danger
- The best practice is to support the student to find a way to come out to their parents if/when they are ready. We don't know what is happening at home and outing this child could put them in danger.

Scenario: *I think we need to tell our community about ____ being transgender*

Response:

- This child has the right to privacy, we cannot communicate private information about this child without parent and student consent
- The family and the student have the right to decide when and how they want to tell other members of our community. Communicating any information that would out this child is a violation of their FERPA rights
- I am happy to connect you with the district legal team if you have further questions about privacy laws or FERPA, but we cannot send out any communication about this child's transgender status

Scenario: *As a teacher, I don't feel its my job to teach about sex*

Response:

- You are not teaching about sex, you are teaching about different kinds of people, families, etc....
- This is an issue of equity, it is not about sex or intimacy but about how we honor diversity and inclusivity in our district
- Gender identity is not about sex or sexual orientation. Here are some resources to support your learning

Scenario: *I am not using ____ pronoun/name for this student*

Response:

- Our district values diversity, equity, and inclusion. Using this student's desired name and pronouns are a part of the commitment to those values, not to mention the best practice to help this child feel safe, supported, and seen at school.
- Denver Public School's policy explicitly states it is best practice to refer to the student using the name and pronoun they consistently want to use at school. The expectation is that you use the name and pronoun the student would like.
- Not honoring the name/pronoun of this student is considered discriminatory under Title IX, if you want to discuss this further I can connect you with our district legal team.

Scenario: *Biologically, this child is still ____, I'm an ally of gays and lesbians but I don't get this. How can this student know they are transgender anyway?*

Response:

- The most up-to-date research notes most people know their sexual orientation and gender identity by the age of 4 or 5. I can give the email of our district LGBTQ+ Equity Program Manager if you'd like more information.
- Biology actually doesn't equal gender identity. Gender identity is different than biology. Would you like some resources to support your learning?
- It sounds like you are working on allyship in terms of sexual orientation, but gender identity is different. Would you like some resources to understand the difference?
- Allies can always learn more, let's work on building our allyship together.
- Allyship is a lifelong journey. Just because you know someone who is gay or lesbian doesn't mean there isn't more work to do. I consider myself an ally to ____, but I know I always have work to do around ____.
- When you say ____ it doesn't feel like you're in allyship. Have you thought about trying ____ to increase your learning?
- It's ok if you don't get it, you can still be empathetic and supportive of this child.

4. WHAT TO SAY TO THAT'S SO GAY (and other insults)

Address it with simple, quick responses ...

- "Remember, we don't use put-downs in this class."
- "It's not OK at this school to use 'gay' disrespectfully to mean something is bad."
- "You may not have meant to be hurtful, but when you use the word 'gay' to mean something is bad or stupid, it is hurtful." Follow-up: "Do you know why this is hurtful?"
- "Using the word 'homo' to tease someone is harassment and not part of our culture and values."
- "Even if you didn't mean to offend people who are gay, it is offensive to call this assignment gay (or queer); if you don't like something, you can discuss this with me."
- "It is never OK to say, 'you act like a girl (or look like a boy)' as a put-down."
- "Using the words 'queer', 'dyke' or 'fag' to joke around is not OK. These are hurtful words and can impact anyone who overhears them."
- "That is not the language we use here again"

Don't Ignore It ...

- Harassment does not go away on its own.
- Ignoring mean name-calling and hurtful teasing allows it to continue and possibly get worse.

- If other students do not see action, they get the message there is nothing wrong with it.
- Not speaking up teaches not only the student targeted, but also anyone within hearing range that they will not be protected from harassment.
- Almost any response is better than ignoring the situation. You may not know exactly what to say, but you must stop the harassment.
- Taking action reaffirms limits. Interrupting name-calling and harassment isn't always easy. With experience you will become more comfortable in handling it. Practice with colleagues.
- You can always go back to the student and say or do something else if you feel you did not respond well.

Educate ...

- If you have the time and opportunity to educate on the spot, do it. If you don't, make time later.
- If you have been hearing the phrase "That's gay" or "no homo," take time during class to make sure that your students know what "gay" means and know why it is hurtful to use as a comment or put-down.
- Be clear that using the word "gay" in a negative way is disrespectful. Be clear that using the phrase "That's gay" is hurtful to other students who may have family members or friends who are LGBTQ.
- Be prepared to provide accurate information. For the youngest students, keep it simple – for example, "the word gay describes a man and a man or a woman and a woman who love each other." As students get older, they may want more explanations and discussion.
- In lessons on respect, prejudice or civil rights include information about discrimination against LGBTQ people and the LGBTQ civil rights movement.

Be Proactive ...

- Develop an environment of respect and caring for all students in your school and classroom using inclusive language, books and other materials.
- Establish clear schoolwide and classroom policies against hurtful teasing and bullying. Ensure that all members of the school community understand what the policies are and why they are important.
- Be explicit that rules against hurtful name-calling include "That's gay!" "Homo!" "Fag!" "Tranny!" "Sissy!" and other LGBTQ put-downs.
- Develop the capacity of students and educators to be allies that stand up for students who are harassed.