

BUILDING SAFE SPACES

FOR LGBTQIA+ YOUTH



to build Safe Spaces in your school / classroom

Focus on building a strong sense of community, emphasizing empathy and respect, and providing clear boundaries and expectations. Not sure where to start? See advice from surveyed students below!

Allow students to speak about their experiences and explain things about [their identity].*

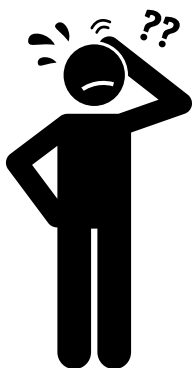
Show students respect by using their preferred pronouns*

Offer protection and support for students who want to be leaders.*

Encourage individuals, regardless of their identity*

Lean on school counselors for support and resources*

Ask if they have a preferred name or pronoun.* Ask student if you should refer to them that way with guardians!



References:

*Teenage student responses/feedback to GSE anonymous Youth Survey, 2024

ACTION ITEMS TO BUILD SAFE SPACES

Have you ever been stuck on how to respond when you hear something that you know is misinformation or malinformation? The following action items provide examples from anonymous student responses* for situations that have occurred and how to address them proactively.



Ways to uplift and affirm:

- Genuine compliments
- Acknowledge pronouns
- Protect student identity
- Encourage hobbies/interests
- Keep an open mind
- Respect them!

How to affirm from the beginning of the year:

Survey students about their preferred name and pronouns from the very first day of school. And ask “**who can know?**” because some students might go by a different name when speaking to their families, and you want to understand their comfort level.

Educate yourself on LGBTQ+ terminology and issues, actively challenging harmful language and stereotypes, and promoting positive representations of LGBTQ+ people in your class culture.

If you have had any experiences of feeling different, share them! (ex: being neurodivergent)

Staff to Staff - How to address incorrect things you hear:

→ When you hear something incorrect or insensitive, address it directly and clearly. ←

Things you could do if you're comfortable:

- Defend your student in the moment
- Contact a counselor or admin for additional support
- Explain the severity and impact of words to the students
- Document it!

No one has all the answers/solutions.

Lean into organizations like Garden State Equality for support.



Want to learn more?

gardenstateequality.org