

Facilitation Guide for “Supporting LGBTQ+ Students” SASH Club Power Topics Presentation

By Kel O’Hara, Esq.,
Equal Rights Advocates

The purpose of this module is to help club members understand the basics of LGBTQ+ identity and terminology, as well as how to be allies to LGBTQ+ classmates. This is an important part of addressing sexual violence in schools because LGBTQ+ students experience sexual violence at higher rates than their non-LGBTQ+ peers, sometimes just for being who they are. By supporting LGBTQ+ students, we are making a safer and more welcoming school environment for everyone.

Set Up

The module includes questions for the group that are meant to facilitate discussion. If possible, have group members sit in a semi-circle so they can see both the presentation and each other during conversations.

Consider having group members trade off reading bullet points on slides with information to keep everyone engaged.

Introductory Remarks

- Open the meeting by explaining that this module is about how to support LGBTQ+ students, and that this module is primarily designed for allies and people who are still learning about the LGBTQ+ community. Keep in mind that LGBTQ+ people and allies who already know a lot about the subject may be in the room. Do not pressure anyone to come out, but do tell the group that anyone who identifies as LGBTQ is invited to share their perspective on these topics.
- If it feels appropriate, consider acknowledging that some people may be uncomfortable with the topics you’re discussing (because of lack of information, religious beliefs, or other cultural factors). Remind the group that inclusion and equality mean learning about and respecting people of all identities, even those who live in a way we don’t personally agree with or understand.
- Encourage respect and honesty in the space. Acknowledging you are uncomfortable is okay, but making discriminatory comments is not. Consider making a group agreement that anyone who makes inappropriate remarks will be asked to leave the meeting.
- Make a group agreement that no one will share anything they learned about other people’s identity outside of the group without their permission. This is to avoid anyone being “outed,” or having their LGBTQ+ identity revealed to others without their consent.

Presentation Format and Additional Notes

Introductory slides (5 minutes)

Use these slides to introduce the content and why it's being taught, and set the stage for conversation among group members by engaging them in structured questions

Slide 1: Title

Slide 4: What's Ahead

- Set expectations for what you will learn today using the content on the slides

Slide 5: Why learn about LGBTQ+ students as part of understanding sexual violence?

- Go through material on the slides to help the group understand why this topic is an included education module

Slide 4: Questions

- For the first two questions, have a few people raise their hands to share. Try to get a few different perspective and experiences represented if you can.
- For the second two questions, consider having group members raise their hands to answer instead of answering individually. Try giving them the options “yes,” “no,” and “I’m not sure.”
 - If anyone says no, you may consider saying: “I’d like anyone who said no to consider if they might have friends or classmates that are LGBTQ but haven’t come out to them or in general yet” before moving to the next topic

LGBTQ+ Terms and Identities (15-20 minutes)

Use these slides to define some common terminology that relates to LGBTQ+ identity and to clarify any misconceptions about what these words mean. Make sure to leave space for questions from the group to make sure everyone understands before moving to the next slide.

Slide 7 – LGBTQ+ Terms and Identities

- Explain that the next section of the presentation is about the words we use to describe LGBTQ+ people.
- The goal is to get everyone on the same page about what these words mean so we can discuss the LGBTQ+ community respectfully and accurately

Slide 8- Sexuality, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression

- Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vlx9iZ9g_9I
- This slide features a short video that introduces the following terms and concepts:
 - *Sexual orientation* – an individual’s emotional and/ or physical attraction to another person or people

- *Gender identity* – an innate identification as a man, woman, neither, both, or some other gender
 - May not correspond to sex assigned at birth
- *Gender expression*- the way a person communicates their gender to the world via external characteristics and behaviors.
- The above all exist on a spectrum
- Gender norms and expression may vary across cultures
- Someone’s gender expression may or may not align with traditional perceptions of gender identity
- After the video, consider asking volunteers to define the key three terms presented in the video for the group

Slide 9- Understanding Gender and Sexuality

- This slide uses a drawing of the “Genderbread Person” to explain the differences between gender identity, gender expression, anatomical sex, and attraction (sexual and romantic).
- Rather than explaining the image, invite group members to point out what they notice in the diagram and accompanying text. If they need help getting started, here are some things you could point out:
 - The elements are all separate and do not necessarily influence each other
 - The elements all exist on a spectrum
 - Gender identity is how you think about yourself, whereas anatomical sex is how your body fits into the categories of “male,” “female,” or “intersex” (defined later)
 - Someone’s anatomical sex may not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.
 - This is because some trans people choose to medically transition (change their bodies through gender affirming surgery or hormones to bring their gender identity and body into closer alignment). Not all people who medically transition want to “pass” (or be perceived as the opposite sex).
 - Someone might have different romantic and sexual attractions (for example, a person could be interested in having sex with both men and women but only want to date women)
 - Someone’s gender expression does not necessarily need to “match” their gender identity

Slide 10- Terms to Know: Gender

- This slide explains some commonly used terms to describe people’s gender identity. It does not include every word people use to describe their gender, so some people may not feel fully represented by the words provided here.
- Here is additional information on these terms that may be helpful for responding to any questions:
 - Cisgender: if someone is not trans, they are cis. Using a word to describe not being transgender helps establish that being trans and cis are both equally valid.

In a sentence or phrase, cisgender is placed before the word to describe someone's gender identity (e.g. "I am a cis(gender) boy").

- Transgender: trans people may have any gender identity; not all trans people are binary (identify as a man or woman). Someone can be trans without medically transitioning (or changing their body). Transgender is also placed before the word that describes someone's gender identity *e.g. I am a transgender woman").
- Intersex: intersex is also an umbrella term used to describe people with various biological traits that fall outside the sex binary. Some people may have biological sex characteristics (genitals, reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones etc.), that correspond to both sexes, or they may be missing some biological characteristics that doctors look for to determine if they are female or male. For example, someone might appear female on the outside but have internal anatomy that is typical for males.
- Non-binary: as an umbrella term, "non-binary" encompasses many different identities outside of man or woman. Some examples of identities under the non-binary include genderqueer (when someone's gender identity is non-normative) gender fluid (when someone's gender is not fixed), agender (when someone has no gender), and bigender (when someone has two genders). Many other cultures historically/currently recognize non-binary identities: for example, some indigenous (native) North American tribes recognize "two spirit" people, defined as those who have the spirit of both a man and a woman, and have for many generations.

Slide 11- Terms to Know: Sexuality

- This slide explains some commonly used terms to describe people's sexual and romantic orientation. It does not include every word people use to describe who they are attracted to, so some people may not feel fully represented by the words provided here.
- Although these definitions rely on binary gender, people who do not identify within the gender binary may still identify with these terms. For example, a non-binary person may identify as a lesbian because they feel like best describes their attraction, or because they feel a strong connection to that community.

Slide 12- Other Terms to Know

- This slide explains some other commonly used terms relating to the LGBTQ+ community. Again, the list is not exhaustive so some words people find important may be left out. Consider asking people to share any other terms relating to the LGBTQ+ community they think are important for others to know.
- Some people may be familiar with the term "LGBTQIA+" a variation on LGBTQ+ that includes intersex and asexual people. While some folks understand the "A" to stand for ally, others find this offensive because supporting a community is not the same as being part of it.

Slide 13: Talk About It

- These questions are more discussion oriented, so invite people to respectfully engage with what others have said.
- Notice and point out any commonalities or themes that arise to help group members understand similar gaps in knowledge or discomfort that could be due to shared cultural factors or privileges.

Supporting LGBTQ+ Classmates

This section is about tangible steps group members can take to support LGBTQ+ students. The suggestions here are only a starting point: brainstorming and adding ideas is encouraged! Ideally, group members should walk away from the presentation feeling empowered and committed to supporting LGBTQ+ people at school and elsewhere.

Slide 14- Supporting LGBTQ+ Classmates

- Explain that this section explains some actions they can take to make LGBTQ+ students feel more accepted and respected at school.
- To explain why this is so important, you may consider sharing these statistics:
 - LGBTQ+ young people who experience rejection because of their identities are **8x more likely to attempt suicide** and **6x more likely to report high levels of depression** than LGBTQ+ young people who mostly experience acceptance of who they are.
 - **95%** of highly accepted LGBTQ+ young people believe they can grow up to be happy LGBTQ+ adults, while only **25%** of highly rejected LGBTQ+ young people think the same.

Slide 15- Questions

- Ask for a few volunteers to answer each question
- If no one has ideas for the last question, that's ok! The group will get plenty of suggestions in the following slides

Slide 16- Accepting LGBTQ+ Classmates: Pronouns

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3xpvricekxU> (5:18)
- This video will introduce group members to pronouns, the words we use to refer to people without their names
- After the video, consider asking group members to share their own pronouns if that's not something your group has already done.

Slides 17-20 all offer suggestions for ways group members can support LGBTQ+ classmates. Consider brainstorming and writing any additional ideas on the whiteboard!

Slide 17- Respecting LGBTQ+ Classmates

Slide 18 & 19- Standing up for LGBTQ+ Classmates

Slide 20 & 21- Making school more inclusive for LGBTQ+ students

- Use the suggestions on each slide to start conversations and generate new ideas. Some prompts you could try include:
 - Why is [this bullet point] important?
 - Does [this bullet point] feel like something you would do? Why or not?
 - Does [this bullet point] feel like something that would be impactful here at our school? Why or why not?
 - Do you have additional ideas after seeing these suggestions?

Slide 22- Do More: Questions and Discussion

- Use this slide to close out the conversation and get group members' final reflections and thoughts
- Depending on the size of your group, consider asking each group member to share one thing they learned and one thing they will commit to doing in support of LGBTQ+ students moving forward.

That's all! Thank you for leading this presentation!