Resource

2SLGBTQIA+ Affirming and Equitable Teaching & Learning Practices

This tipsheet outlines how harnessing **queer- and trans-informed**[1] knowledge and resources, operating from a **trauma-informed** and **intersectional** lens, and enacting **anti-oppressive** teaching and learning practices can be used to deliver **equitable** curricula, including anti-violence, mental health promotion, and healthy relationships content. The promising practices shared in this document are drawn from a literature review on affirming 2SLGBTQIA+ students in and through schooling. This review emphasized how queer and trans theories and pedagogies can be incorporated into teen dating violence education to create more equitable and affirming programming for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.

We use the metaphor of a landscape to explore how teachers and other school staff can address the inequities 2SLGBTQIA+ students continue to face in the education system across what is colonially referred to as Canada.

Land: Building a welcoming, inclusive, and safe foundation for learning in all educational spaces

Goal: Affirming and equitable 2SLGBTQIA+ teaching and learning practices that are grounded in anti-heteronormative/cisnormative, anti-oppressive and decolonizing, and trauma-informed insights, experiences, and expertise.

Land Essential Element 1: *Acknowledge, understand, and affirm the full continuum of interlocking identities/ways of being, experiences, and expressions among students*

In healthy relationships/sexual education content, teachers can discuss that there is a spectrum of possibilities and presentations for sexual and romantic orientation, gender identity, gender expression, assigned sex at birth, and bodies. These are not fixed aspects of personhood so they can change over time. There are also many terms people use to refer to their identities/ways of being. It is important to recognize that whatever term(s) a student uses is valid and true to their experience. If we don't know what a term means, we can look it up to learn about and validate each student.

Resources for further learning:
- Building Capacity to Work with 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth: Understanding Concepts and Terminology
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Terms
- Human Identity

[1]Bolded terms are defined in the glossary

Land Essential Element 2: *Engaging in ongoing personal and professional development*

Teachers can also build their own foundation of knowledge on 2SLGBTQIA+ topics and issues. Specifically, school staff can participate in personal and professional development (PD) opportunities to learn more about the needs and strengths of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and integrate these new understandings into their daily practice. Important topics for ongoing learning include equitable language (e.g., inclusive, representative), actions (e.g., unbiased, non-stereotypical, etc.), strategies (e.g., **anti-colonial,** reflexive), and content (e.g., intersectional, trauma-informed). PD opportunities can include workshops, webinars, books, podcasts, tip sheets, and practice briefs, among many other things! Practice incorporating anti-oppressive and 2SLGBTQIA+ affirming language, examples, literature, and resources in every learning/sharing space. When you get it wrong (and we all will), acknowledge it and correct yourself.

Resources for further learning:
- Affirming and Inclusive Language
- Trauma-Informed Care for Sexually and Gender Diverse Youth: A Research Summary
- Intersectionality for Educators

Atmosphere: Creating equitable and affirmative climates in all learning environments

Goal: Equitable learning spaces that are anti-discriminatory, and 2SLGBTQIA+ affirmative and celebratory, so that 2SLGBTQIA+ students feel safe, respected, valued, and understood in their school environment.

Atmosphere Essential Element 1: *Identify and address disparities 2SLGBTQIA+ students face in the school environment*

To acknowledge, understand, and address current inequities for 2SLGBTQIA+ students, teachers can draw on research and practice evidence. For example, 2SLGBTQIA+ students rarely see themselves fully integrated into healthy relationships/sexual education curriculum. If their experiences are mentioned at all, they tend to be negative or an add-on. To create a climate that is affirmative, information on 2SLGBTQIA+ needs, experiences, and relationships needs to be presented alongside information on heterosexual and cisgender realities in all healthy relationships/sexual education curriculum. Teachers can draw on resources from 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations, such as Egale Canada, GLSEN, and Wisdom2Action, that create and provide equity-oriented content and presentations.

Resources for further learning:
- Still In Every Class In Every School: Final Report on the Second Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in Canadian Schools
- 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth's Experiences and Protective Factors
- Supporting LGBTQ Students of Color

Atmosphere Essential Element 2: *Student privacy and confidentiality is prioritized in all teaching and learning decisions*

To achieve this element, teachers, administrators, and other school staff can work to ensure that school policies, practice and materials do not **out** students to their peers, school/agency staff, or family. The risk for **outing** can happen through verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., report cards, lesson plans, teacher notes, documentation going home). Ask what names and pronouns, if any, children and youth are comfortable using with whom and in what place. Be aware that this can change across time and space.

Resources for further learning:
- Pronoun usage guide for teachers
- Pronoun form

Water: Riding the wave and using current resources, events, and expertise to continually shape affirming learning and school environments

Goal: Drawing on the 'current' of 2SLGBTQIA+ champions, change makers, and allies working in solidarity with 2SLGBTQIA+ people, teachers and other school staff ride the waves of socio-cultural change to ensure equitable teaching and learning.

Water Essential Element 1: *Recognize that creating affirmative spaces is an ongoing journey*

Creating affirmative and welcoming school spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ students is an ongoing journey, not a one-time conversation, activity, lesson, event, or checklist. Over time, support for this work may ebb and flow, but teachers have a professional responsibility to create inclusive learning environments. Tips for creating ripples of positive change include collaborating and networking with 2SLGBTQIA+ leaders and champions in your division/community; seeking support from Decolonization, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (DEDI) leaders in school communities; looking for curricular gaps and actively addressing them; integrating positive 2SLGBTQIA+ content into everyday teaching and learning; focusing on varied representation rather than privileging tropes, stereotypes, and a universal '2SLGBTQIA+ experience'; and committing to and engaging in ongoing and continuous (un)learning.

Resources for further learning:
- Developing 2SLGBTQIA-Inclusive Classroom Resources
- Sample Lesson Plans
- Healthy Relationships Program for 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth

## Sun: Shining the light on student-centered learning

Goal: A commitment to student-centered learning cultivates opportunities for children and youth to be and see themselves in all educational environments and endeavors.

Sun Essential Element 1: *Youth voice is at the center of decisions made in learning environments*

Given the evolving landscape of 2SLGBTQIA+ needs, it is critical that youth are meaningfully included in discussions about how to create affirmative classroom and school environments. Youth are the best source of knowledge on what youth need! Teachers can empower youth by promoting student voice and choice in activities and assignments; ensuring students are on decision-making committees in the school; facilitating courageous conversations that dismantle **heteronormative/cisnormative** and **oppressive** assumptions and beliefs; encouraging discussion, case study, and role-playing practices where students can learn with and from each other; and fostering opportunities for self-reflection and exploration.

Resources for further learning:
- GLSEN's Challenging Assumptions Activity
- GLSEN's Learning Empowerment and Self Identification Activity
- Draw-the-Line Postcard Activity
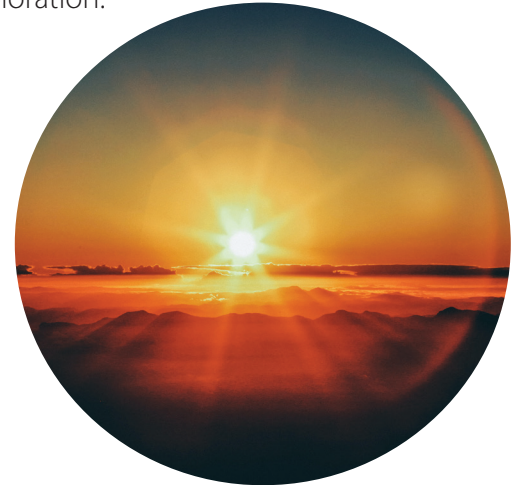
Glossary

Here is a list of some terms we use in this document. For a more extensive list, Egale's 2SLGTBQI Glossary is a great resource.

Affirming: Practices and content that validates diverse identities as real, normal, good, and welcomed.

Anti-cisnormative: Challenges dominant ideologies and systems that support the gender binary (man/boy/woman/girl) as normal, moral, and natural (and Two-Spirit, transgender, nonbinary, gender fluid, and genderqueer identities as abnormal, immoral, and unnatural).

Anti-colonial: Practices that actively resist the dominance of European ideas, beliefs, and value systems in Canadian society. Resisting the gender binary (which is a colonial idea) is one way to be anti-colonial.

Anti-heteronormative: Practices that challenge dominant ideologies and systems that perpetuate ideas of heterosexuality as normal, moral, and natural (and same-gender attraction, multiple-gender attraction, and non-attraction as abnormal, immoral, and unnatural).

Anti-oppressive: Practices that actively challenge systemic inequities (e.g., racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia etc.) through affirming action and language.

Cisnormative: Ideologies and systems that assume the gender binary (man/boy/woman/girl) is normal, moral, and natural, and that support this assumption in practice by erasing identities and experiences beyond the binary (e.g., only offering sanitary products in women's washrooms).

Equitable: Providing individuals with supports and opportunities that result in similar outcomes for all (e.g., including subtitles in presentations to ensure both Deaf and hearing individuals can benefit from the presentation).

Heteronormative: Ideologies and systems that assume heterosexuality is normal, moral, and natural, and that support this assumption in practice by erasing the identities and experiences of same-gender attracted, multiple-gender attracted, and non-attracted people (e.g., sexual education focused only on opposite-sex intimacy).

Intersectionality: A concept developed by Black legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and members of the Combahee River Collective. This idea recognizes that individuals can experience multiple forms of oppression that overlap and shape their individual experiences in unique ways (e.g., Black women experience racism and sexism simultaneously, such that their experiences are different from Black men and White women).

Oppressive: Ideologies and systems that invalidate, harm, and create barriers for certain groups. Often includes violating the human rights of these groups (e.g., the continued inaccessibility of clean drinking water on First Nations reserves).

Out: When a 2SLGBTQIA+ person discloses their sexuality and/or gender identity to others. A person may be out to one person, multiple people, or publicly. *Outing* is to reveal a person's sexual and/or gender identity to others without their permission. E.g. "I'm out at school but not at home. My teacher outed me to my parents!"

Queer: Although previously used as an insult, the term 'queer' has been reclaimed by 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Queer is an umbrella term that "describes sexual and gender identities other than straight or cisgender" (Definition source: Planned Parenthood).

Queer-informed: Includes content based on an understanding of queer identities, ways of being, and experiences (e.g., queer theory). Queer-informed content acknowledges the continued oppression and harm queer people face and works to disrupt this harm.

Trans-informed: Includes content that acknowledges and affirms gender identities beyond the gender binary (e.g., Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary, gender-fluid, genderqueer). Trans-informed content acknowledges the continued harm and oppression experienced by trans and gender nonconforming people and works to disrupt this harm.

Trauma-informed: Practices and content that acknowledge many individuals have traumatic experiences and that works to promote feelings of safety and trust in shared spaces while taking care to avoid re-traumatizing people. Trauma-informed practices include knowing the signs of trauma and how to respond to trauma symptoms.