Creating Safe Spaces Inclusive of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning/Queer Students

Educator creates a safe space for LGBTQ youth in their school(s).

Key Method

The educator creates a safe and affirming learning environment inclusive of LGBTQ students by examining issues for LGBTQ students; identifying the needs of students within their school setting; designing curricular lessons inclusive of LGBTQ students; and advocating for school-wide programs on bias, harassment, and bullying.

Method Components

(Data taken from the 2015 National GLSEN 2015 National School Climate Survey (NSCS))

Hostile School Climate:

Schools nationwide are hostile environments for a distressing number of LGBTQ students, the overwhelming majority of whom routinely hear anti-LGBT language and experience victimization and discrimination at school. As a result, many LGBTQ students avoid school activities or miss school entirely.

57.6% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 43.3% because of their gender expression.

31.8% of LGBTQ students missed at least one entire day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable, and a tenth (10.0%) missed four or more days in the past month.

Over a third avoided gender-segregated spaces in school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (bathrooms: 39.4%; locker rooms: 37.9%).

Most reported avoiding school functions and extracurricular activities (71.5% and 65.7%, respectively) because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable.

Harassment and Assault at School

The vast majority of LGBTQ students (85.2%) experienced verbal harassment (e.g., being called names or threatened) at school based on a personal characteristic, most commonly sexual orientation (70.8% of LGBTQ students) and gender expression (54.5%).

Effects of Victimization

LGBTQ students who experienced higher levels of victimization because of their sexual orientation:

Were more than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month than those who experienced lower levels (62.2% vs. 20.1%);

Had lower grade-point averages (GPAs) than students who were less often harassed (2.9 vs. 3.3);

Were twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any post-secondary education (e.g., college or trade school) than those who experienced lower levels (10.0% vs. 5.2%);

Were more likely to have been disciplined at school (54.9% vs. 32.1%); and

Had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.

Effects of Discrimination

LGBTQ students who experienced LGBT-related discrimination at school were:

More than three times as likely to have missed school in the past month as those who had not (44.3% vs. 12.3%);

Had lower GPAs than their peers (3.1 vs. 3.4);

Were more likely to have been disciplined at school (46.0% vs. 27.9%); and

Had lower self-esteem and school belonging and higher levels of depression.

Inclusive Curricular Resources

LGBTQ students who have LGBTQ-related school resources report better school experiences and academic success. Compared to LGBTQ students who did not have a GSA in their school, students who had a GSA in their school:

Were less likely to hear "gay" used in a negative way often or frequently (59.3% compared to 77.1% of other students);

Were less likely to hear homophobic remarks such as "fag" or "dyke" often or frequently (51.0% vs. 68.0%);

Were less likely to hear negative remarks about gender expression and transgender people often or frequently (gender expression: 59.6% vs. 66.8%; transgender people: 35.9% vs. 46.0%);

Were more likely to report that school personnel intervened when hearing homophobic remarks compared to students without a GSA – 20.6% vs. 12.0% said that staff intervene most of the time or always;

Were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation than those without a GSA (50.2% vs. 66.3%), and less likely to miss school (26.1% vs. 38.5% missed one day of school in past month because of safety concerns);

Experienced lower levels of victimization related to their sexual orientation and gender expression – for example, 21.5% of students with a GSA experienced higher levels of victimization based on their gender expression, compared to 34.0% of those without a GSA;

Reported a greater number of supportive school staff and more accepting peers; and

Felt more connected to their school community than students without a GSA.

Supportive Educators

Providing professional development for school staff to improve rates of intervention and increase the number of supportive teachers and other staff available to students; Taken together, such measures can move us toward a future in which all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Compared to LGBTQ students with no supportive school staff, students with many (11 or more) supportive staff at their school:

Were less likely to feel unsafe (40.6% vs. 78.7%);

Were less likely to miss school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (16.9% vs. 47.2%);

Had higher GPAs than other students (3.3 vs. 2.8);

Were less likely to say they might not graduate high school (1.7% vs. 9.5%) and were less likely to not plan on pursuing

post-secondary education (4.5% vs. 14.7%); and

Felt more connected to their school community.

Students who had seen a Safe Space sticker or poster in their school were more likely to identify school staff who were supportive of LGBTQ students and more likely to feel comfortable talking with school staff about LGBTQ issues.

Wraparound Services and Support

Wraparound supports are necessary for the support and safety of LGBTQ students. Educators should make themselves aware of various school and community services. They also need to know how to connect with them when needed to support a student in crisis. These services include but are not limited to:

Gay-straight alliances (GSAs) or similar student organizations in schools

Social services, legal counsel, and physical and mental health services providers experienced in serving LGBTQ youth

Suicide hotline numbers

Supports for LGBTQ youth in crisis such as The Trevor Project (examples of crisis are suicidal thoughts, homelessness, HIV/AIDS diagnosis)

Supporting Research

2015 National GLSEN 2015 National School Climate Survey (NSCS)
https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2015%20National%20GLSEN%202015%20National%20School%20Climate%20Surve
%20Full%20Report_0.pdf

Berkowitz, R. (2017) A Research Synthesis of the Associations Between Socioeconomic Background, Inequality, School Climate, and Academic Achievement, Review of Educational Research. DOI: 10.3102/0034654316669821.
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.3102/0034654316669821

Christia Spears Brown, Hui Chu (2012) Discrimination, ethnic identity, and academic outcomes of Mexican immigrant children: the importance of school context. Child Development 83 (5):1477-85.
http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01786.x/abstract

Coker, T.R. et al (2009) Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination Among Fifth-Grade Students and Its Association With Mental Health. American Journal of Public Health. 2009 May; 99(5): 878–884. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2008.144329.
https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2008.144329

Cornell, D., Gregory, A., Huang, F., & Fan, X. (2012). Perceived prevalence of bullying and teasing predicts high school dropout rates. Journal of Educational Psychology. DOI: 10.1037/a0030416.
https://psycnet.apa.org/search/display?id=8075ba7c-e792-c19b-a37d-e7518ce07d46&recordId=1&tab=PA&page=1&display=25&sort=PublicationYearMSSort%20desc,AuthorSort%20asc&sr=1

Joseph A. Dake, James H. Price & Susan K. Telljohann, "The Nature and Extent of Bullying at School," Journal of School Health, May 2003 (pp. 173 – 180).
http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1746-1561.2003.tb03599.x/full

K. F. Osterman (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. Review of Educational Research 70(3), (pp. 323-367)
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/00346543070003323

Kann L, Olsen EO, McManus T, et al. Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9–12 – United States and Selected Sites, 2015. MMWR Surveill Summ 2016;65(No. SS-9):1–202. DOI:
http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6509a1

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2016) Digest of Education Statistics. Available at

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_105.20.asp?current=yes

Resources

GLSEN Safe Space Kit: Be an ALLY to LGBTQ Youth!
https://www.glsen.org/safespace

The Trevor Project Support Center
http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/support-center

Let's Get Real (Video)
www.newday.com/film/lets-get-real

Movement Advanced Project: Safe Schools Laws
https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/safe_school_laws/bullying

Resources for an LGBTQ-Inclusive School
http://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/school-tips/lgbtq-inclusive-schools-what/

Bluestein, Jane. Creating Emotionally Safe Schools: A Guide for Educators and Parents. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2001. Print.
http://www.hcibooks.com/p-3530-creating-emotionally-safe-schools.aspx

Local School Climate Survey
https://www.glsen.org/research/school-climate-survey

Issue 5: Does School Safety Influence Standards of Learning Achievement? Virginia High School Safety Study.
https://curry.virginia.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/resourceLibrary/vhss-one-pager-issue-5.pdf

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Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing evaluation for Parts 1 and 3, and "Proficient" for each component in Part 2."

Part 1. Overview Questions

400-600 words

Describe your school's current climate with regards to addressing LGBTQ issues.
Include:
Barriers or supports in creating a safe space for all students.
Safety issues for LGBTQ students.
School/district/state policy considerations inclusive of LGBTQ students.
Resources and strategies needed or used for creating safe schools.
Educator and student awareness of support services for students

- **Passing:** Responses clearly address all four points using personal examples and supportive evidence that clearly illustrates the educator's current school climate with regards to LGBTQ issues. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples / Artifacts

Artifact 1: School Climate Survey

Create and administer a school climate survey for students and/or staff. The survey should include questions regarding student/staff perceptions of their school climate with regards to LGBTQ issues, including biased language, harassment, and the availability of resources and supports.

Submit a report of your findings. (400 to 600 word limit)

Include:

1. charts and/or graphs to support your findings.

2. a reflection on whether the data confirms or contradicts your initial views regarding your current school climate.

Artifact 2: Lesson/Activity

Design a lesson or activity for students. The lesson or activity could include:

Examining school safety issues with regard to LGBTQ issues.

Issues facing students who identify as LGBTQ.

Bullying and/or harassment

School/district/state policy considerations when addressing LGBTQ issues

Discussions about bullying of LGBTQ students

Develop empathy for others

Think about the underlying prejudice and bias that foster bullying

Develop tangible skills for coping with bullying

Learn how to become an ally and intervene successfully

Provide artifacts from the lesson with a reflection of the lesson (200 to 300 word limit). This could include:

Student work examples

2- to 10-minute video of the lesson being taught

Photo slideshow with captions of the lesson implementation

Artifact 3: Promotional Project

Create a classroom, school, or district-wide PSA for your safe space inclusive of LGBTQ students that illustrates the holistic network of supports for LGBTQ students (i.e., the establishment of a GSA chapter, or community mentorship program through the guidance office). This could be in the format of a poster or video (2-10 minutes).

null	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Survey	The survey has clear instructions.	The survey has some clear instructions.	The survey does not have clear instructions.
	The survey assesses the safety and overall environment of the local schools, inclusive of LGBTQ-related issues.	The survey assesses some of the safety and overall environment of the local schools, inclusive of LGBTQ-related issues.	The survey does not assesses the safety and overall environment of the local schools, inclusive of LGBTQ-related issues.
	The questions are appropriate, clear, and easy to answer.	Some of the questions are appropriate, clear, and easy to answer.	The questions are not appropriate, clear, or easy to answer.
	The report clearly describes the results of the survey.	The report clearly describes some of the results of the survey.	The report does not clearly describe the results of the survey.
	The report includes charts or graphs to support the results.	The report includes charts or graphs but they do not support the results.	The report does not includes charts or graphs to support the results.
	The report includes a reflection comparing the results with your initial thoughts on school climate.	The report includes a reflection but does not compare the results with your initial thoughts on school climate.	The report does not include a reflection comparing the results with your initial thoughts on school climate.
	Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure	Grammar, spelling, and	Grammar, spelling, and

	enhance clear communication. 400 to 600 words	sentence structure allow for clear communication. 500-word limit	sentence structure may inhibit clear communication. 500-word limit
Artifact 2: Lesson/Activity	Topic is relevant to the learners. The objectives were designed to meet the needs of the survey results and clearly stated what learners would be able to do at the end of the lesson/activity A variety of audio/visual materials were identified and used to support the lesson/activity, allowing learners to acquire information/skills via a variety of modalities. Required vocabulary was identified and taught for the lesson/activity. The lesson/activity is inclusive of LGBTQ issues. Appropriate artifacts were submitted with the lesson/activity, including the reflection. were submitted with the lesson/activity, including the reflection.	Topic is partially relevant to the learners. The objectives somewhat meet the needs of the survey results and sometimes stated what learners would be able to do at the end of the lesson/activity Limited audio/visual materials were identified and used to support the lesson/activity, allowing learners to acquire information/skills via a variety of modalities. Some of ? the required vocabulary was identified and taught for the lesson/activity. The lesson/activity is partially? inclusive of LGBTQ issues. Irrelevant artifacts were submitted with the lesson/activity, including the reflection.	Topic is not relevant to the learners. The objectives were not designed to meet the needs of the survey results and did not clearly state what learners would be able to do at the end of the lesson/activity No audio/visual materials were identified and used to support the lesson/activity, allowing learners to acquire information/skills via a variety of modalities. Required vocabulary was not identified and taught for the lesson/activity. The lesson/activity is not inclusive of LGBTQ issues. No artifacts were submitted with the lesson/activity, including the reflection.
Artifact 3: Promotional Project	Poster/video is clear and the content is easily viewed and identified. Graphics used in the poster/video reflect an exceptional degree of creativity in their creation and/or display. Poster/video is related to the topic and makes it easier to understand. The poster/video is exceptionally relevant in terms of design and	Poster/video is somewhat clear and some content is easily viewed and identified. Graphics used in the poster/video reflect some degree of creativity in their creation and/or display. Poster/video is partially related to the topic and makes it somewhat easier to understand. The poster/video is	Poster/video is not clear and the content is not easily viewed and identified. Graphics used in the poster/video do not reflect creativity in their creation and/or display. Poster/video is not related to the topic and is not easy to understand. The poster/video is not relevant in terms of

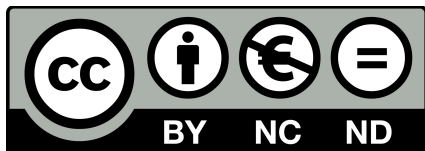|		
layout and is presented in a clear and neat manner.	somewhat relevant in terms of design, layout, and neatness.	design, layout, and neatness.

Reflection

400-600 words

Submit a reflection on the development and implementation of a safe space for your school. Make sure to include:

Reflections on this plan: What was the impact of the implemented survey and lesson? Note the successes, challenges, and opportunities.

Reflections on self and others: What did you learn about yourself? Where were you, and where are you now? How do you know the lesson selected to implement was effective in helping achieve the desired goal?

- **Passing:** Reflections include thoughtful analysis of the impact of the implemented plan and the challenges and successes. Reflections also include thoughtful self-analysis and provided clear descriptions of how the lesson was effective in achieving the desired goal.