

BLOG

Supporting LGBTQ Young People In The Classroom And Beyond

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Supporting LGBTQ Young People In The Classroom And Beyond with Keygan Miller (they/them)

It's almost time for students to go back to school, which can be stressful, confusing, and overwhelming for some. Especially in a political climate where LGBTQ identities are under attack by federal and state legislatures, LGBTQ young people could be going back to a hostile or unsafe environment this fall — the opposite of what a school should be.

After serving as a youth educator, I came to The Trevor Project with a desire to educate folks, mostly youth-serving adults, about LGBTQ issues and about suicide prevention and mental health.

The back-to-school season is quickly approaching, and it has me thinking about the environments young people could be going back to. This current political moment, where LGBTQ people are being legislatively attacked, doesn't just impact folks today.

This is why allies and organizations like The Trevor Project have to be even louder in affirming LGBTQ young people and providing safe environments for them to thrive — and a safe classroom environment is essential.

So how do we provide a safe classroom? Start with using and teaching empathy — your students will follow your lead. Do not tolerate any bullying or harassment in your space.

Educate yourself on the nuances of LGBTQ identities and issues impacting LGBTQ folks. Make sure you understand the basics (The Trevor Project resource center is a great place to start), and then dive deeper.

Use inclusive practices. For example, on the first day, have the students tell you their names rather than reading off the roster. If you want to, introduce yourself with your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc) and invite your students to do the same.

If you make a mistake about someone's names or pronouns, acknowledge it, apologize quickly, and then do better! Subtleties also go a long way — do you have a lovely piece of artwork that is in the trans flag colors? Do you have a small pronoun button that you can wear on your lanyard?

To LGBTQ young people, I want you to know that most people in the world want you to be you. Sometimes they don't know the right words or terms. Sometimes they don't know how to best support you. Sometimes you being you changes their lives in ways that they would have never imagined.

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