



FAQs FOR ALL PPS EMPLOYEES REGARDING LGBTQ ISSUES
(LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning)
Portland Public Schools is an equal opportunity educator and employer

Portland Public Schools is committed to providing a welcoming and supportive environment for our LGBTQ students, families and employees. Our LGBTQ students must feel safe and supported at school, so that they can thrive academically and socially. Our LGBTQ families are similarly entitled to an environment in which they are fully included in supporting their student's education. Our LGBTQ employees are entitled to a workplace where they are welcomed and affirmed. PPS prohibits any discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity and discrimination is prohibited under state law (ORS 659A.003).

The goal of this FAQ document is to provide consistent guidance to all PPS employees so that every school and department creates and sustains a welcoming, supportive environment for LGBTQ students, families and employees.

What does "LGBTQ" stand for? "LGBTQ" means lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning.

- Lesbian refers to a female with romantic and emotional attractions to females.
- Gay refers to a male with romantic and emotional attractions to males; it is also used as a general term for people who are attracted to people of their own gender.
- Bisexual refers to someone with romantic and emotional attractions to both males and females.
- Transgender refers to people whose gender identity is different from their gender assigned at birth.
- Queer is an umbrella term to refer to all LGBTQ people.
- Questioning refers to people who are questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

There are many other terms that you may hear used. The expectation for creating a welcoming environment and the policy against discrimination, applies to sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity, regardless of the terms used. For more information about terminology, please refer to An Ally's Guide to Terminology at: www.lgbtmap.org/effective-messaging/allys-guide-to-terminology.

What should I do if I HEAR a student say "That's so gay" or a similar derogatory comment?

Use of slurs based on sexual orientation or gender identity is a violation of the PPS policy against bullying and harassment (www.pps.k12.or.us/files/board/4_30_061_AD.pdf). If you hear name-calling, bullying or harassment, deal with it immediately. Describe what you saw and label the behavior. "I heard you use the word 'fag' and that's a derogatory term. It is considered name-calling and that is unacceptable." Point out to the offender that those words are hurtful, and the behavior is against our school and district rules. Treat this incident as you would any hurtful speech. Document the incident and the students involved, and give the information to the administration.

If possible, engage students in a conversation about restrictive gender norms and/or homophobia. For example, "Sometimes people consider certain colors to be 'girl colors' or 'boy colors,' but at this school anyone can use whatever colors they like," or "There can be a lot of pressure on boys to act tough or behave in a certain way to be masculine. But if you don't do that it doesn't mean you're gay. Besides, there's nothing wrong with being gay, so it hurts people to use it as an insult.

Let the targeted student know the school does not tolerate actions such as these and that you are sorry this incident occurred. Asking what the student might need or offering additional support of some kind might need to be done privately versus publicly.

How should I respond when a student comes to me and says that someone called them* queer, gay or a similar derogatory comment? (*Note: In regard to gender identity, the pronoun “them” is more inclusive than “him” or “her”.)

Tell the student it was important that they told a staff member what happened. Assure the student that calling someone an offensive name is disrespectful and against school and district policies. Ask where and when the incident happened, and if they can identify witnesses who were close enough to hear the comment. Inform the student that you will be notifying the administration of the incident. Encourage the student to do likewise. Offer to go with them. The student might be hesitant at this point because of fear of retaliation. Reassure the student that any further attempt at harassment by the intimidator will result in serious consequences. Don't state any specific consequences because that is not your decision.

Even if the student chooses not to speak directly to the administration, you are required to immediately report the incident.

How should I respond when a student confides they might be LGBTQ?

Appreciate the courage it took for the student to confide in you. One of the best ways to support a student is to sit and listen. Asking questions can convey compassion and caring. If the student is hesitant to talk after the initial coming out, but clearly wishes to have a conversation, some suggested questions might be:

- ◆ Besides me, with whom have you felt comfortable sharing this information?
- ◆ How do you think your family might respond?
- ◆ How might other adults in your life support you?
- ◆ Are you feeling safe in our school? Why or why not?
- ◆ What kind of support would you like from me and any other adults in this school?
- ◆ Would you like help finding resources that can give you information or support?

Assure the student that you realize this was told to you in confidence. Indicate that you won't tell anyone—even their parents or guardians—unless (a) the student gives you permission (b) the student asks you for help that would require you to share this information or (c) you believe the student's safety is at risk. Keep that promise. In the case of (c), the educator should discuss the safety concern with the principal to determine next steps.

If the student appears to need emotional support, suggest going to a sympathetic counselor at the school, calling a hotline, contacting the school's Gay Straight Alliance (if one exists in your building), or an LGBTQ youth group in the city. Offering help is important, but don't assume that all students need it. Sometimes they just need someone to talk to that they can trust and who can acknowledge what they're feeling. Besides more general resources mentioned at the end of this document, Portland has a youth resource center for support.

SMYRC - Sexual & Gender Minority Youth Resource Center
Address: 2406 NE Sandy Blvd, Suite 100
Portland, OR 97232
Phone: 503.872.9664
E-Mail: Info@SMYRC.org

What if an LGBTQ student's family doesn't support their LGBTQ identity?

This is a challenging situation, since we must balance our goal of supporting students with our need to maintain open relationships with families and respect their beliefs. Especially for students from religious or cultural backgrounds with small, close-knit communities, there can be significant pressure on students and families. You should confer with your building administrator in such circumstances. You may also want to confer with Student Services.

It is a student's decision whether or not to talk with their family. Parents may benefit from support and information if they are struggling to come to terms with their child's identity.

A resource for parents is Parent and Friends of Lesbians and Gays or PFLAG (www.pflagpdx.org). The local group also has a Black Chapter, created by and for Portland's black community.

TransActive is a local organization that works with gender variant children, youth and their families (www.transactiveonline.org).

What if I want to have materials that address LGBTQ issues in my classroom? What if I want to do a lesson in this area?

It is important to have age-appropriate materials and lessons that support LGBTQ students. For instance, in younger grades, it is helpful to have books that reflect diverse families, including ones with two moms or two dads. It is important to convey the message that LGBTQ families are healthy, normal and welcomed. There are lessons available regarding family diversity from a variety of resources. In older grades, it is fine to talk about current LGBTQ topics (such as gay marriage) as they relate to your subject area. You may want to confirm that a book is approved by the American Library Association (check with your school librarian). If you have questions about whether a certain book or lesson is appropriate, discuss it with your administrator. Keeping the administration informed can help you better support your students and respond to any concerns from parents.

If it is your desire to have materials available for students who might be questioning their sexuality and are looking for more information or resources, you might consider creating a resource center in your classroom featuring materials provided from the counseling office. The variety of topics could include information on college, careers and self-help as well as LGBTQ issues so that materials would be readily available to all students seeking LGBTQ information.

Should we be doing anything in particular when we are aware that we have families with two moms and/or two dads?

Make sure they feel welcome! Our responsibility to families with two moms and/or two dads is the same as that to families of any other configuration. For younger students, you may want to confirm how the student refers to each parent (i.e. "dad" and "poppa") so you can use similar language. Depending on the student's age, there might be questions that arise from other students when same-sex parents come to school or school sponsored events. Ask the family how you can best support them and if there are ways they would prefer you respond to such questions.

How should I respond if another employee makes an anti-LGBTQ or similar derogatory comment?

At Portland Public Schools, it is an expectation that we all work toward maintaining a culture of mutual respect by ending harassment, bullying, and disparaging remarks. If you hear derogatory comments, you should address your concerns with the person. Let them know that the comment was offensive and hurtful and you expect the behavior to stop. At this point there are several follow-up options an employee might choose:

- ◆ Engage the person in a discussion to help the individual understand how the comment was hurtful.
- ◆ Inform the individual that what occurred is against Portland Public Schools policies and Oregon law.
- ◆ Make note of the person, date, time, words spoken by both of you, any witnesses who might have been there, and the place in the building where it occurred.
- ◆ Share the noted information with your supervisor.

If there is another occurrence by the same individual, there are several options:

- ◆ Inform your supervisor of the second occurrence and present any notes from the previous one if you created such a document.
- ◆ Contact Human Resources for help and direction.
- ◆ Write the person a letter specifying what they have done that you consider offensive or harassing and that you want it to stop. Keep a copy. Again, make note of everything, documenting the incident that occurred. You might choose to wait and see if your letter is effective or you might present a copy of your letter and notes to your supervisor.

I want to learn and do more to support our LGBTQ students, staff and families. What are good resources?

There are a number of websites that our school district has used to gather and share information:

GLSEN - Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (www.glsen.org) is an organization for students, families, and teachers that tries to effect positive change in schools.

The Safe Schools Coalition (www.safeschoolscoalition.org) is an international, public/private partnership in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth. They have a variety of resources to help combat bullying and harassment to make our schools a safer place for our students.

Welcoming Schools (www.welcomingschools.org) offers tools, lessons and resources about embracing family diversity, avoiding gender stereotyping and ending bullying and name-calling in elementary schools. The information and supportive resources are helpful regardless of age. It offers an LGBTQ inclusive approach that is also inclusive of the many types of diversity found in our communities.

Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition (www.oregonsafeschools.org) offers low cost trainings for schools or other groups wanting to create LGBTQ-welcoming environments.

Basic Rights Oregon has developed *Our Families* (www.basicrights.org/ourfamilies/), a community-based education program that raises the visibility, experiences and public support of LGBT families of color within predominantly straight communities.

To better support transgender students and families at PPS, please refer to the following General Counsel's guidance memo: [www.pps.k12.or.us/files/general-counsel/Transgender_FAQ_final_2012_\(2\).pdf](http://www.pps.k12.or.us/files/general-counsel/Transgender_FAQ_final_2012_(2).pdf).

Who can I go to with more questions?

There are many people and departments at PPS that can help with questions you may have regarding support for our LGBTQ students, families and employees. We suggest that you start with your direct supervisor. In addition, the contacts in the following departments can provide additional support:

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| Human Resources: | Bonnie Gray | 503-916-3386 | bgray1@pps.net |
| The Office of Equity: | Jeanine Fukuda | 503-916-3769 | jfukuda@pps.net |
| Student Supports: | Tammy Jackson | 503-916-2000, ext. 71004 | tjackson@pps.net |
| General Counsel: | Jollee Patterson | 503-916-3570 | jpatters@pps.net |

There is also a local community support and advocacy group, LGBTQ Educators and Allies, whose email address is: OregonLGBTQeducators@gmail.com

ITEMS SPECIFICALLY FOR LGBTQ EMPLOYEES

What are my rights? Who can I go to for help?

You are entitled to a workplace in which you are welcomed and supported. Portland Public Schools prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. If you feel you are being discriminated against, or your school or department is not a welcoming environment, please contact your supervisor, Human Resources, or your employee union. (659A.003 Purpose of ORS Chapter 659A—Unlawful Discrimination in Employment, Public Accommodations and Real Property Transactions; Administrative and Civil Enforcement)

Is it okay to be "out" in the workplace?

For all PPS employees, it is up to you to decide how much information you wish to share about your personal life, including your sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTQ employees have the right to be “out” in the workplace whether you work in a school or other district facility. LGBTQ employees should feel just as comfortable as straight or cisgender (when an individual's self-perception of their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth) employees in sharing age and content appropriate information about their partners, families and personal life. For instance, it is appropriate to share the name of a same-sex partner, or to have a picture of a same-sex partner on your desk.

How do I respond if students ask me about a picture of my partner or other questions about my personal life?

It is appropriate to confirm that this person is your partner, significant other, husband or wife. It is up to you whether you want to answer additional questions such as the partner's type of work, if you have children, if you live in the same house or if you are married. One response regarding questions of marriage is that in some countries and in some states of the United States, same-sex couples can marry. That is not true at this time in Oregon.

If the student continues to ask questions about this, remember, the personal lives of employees whether straight or gay, transgender or cis-gender, should not be the main focus of classroom conversation and activities. Move the conversation along to the lesson at hand just as you would with any other personal discussion that you have with students. Employees should maintain appropriate staff/student boundaries. You can respond at any time that you don't discuss your personal life with students.

If a particular student continues to ask questions, you should consider referring the student to the counselor or the administrator.

If you have any concerns or questions about being “out” in your school, you may want to talk with your building administrator, Human Resources or your employee union for support.

Do my employee benefits through PPS extend to my same-sex partner?

Portland Public Schools offers a comprehensive benefits package designed to provide employees and their families with a wide range of benefits. Employees may include domestic partners (same or opposite sex) in their health insurance benefits. Be aware that the cost of the medical coverage given to domestic partners is considered income for federal tax purposes, so your income tax will be greater. If you are enrolling a domestic partner, the domestic partnership must have been established for at least six months preceding the effective date of coverage. A Certificate of Registered Domestic Partnership or a notarized Affidavit of Domestic Partnership must accompany the enrollment form. This Affidavit can be found on PPS Inside by clicking on Departments > Human Resources > Benefits. The Affidavit is on the right side of the page.

ITEMS SPECIFICALLY FOR TRANSGENDER EMPLOYEES

I don't feel comfortable using the bathroom of my identified gender and as far as I know, there are no unisex bathrooms in my work location. What should I do?

This issue requires us to consider the need to support our transgender employees while also doing our best to ensure the comfort of all employees. Transgender employees must be allowed to use the bathroom that corresponds to the employee's identified gender (as opposed to their biological sex).

If you feel there is a need for greater privacy, speak to your supervisor about the availability of an alternative restroom such as a single staff "unisex" restroom. If an alternative is not available, your supervisor will work with senior management to help resolve the situation.

I am interested in transitioning to my identified gender on the job. What's the process I would go through to transition at PPS?

Transgender employees have the right to transition to their identified gender on the job. Transitioning in the workplace is a multifaceted experience and Portland Public Schools will be there to support you and help you with the process.

We recommend that you communicate your plans with your immediate supervisor. As the process moves along, keeping your supervisor informed can help eliminate some of the work anxiety that comes with this major life change. The Human Resources Department can provide information regarding name change, applicable benefits, possible need for a medical leave, and other supports. PPS has available for all employees the services of the Employee Assistance Program: <https://www.myrbh.com/> (access code = OEBC), with many of those services available for free. The organization TransActive <http://www.transactiveonline.org/index.php> is an Oregon and Washington group that has a great deal of additional support information.