

Four Step Guide to Supporting 2SLGBTQI Students

FOR TEACHERS



Egale's *Still in Every Class in Every School* report revealed that despite important improvements in the last decade, there is still a long way to go in creating safer, more inclusive schools for 2SLGBTQI youth.¹ Combined with increasing levels of anti-2SLGBTQI hostility in the community, students' sense of personal safety, school attendance, wellbeing, and academic achievement are being greatly impacted.² **The importance of supporting 2SLGBTQI youth and colleagues today remains as clear as ever.**

If one of your students is experiencing anti-2SLGBTQI related hate or anxiety related to their identity, use these four steps to help guide you in supporting them. Remember that you are not alone in advocating safer and more accepting school environment. Egale is available for consultation at any stage along the way.

¹ Peter, T., Campbell, C.P., & Taylor, C. (2021). Still in every class in every school: Final report on the second climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

² Morning Consult (2022). Issues Impacting LGBTQ Youth. The Trevor Project. https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/TrevorProject_Public1.pdf

1) Validate your feelings

As an educator, you may have your own emotions and reactions when a student shares sensitive information with you, whether about themselves or something they have experienced. If you are a 2SLGBTQI educator yourself, you may be particularly impacted. Allow yourself time to recognize and process what you are feeling.

Ask Yourself

- ❓ What feelings do I have after hearing about the experiences of my student or a student I'm supporting?
- ❓ How can I acknowledge my feelings and support myself so that I can best show up to advocate for my student?

Remember:

In the moment, it can be difficult to know how best to move forward in supporting your student. It is okay to be uncertain. You are not expected to be an expert. Work collaboratively with your student to determine the best way to handle whatever they may be going through.

2) Listen and support

It's important to acknowledge your student's feelings and reactions to their experiences. You can do this by actively listening and offering affirmation. Be empathetic, non-judgemental, and avoid assumptions. When a student shares something vulnerable with you, it is a sign that you are someone they trust. It's important to honour this trust.

Ask Yourself

- ? How can I hold space for this student and listen with intention?
- ? What feelings is my student describing?
- ? How does the student want me to handle the situation?
- ? How can I avoid dismissing or minimizing the situation to ensure they are supported?
- ? If there are limits to confidentiality, how can I communicate this to my student?

Remember:

2SLGBTQI students are the experts of their own lives. Your role isn't to have all the answers. What students are looking for is someone who will listen respectfully and hold space for them as a supportive adult while they process their experiences. Often, the goal is simply to facilitate their self-reflection and act as a sounding board as they develop on their journey.

If your student is in distress or immediate crisis, use your best judgement to assess what the student might need in that moment. There are increasing levels of 'distress' – they may need space to express themselves, support navigating conversations with their caregivers, or access to emergency professional supports.

3) Make your classroom and curriculum more inclusive

One of the most accessible ways to support 2SLGBTQI students and demonstrating allyship is by incorporating 2SLGBTQI identities and experiences in your classroom. This can include visual representation and signals such as flags or stickers, ensuring readings and materials include diverse people and family types, and engaging in classroom discussions that foster empathy and critical thinking around questions of 2SLGBTQI equity and justice.

Ask Yourself

- ? What forms of 2SLGBTQI representation exist in my classroom?
- ? Who are important 2SLGBTQI figures related to the subjects I teach?
- ? How can I make my students feel safe and included?
- ? How can I make it clear to my students that I support them?

Remember:

Bringing inclusivity into the classroom can be a daunting task, but you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Often the questions teachers have about how to include 2SLGBTQI voices have already been answered by others. Collaborating with other educators and looking online for existing resources can help you identify the most promising opportunities for your own classroom.

4) Take further action – at school and beyond

Sometimes 2SLGBTQI students will require your support beyond your classroom, such as advocating with school or board leaders about school-wide changes or helping them to identify resources in the community. Your advocacy can be life changing. When you advocate for others, it shows you care about their wellbeing and want them to succeed. Your actions can support positive self-image, disrupt harm, and ensure all students get the most out of their education.

Ask Yourself

- ❓ What outcomes is the student hoping for and what steps can I take to support that?
- ❓ How involved does the student want their family of origin to be in these conversations?
- ❓ If there is hesitation from school administration, what is the biggest point of concern – did you get a sense there was space for negotiation?
- ❓ What community-based options are available to support the student?

Remember:

The positive impacts of advocacy often extend beyond the person or group being advocated for. Seeing affirming adults stand up for those around them and for causes they believe in sends a strong message about the power within each of us to foster a world in which every person is valued and can thrive. If your initial advocacy efforts are unsuccessful, seek out alternative routes to getting your student's needs heard and addressed. Egale is available for consultation at any stage along the way.

Additional Resources

- **Egale Canada - Draw The Line Against Transphobic Violence**

<https://egale.ca/draw-the-line-atv/>

- **Egale Canada - Relearn and React Series**

<https://egale.ca/awareness/relearn-and-react-reapprendre-et-reagir/>

- **Egale Canada - Tackling anti-2SLGBTQI Cyberbullying**

<https://egale.ca/awareness/tackling-anti-2slgbtqi-cyberbullying-in-schools/>

- **It Gets Better Canada**

<https://itgetsbettercanada.org/stories/>

- **Good2Talk**

<https://good2talk.ca/>

1-866-925-5454

- **Hope for Wellness Help Line**

<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

1-855-242-3310

- **Kids Help Phone**

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

1-800-668-6868

- **Talk Suicide**

<https://talksuicide.ca>

1-833-456-4566

- **Trans Lifeline**

<https://translifeline.org/>

1-877-330-6366

- **Youthspace.ca**

<http://www.youthspace.ca>

778-783-0177