



# Virtual Roundtable

## Be(com)ing an Ally: How to Support LGBTQ Students



### INTERRUPT HATE

- Know that the diversity of your students is not always visible.
- Stop people from using slurs; teach them what they mean; explain their consequences.
- Prevent fights by addressing tensions.
- Interrupt violence.
- Do not let fear prevent you from doing what you know is right.
- Recognize your biases.
- Pay attention to your students; talk to them when something seems wrong; be open to hearing about their lives beyond school; if you are unable to address their concerns, connect them with someone who can.
- Familiarize yourself with community resources.
- Recognize allies in the context in which you work; connect with them.

### FOSTER STUDENT AGENCY

- Accepting a broad range of texts in order to include and draw on students' strengths
- Acknowledging that different contents are appropriate in different contexts and that this benefits youth because it gives them access to diverse perspectives
- Valuing and integrating a wide range of media in an effort to provide students with more ways into their schoolwork and more ways of applying what they've learned beyond school
- Including authors and other people that represent diverse populations (name the diversity so that young people can see they are not alone)
- Inviting, but not requiring, students to draw from their life experiences as they learn.
- Responding to students in genuine, thoughtful, and careful ways when they draw from their life experiences
- Engaging youth in pedagogical decisions

### PROMOTE STUDENT ACTIVISM

- Speak kind words to outsiders; listen.
- Recognize reading and writing as having life-saving potential for some—but not all—young people.
- Co-create a safe-enough space for and with marginalized students; protect this space.
- Educate students and colleagues about equity and diversity issues; provoke reflection around issues of oppression; analyze hate-based language with students; provide related resources.

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- Be a part of designing and implementing equity and diversity policies.
- Help students construct their interests in ways suitable for school.
- Take student efforts at activism seriously; support them.

### NURTURE STUDENT ALLIES

- Recognize your complicity in oppressing marginalized populations, whether by ignoring homophobia, hindering ally behavior, or otherwise.
- Assert an ally identity and work diligently to develop it.
- Believe that some of your students are be(com)ing allies; create contexts in which this is acceptable.
- Start a GSA; advertise the GSA; be explicit about the nature of the group.
- Select, read, recommend, and discuss a broad range of texts with students that both connect with their experiences as well as inform them of the experiences of people unlike them in significant ways.
- Use these texts to teach about the histories and presence of diverse populations, including but not limited to LGBTQ people.
- In the discussion of such texts, point to things allies do. Include their successes and struggles.
- Name, too the pleasures and challenges of marginalized people.
- In discussions of desires, attractions, and dating, be open to those not defined rigidly.
- Initiate and facilitate conversations across differences, including with parents and administrators.

### BE (COME) AN ALLY

- Brace yourself. There are risks involved.
- Never forget your privilege.
- Keep reading, watching, talking, listening, thinking, and feeling.
- Provide students with opportunities to do the same.
- Choose not to censor topics that acknowledge diversity in sexual orientations and gender expressions.
- Remember that just as there are some people who are uncomfortable engaging with topics pertinent to LGBTQ people, there are others who are uncomfortable not doing so.
- Celebrate the successes of the community, including your own.
- Forgive yourselves and one another for embodying hateful values, love yourselves and one another for fighting them, and challenge yourselves and one another to keep up the fight.
- Be open to connecting with allies where you least expect them.



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She is the author of *Interrupting Hate: Homophobia in Schools and What Literacy Can Do About It* and the co-editor of *Acting Out!: Combating Homophobia Through Teacher Activism*.



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### References

Blackburn, M.V. (2012) *Interrupting hate: Homophobia in schools and what literacy can do about it*. New York: Teachers College Press