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.
Virtual Roundtable
Be(com)ing an Ally:
How to Support LGBTQ Students

- 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 LGBTQQ 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 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.
Dr. Mollie Blackburn is a professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the Ohio State University. Her research focuses on literacy, language, and social change, with particular attention to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth (LGBTQ) and the teachers who serve them. She has published in journals such as *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, and *Teachers College Record*, among others.

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*. 
References