



## Vocabulary and Definitions

- Sex:** A person's biological and anatomical identity.
- Gender:** Gender covers a wide range of issues relevant to all people. It relates to femininity and masculinity and it includes the following pieces:
- Gender identity** - one's understanding or feeling about whether one is emotionally or spiritually female or male or both or neither, regardless of one's biological sex.
- Gender characteristics** - characteristics such as facial hair and vocal pitch.
- Gender expression** - the way a person expresses her or his gender, through gestures, movement, dress and grooming.
- Gender nonconformity** - means not expressing gender or not having gender characteristics or a gender identity that conforms to others' expectations. Much, perhaps most, of the harassment of LGBT students experience is related to gender and gender nonconformity.
- Sexual Orientation:** Sexual orientation is the term that describes whether a person is attracted to members of the same sex (gay or lesbian), to members of the opposite sex (heterosexual), or to members of both sexes (bisexual).
- Sexual Preference:** Avoid using this archaic term; it implies a casual choice. Sexual orientation is the correct term.
- Lifestyle:** Lifestyle is an inaccurate term sometimes used to describe the lives of LGBTQ people. There is no gay lifestyle, just as there is no straight or heterosexual lifestyle.
- Heterosexual:** Heterosexual is the clinical synonym for *straight*.
- Pre-K & Grade K-8: Heterosexual refers to a man who loves a woman or a woman who loves a man.
- Grades 9-12: Heterosexual refers to a person who is physically and/or emotionally attracted to members of the opposite sex.
- Homosexual:** Homosexual is the clinical synonym for *gay*.
- Avoid using this term; it is archaic and distancing. Though sometimes used to describe behavior, the term same-sex is preferable. When re-

ferring to people, the use of the term homosexual is considered derogatory.

**Gay:** Pre-K & Grades K-8: Gay refers to a man who loves another man or a woman who loves another woman.

Grades 9-12: Gay Refers to a person who is physically and/or emotionally attracted to members of the same sex (a woman might prefer to call herself lesbian).

**Lesbian:** Pre-K & Grades K-8: lesbian refers to a woman who loves another woman.

Grades 9-12: Lesbians refers to a woman who is physically and/or emotionally attracted to other women.

**Bisexual:** Bisexual refers to a person who is attracted to members of both sexes.

**Bi:** A slang term that refers to a bisexual person.

**Transgender:** Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity, gender characteristics, or gender expressions cross traditionally accepted gender roles, and includes transsexuals, transvestites, intersex people, and other gender nonconformists.

**LGBT:** LGBT is the string of letters that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. Some people use LGBTQ, to include youth who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. You might even see more letters on occasion: roll with it and ask what they stand for.

**Queer:** Queer is an umbrella term used to describe LGBT people; it has been reclaimed by some LGBT people from its derogatory use by others and is used to express pride in being LGBT.

**Cross-Dress:** To cross-dress is to wear clothing most often associated (in one's culture and historical timeframe) with people of the other gender.

**Intersexed:** Intersexed is an adjective that describes a person who is born with genitals or chromosomes that are not clearly male or female. At least 1 in 2,000 babies are born with genitals that make it difficult to determine their sex. The archaic term is hermaphrodite.

**Coming Out:** Coming out is the process of recognizing and acknowledging non-heterosexual or transgender identity to oneself and then sharing it with others. Developmentally, many LGBT and questioning individuals initially pretend (actively or through silence) to be heterosexual and congruent. Coming out means dropping the secrecy and pretense and becoming more emotionally integrated. This usually occurs in stages and is a non-linear, life-long process.

- Outing:** To *out* someone is to publicly reveal the sexual orientation of someone who has chosen not to share it.
- Stereotype:** An oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for individual differences. Even positive stereotypes, such as “Asian are good at math and computers,” have a negative impact.
- Prejudice (a feeling):** Prejudice is pre-judging, making a decision about a person or group of people without sufficient knowledge. Prejudicial thinking is based on stereotypes. Prejudice is a feeling or attitude.
- Discrimination (an action):** Discrimination is the behavior that can follow prejudicial thinking. Discrimination is the denial of justice and fair treatment in many arenas, including employment, housing, and political rights.
- Homophobia:** Homophobia is a term that is often used generally to describe a strong negative bias toward lesbian, gay and bisexual people, but the term isn't inclusive in its origins and strict meaning, so you may want to use anti-LGBT bias.
- Transphobia:** Transphobia is a term that is used to describe a strong negative bias toward transgender people. Using anti-LGBT bias can be more inclusive.
- Heterosexism:** Heterosexism is the belief that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality or bisexuality.
- Derogatory:** Derogatory is an adjective used to describe offensive comments or slurs which make fun of someone's race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, disability or gender.
- Bigotry:** Bigotry is prejudice and/or discrimination against one or all members of a particular group based on negative perceptions of their beliefs and practices or on negative group stereotypes.
- Bias-Motivated Incident:** A bias-motivated incident is a non-criminal act (e.g., name-calling, verbal abuse, etc.) motivated by bias, hate, or prejudice towards another person's real or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, disability or gender.
- Hate Crime:** A hate crime is a criminal act (e.g. graffiti, threatened violence, hitting, etc.) motivated by bias, hate, or prejudice towards another person's real or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, disability or gender.
- GSA:** GSA is an abbreviation for Gay-Straight Alliance, an alliance of student dedicated to fighting homophobia on campus and improving the lives of LGBT students.
- Ally:** An ally is a person who supports you but who, for whatever reason, is not a potential member of your organization or coalition.