



Understanding Myths and Misconceptions about LGBTQ2 Youth at School

Challenging stereotypes, fear and misinformation to create safe places for LGBTQ2 students

In reference to the article ***The Straight Facts: Eight Common Myths and Misconceptions about LGBTQ2 Youth***
By Dr. Kristopher Wells

DISCUSSION LEADER CHEAT SHEET: 5 key points from the article

5 minutes

AIM: TO INTRODUCE THE SESSION AND TODAY'S THEME:

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES, FEAR AND MISINFORMATION ABOUT LGBTQ2 YOUTH AT SCHOOL

Myth	Myth Buster
1 It's just a phase	Being LGBTQ2 is an identity – not a choice, lifestyle, or phase you grow out of. In fact, youth discover their sexual orientation around age 10, yet often don't "come out" until 15 or 16 on average. Trans youth first recognize their identity around age 8.
2 LGBTQ2 youth are too flamboyant	You can't tell who LGBTQ2 youth are by simply looking at or listening to them. Just as gay men aren't all hairdressers, lesbians aren't all truck drivers, and trans kids don't all cross dress. Stereotypes trap youth in "gender boxes," limiting the full expression of their identities, hopes, and dreams.
3 Parents have the right to know	LGBTQ2 youth should always have the right to "come out" on their own terms. In fact, "outing" can be life-altering and parental rejection is a leading cause of youth homelessness and, in some provinces, it's illegal to disclose someone's LGBTQ2 identity without direct permission.
4 Gender-neutral bathrooms are unsafe	Safety and privacy fears about gender-neutral bathrooms aren't based on evidence. Gendered bathrooms can actually make trans youth view schools as unsupportive and create fears about going to the bathroom, leading to serious health complications.
5 Gay-straight alliances (GSAs) aren't needed	LGBTQ2 perspectives are left out of curriculum in many schools and "catch-all" anti-bullying policies are ineffective at protecting LGBTQ2 students. Furthermore, while 85% of Canadian educators support LGBTQ2-inclusive classrooms, 37% don't know how to create a supportive learning environment. As well, in schools without a GSA, LGBTQ2 students report feeling more socially isolated and having fewer friendships.

DISCUSS

20 minutes

AIM: TO GET EVERYONE SHARING THEIR THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS

The discussion leader can choose 3 questions from the list below or integrate questions of their own.

- ❓ The author states that little boys who like to dance or do ballet are often called “sissies” or “faggots,” while girls who like to play sports or climb trees are frequently called “lesbos” or “dykes.” **Have you ever come across this type of homophobic bullying, rooted in stereotypical beliefs, among your students? If yes, what did you say or do and, if not, what would you do?**
- ❓ The Every Teacher Project (2015) found that one in five (22%) of Canadian educators reported that other teachers were using homonegative language (e.g. “That’s so gay”) at school. **Have you had this experience? How did you, or how could you, respond to a colleague who was using this type of language?**
- ❓ The author states that LGBTQ2 youth should always have the right to “come out” on their own terms. **Have you ever had a student “come out” to you, and how did you respond? If not, how would you respond? Did you, or would you, feel equipped to offer adequate support to the student based on your knowledge and experience to date?**
- ❓ The Every Teacher Project (2015) also found that 85% of Canadian educators support LGBTQ2-inclusive classrooms, however 37% don’t know how to create a supportive learning environment. **What is your top question about LGBTQ2 youth that you would like clarified or to learn more about?**

DO IT

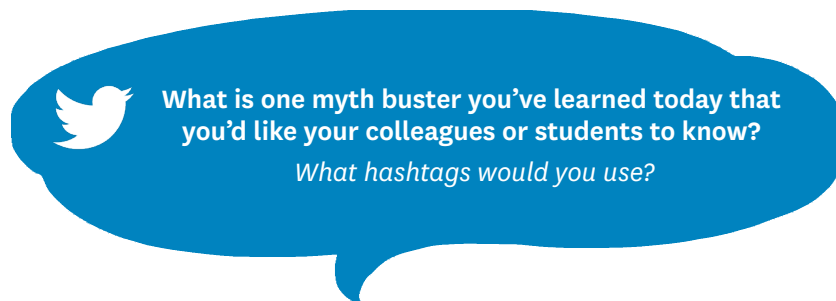
15 minutes

AIM: TO UNDERSTAND WAYS TO BUILD AWARENESS ON MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT LGBTQ2 YOUTH

Discussion leader instructions

Invite each group member to write down (or type into their mobile phone if they have Twitter) a fictional (or real) Twitter post in 140 characters or less (or 25-30 words) using the prompt below.

OPTIONAL: Group members can use the hashtag #EdCanLearning to share their learning with our online community of practice.



Share back and display

After 2-3 minutes, invite the group to read out their tweets. Support the group in thinking about ways they could shed light on their chosen myth or misconception when in the midst of an unknowing student or colleague.