



LGBTQ Definitions for Children



When children ask questions about LGBTQ words, it is often best to offer simple and direct answers. Sometimes, children aren't quite sure what they are asking, or they are just repeating something they heard on the playground, on television or at home—therefore, it is helpful to ask clarifying questions. If a student is asking because another student used the word as a slur, a teacher will also need to address the situation as bullying behavior.

Here are a few items to keep in mind when defining terms for children:

- Use examples to help children understand definitions.
- Ask questions about LGBTQ words to help students to understand differences and treat others with respect.

- If a student uses an LGBTQ term in a derogatory way, ask them if they know what it means. If they don't, give a short definition and explain how using an identity as a slur is mean and emphasize that the word is not a bad word.

The following list can serve as a starting place for educators to respond to questions about LGBTQ words. These suggested definitions can help to ensure that you feel confident in your own knowledge and ability to communicate these ideas to students. Use your own expertise to modify definitions based upon the age of your students.

Ally: A student who speaks up in the moment for someone else, comforts someone privately, or who gets help from a caring adult.

Bisexual: People can love other people of both genders. People get to love who they love.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity is the same as their sex assigned at birth (anatomy/biology).

Gay: Two people of the same gender who love each other. Two men or two women.

Gender: It's how you feel. She, he, neither or both.

Gender Binary: The idea that there are two distinct and opposite genders—male and female / boy and girl. This idea is limiting and doesn't allow for the many ways that children and adults express themselves.

Gender Expansive: This means that here at our school children get to "like what they like." Toys are toys, hair is hair, clothes are clothes. Children can express themselves fully – to be who they are without being teased or bullied.

Gender Expression: One of the many forms of expression where we share who we are with items such as our clothes and hair.

Gender Identity: How you feel—male, female, neither or both. This can be different from the anatomy that you were born with (sex assigned at birth).

Genderqueer: A person whose gender identity is neither, both or a combination of male and female.

Gender Spectrum: The idea that there are many genders and gender identities beyond the categories of boy and girl. There are many, many ways to be a person in terms of how you feel and your gender expression.

Heterosexual: Two people of different genders who love each other. A man and a woman.

Intersex: Just as our hair, eyes and noses are different. There is variation in all of our anatomy.

Lesbian: Two people of the same gender who love each other—two women.

LGBTQ: Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer.

Non-binary: People who do not identify as a boy or a girl. They sometimes feel like neither one or both. They sometimes use pronouns such as they, them, theirs.

Queer: Many people now use this word as a way to identify with and celebrate people of all gender identities and all the ways people love each other. When used in a mean way, it is a word that hurts.

Sex Assigned at Birth: When a baby is born, a doctor or midwife looks at their body/anatomy and says they are a boy or a girl. Babies can't talk yet, so they can't tell us how they feel. When they start to talk, they may say they feel like a girl or a boy or neither.

Sexual Orientation: Who you love.

Transgender or Trans: When your gender identity (how you feel) is different than what doctors/midwives assigned to you when you were born (boy/girl or sex assigned at birth).

Source: (4/2018) <http://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/definitions/youth-definitions/>