

Commonly Used Terms

Lesbian

A female who is attracted physically and emotionally to other females.

LGBTQ

A commonly used acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, transgender, two-spirited and queer identities. Sexual minority is a synonymous term.

Queer

Historically, a negative term for homosexuality. More recently, the LGBTQ communities have reclaimed the word and use it as a positive way to refer to themselves.

Transgender/Trans-identified

A person whose gender identity, outward appearance, expression and/or anatomy do not fit into conventional expectations of male or female. Often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of non-conforming gender identities and behaviours.

Two-spirited

Some Aboriginal people identify themselves as two-spirited rather than as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans-identified. Historically, in many Aboriginal cultures two-spirited persons were respected leaders and medicine people. Two-spirited persons were often accorded special status based on their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives.

More terms and expanded definitions are available on the ATA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity webpage.

LGBTQ Educational Resources

ATA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Webpage

Go to www.teachers.ab.ca, click on Diversity, Equity and Human Rights (under Issues in Education), and follow the links. The webpage provides links as well as information on resources, including,

- ♦ Gay–Straight Student Alliances in Alberta Schools: A Guide for Teachers (booklet) and a
- ♦ workshop series on sexual orientation and gender identity.

To find out more about ATA LGBTQ workshops and resources, contact the ATA Professional Development office at 477-9485 (in Edmonton), 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta).

Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities

www.sacsc.ca

- ♦ Creating Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools for LGBTQ Students: A Guide for Counsellors
- ♦ Creating Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools for LGBTQ Students: A Guide for School Administrators
- ♦ Safe and Caring Schools for Lesbian and Gay Youth: A Guide for Teachers

To order the above booklets or the Safe Spaces LGBTQ poster, brochure and sticker, contact SACSC at 447-9487 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 ext 487 (toll free in Alberta).

Videos from the National Film Board of Canada

www.nfb.ca/celebratingdiversity

Diverse Threads in Social Fabrics



Youth Understanding Youth QUILT

To read the youth artists' statements that accompany each of the panels on the quilt, please visit the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity section of the ATA website.



SAFE SPACES



SAFE SPACES

Welcome to Safe Spaces, a joint initiative of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities (SACSC). In this brochure you will find definitions and information to assist you in creating safe, caring and inclusive spaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified and queer (LGBTQ) students, as well as their allies and families.

Why do we need safe spaces for LGBTQ students in our schools?

LGBTQ students often face discrimination and prejudice in schools. Research indicates that LGBTQ students have higher rates of suicide, drug and alcohol use, smoking and feelings of isolation and despair.

Students who feel unsafe in their school are less likely to learn, whereas students who perceive their schools as accepting, safe and welcoming improve their grades and attendance, and feel more hopeful about their academic and personal future.

The ATA and SACSC Safe Spaces initiative focuses on three critical areas necessary to address discrimination and prejudice in schools: respecting human rights, respecting individuals and taking personal responsibility.

Human rights

Both the *Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Individual respect

Alberta's teachers are bound by the Professional Code of Conduct, which requires teachers to show respect for all students, including those who are or are perceived as being LGBTQ.

Everyone's responsibility

Everyone in the school is responsible for creating a safe, caring and inclusive environment and reducing homophobia and heterosexism. Here are a few strategies you can use to reduce discrimination and prejudice toward LGBTQ students in your school:

- Educate yourself about LGBTQ issues by visiting the Diversity and Human Rights section of the ATA webpage (www.teachers.ab.ca).
- Intervene in homophobic name calling when you hear it.
- Help students establish a gay—straight student alliance (GSA) or a designated safe space in your school.
- Request that an ATA LGBTQ workshop be held at your school as a professional-development opportunity.

Commonly Used Terms

Ally

A person who, irrespective of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity, supports and stands up for the human and civil rights of LGBTQ people.

Bisexual

A person who is attracted physically and emotionally to both males and females.

Gay

A person who is physically and emotionally attracted to someone of the same sex. The word *gay* can refer to both males and females, but is commonly used to identify males only.

Gender Identity

A person's internal sense of being male or female. Gender expression relates to how a person presents his or her sense of gender to society. Gender identity and gender expression are often closely linked with the terms *transgender* and *trans-identified*.

GSA

A school-based gay—straight student alliance found in some high schools in North America.

Heterosexism

The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that this sexual orientation is superior. Heterosexism is often expressed in more subtle forms than homophobia.

Homophobia

Fear or hatred of homosexuality, often exhibited by prejudice, discrimination, bullying or acts of violence.