ACTION ITEMS

In keeping with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Toronto District School Board’s policy on anti-homophobia and inclusion, we encourage you to actively engage students and staff whenever possible to ensure that everyone is made to feel welcome and accepted when they walk into our schools and into our school gymnasiums, locker rooms, and onto our playing fields. No student or staff member should feel threatened, bullied, or singled out because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We are part of an ever-growing, diverse community that believes all students can experience personal growth and reach their full potential. We believe in the individuality of each person and that inclusivity nurtures growth and knowledge. Everyone is welcome at our schools.

The TDSB believes that the LGBT voice should be recognised and valued. Homophobic attitudes and beliefs still permeate society and it is crucial that we promote critical thinking skills to challenge such beliefs and attitudes. We will not tolerate discrimination or bias against our LGBT community. This includes, but is not limited to:

* comments that harass, degrade, or insult an individual’s sexual orientation or gender;
* discriminatory gestures or demeaning language and messages; and
* physical violence or the threat of violence.

Here are some actions and activities that you and your school can implement to make everyone aware of homophobia and anti-LGBT bias and to foster an environment of inclusion for all people in the arenas of sport and physical education, and in all facets of school life:

1. **Display LGBT-inclusive materials**.

* Hang safe-space materials (posters / stickers) to let everyone know that all areas of the school (classroom, gym, etc.) are inclusive places.
* Display on classroom walls newspaper articles that deal with LGBT issues and/or post a list of famous LGBT authors, athletes, academics, etc.
* Ensure books that are LGBT focused are in your library.
* Contribute LGBT focused material for inclusion in school announcements.

Great ideas can be found in two TDSB resources:

* Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism: A K-12 Curriculum Resource Guide.
* Rainbows and Triangles: A Curriculum Document for Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism in the K-6 Classroom (2002).

1. Teach about anti-LGBT language and bias through the ten **TDSB character traits: Honesty, Integrity, Respect, Co-operation, Responsibility, Teamwork, Empathy, Fairness, Perseverance, Kindness and Caring**. Consider using the *You Can Play* video or the **OUT**SPORT TORONTO video *Then and Now*as a resource.
2. **Use the *Who Is NOBODY?* programme (www.whoisnobody.com ) at your school**. The *Who Is NOBODY?* programme helps young people figure out their unique strengths. Create a project where students can engage in real-life activities that exercise responsible citizenship, build character, and support career goals. The program is also an effective anti-bullying strategy supporting Safe School initiatives. Discuss *Who Is NOBODY?* in the contexts of homophobia, physical education and sport.
3. **Include LGBT people and history in the curriculum** and integrate awareness of homophobia and anti-LGBT bias into classroom activities.
4. **If you witness homophobic language or behaviour, speak out** and turn a “throw-away” moment into a teaching moment. We do not tolerate discriminatory language in the school, so do not overlook terms and expressions like *That’s so gay*, *faggot*, *lesbo*, *queer*, etc.Tactfully express concern about the term(s) used and teach staff and students why it is offensive to everybody, not just LGBT staff or students.
5. **Develop and implement inclusive phys-ed and intramural programs in your school**.

* Stress the intention: active fun versus serious competition to win.
* Try to ensure balanced teams (players at all levels).
* Avoid students picking teams so that everyone feels included and no-one is the last player to be chosen.
* Encourage top athletes to coach and mentor versus playing and dominating the game, thereby encouraging those athletes to develop good leadership skills.
* In addition to playing traditional games such as basketball, volleyball, soccer, etc., play non-traditional games that might interest all of the students, not just the “athletic” ones. The goal is to get as many people involved as possible!
  + K-8 – noodle hockey, Gatorball, Pilates, yoga, speed stacking, dance, low organisational games, tag games.
  + 9-12 – fitness, free flow with different stations, badminton, dance.
  + See [www.ophea.net](http://www.ophea.net) as a potential source of resources.

1. **Coaches and physical education teachers can take action to stop homophobia and bullying** in sports programs and physical education classes by making a presentation to their colleagues to help them understand the importance of inclusiveness. If coaches and physical education teachers are not engaged, other teachers can approach them and encourage them to become allies.
2. On the local level, **share a story with a trusted colleague** who teaches phys-ed. Let them know how much it means to LGBT students to have a supportive teacher/coach. At the regional or provincial level, **request to** **make a presentation to athletic organisations** such as TDESAA and TDSSAA that explains the impact that exclusion and stereotypes have on LGBT students.
3. Coaches and physical education teachers should **develop an athlete ally pledge** that team members can sign. It should include a ban on discriminatory language and behavior including homophobic comments and advocate for inclusivity and safe spaces. Engage team captains to take leadership in pledge-signing initiatives. See the attached example.
4. **Support LGBT student clubs**. If your school already has a Gay‐Straight‐Alliance (GSA) or other LGBT student club, support the club’s efforts. If your school does not yet have one, work with students to get one started.
5. The equity rep and/or the GSA can **give a presentation at a staff or parent council meeting**. Arrange a meeting with leaders from the student athletic councils and other student leaders to engage them as allies for this presentation. Tell your colleagues about the **OUT**SPORT TORONTO workshop and encourage them to take action with you. Share the *You Can Play* video or the **OUT**SPORT TORONTOvideo *Then and Now*with staff to kick off a staff meeting.
6. **Integrate strategies to combat homophobia into your school’s health action committee**. Get students, nurses, staff and parents to pick a week or month to focus on LGBT issues. Make announcements, put up displays, and/or have students give a five minute speech in class about LGBT issues.
7. **Bring OUT**SPORT TORONTO **to your school to a staff meeting, a sports day, or a school-wide assembly** on inclusion that talks explicitly about homophobia and LGBT issues. Write to [info@OutSportToronto.org](mailto:info@OutSportToronto.org) for an LGBT athlete in your area willing to come and share their personal story about how sport influenced their life.
8. **Organise an awareness week** with school-wide activities. Include homophobia as a topic in a broader dialogue on human rights and inclusion. For example:

* Extend home form period by 5 minutes each day Monday – Thursday and have all students read a brief true story of a student who was bullied due to race, religion, homophobia, etc. and follow each case with a couple of rhetorical questions for students to consider.
* End the week (Friday) with a full assembly program that focuses on equity and inclusiveness throughout the school’s programs.

What other actions can you take?

There are many resources available to help you speak out and take action.

Contact **OUT**SPORT TORONTO ([info@OutSportToronto.org](mailto:info@OutSportToronto.org) ) for more information or visit the following websites for additional ideas:

* [www.OutSportToronto.org](http://www.outsporttoronto.org/)
* [www.tdsb.on.ca/\_site/viewitem.asp?siteid=15&menuid=5018&pageid=4377](http://www.caaws.ca/StepUpSpeakOut/e/index.cfm)
* [http://sports.glsen.org](http://sports.glsen.org/)
* [www.OPHEA.net](http://www.ophea.net/)
* [http://YouCanPlayProject.org](http://youcanplayproject.org/)
* [www.CAAWS.ca/StepUpSpeakOut/e/index.cfm](http://www.caaws.ca/StepUpSpeakOut/e/index.cfm)
* [http://AthleteAlly.com](http://athleteally.com/)
* [www.WhoIsNobody.com](http://www.whoisnobody.com/)
* [www.GForceSports.org](http://www.gforcesports.org/)
* <http://www.youtube.com/user/TGHAGayHockey>

And don’t forget the following resources:

* **Your Equity Rep.**
* Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism: A K-12 Curriculum Resource Guide.
* Rainbows and Triangles: A Curriculum Document for Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism in the K-6 Classroom (2002).