

# When A Student Comes Out to You

One of the most exciting, and sometimes nerve-racking, moments working in SOGI-inclusive education is when a student shares their gender identity or sexual orientation with you. We want to “get it right” and respond to the student in ways that affirm and respect them. One of the best ways to be successful at this is to be prepared. Below are some guidelines for responding to a student when they come out to you. Feel free to print out the chart on the second page as a quick reference.

## **Thank the student for sharing**

It can be a big deal for a student to share this information with you, and it’s important to let them know you appreciate them trusting you with this important information.

## **Give space for the student to share**

Often, when we want to help, we ask a lot of questions. Depending on the student, this can be overwhelming. Start by listening and affirming what they are sharing. Allow the student to set the tone: Are they excited? Are they unsure? Are they calm? Listen to their tone and energy and try to match it.

## **Ask affirming questions that show your acceptance and understanding**

Examples include:

- Do you feel safe at school? What about at home?
- Have you shared this with other people? Do you want to?
- For trans/gender diverse students: Is there a different name you would like to go by? Pronouns?

## **Check in about confidentiality**

You might be the first person a student has told, or the 100<sup>th</sup>. Be clear that you will keep this conversation confidential unless they tell you otherwise. For names and pronouns, check in about where and with whom to use their affirming name and pronouns and where not to. Be honest about the limits of confidentiality, for example, if they want to use their name at school but not at home, we cannot guarantee their peers will keep it confidential.

## **Ask the student if they want any support**

Sometimes when a student comes out to you, they are simply sharing a part of themselves with you, and don’t need any specific support. You can simply ask “Do you want help of any kind?” and be clear that they can always come and ask you if things change.

## **Know what resources are available**

Stay up to date about what resources are available in your school, division, and community. If you are unsure, let the student know you will look into it.

## **Thank the Student again and welcome more conversations**

Be sure to end the conversation by re-affirming your appreciation of the student sharing and invite them to check in with you whenever they want.

## Quick Guide:

### When a Student Comes Out to You



#### Thank the Student

"Thank you! I really appreciate you sharing this with me."

#### Give Space and Listen

Let the student share before you start asking questions. Match their tone and energy.

#### Ask Affirming Questions

"Do you feel safe at school? At home?"  
"Have you shared this with other people? Do you want to?"

#### Clarify Confidentiality

"This conversation is just between you and me. I won't share anything with others unless you ask me to."

#### Offer support

"Do you need any help?"  
"Is there anything I can do?"

#### Know Your Resources

School/Division Resources: (list below)  
Community Resources: (list below)

#### Welcome more conversations

"Thanks again for sharing this with me. Come and chat with me whenever you want."

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