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Teaching about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE)

Note: This resource addresses some of the most common ways in which educators will teach about SOGIE, with suggestions for ways of strengthening those practices. It is not intended to be exhaustive, and will continue to updated as language and best practices shift and evolve.

We Tend To…	We SHOULD…
1. Have one class/separate section on SOGIE	Have separate lessons – BUT also on SOGIE include SOGIE throughout the curriculum.
2. Talk about LGBTQ+ exclusively	Incorporate heterosexual and cisgender identities to reinforce all people have a sexual orientation and gender identity.
3. Use LGBTQ+ but then only talk about lesbian and gay individuals	Be specific and intentional. Understand and include discussions about bisexuality, pansexuality and additional identities. If using LGBTQ+, include trans and non-binary genders.
4. Focus on relationships and behaviors	Focus on orientation and identity, as well as behaviors and relationships. People do not "become" their sexual orientation once they are in a relationship or start having sex; people do not have to behave a particular way to "prove" their gender identity.
5. Use the term "partner" in an effort to be gender-neutral and inclusive	Be more specific and intentional, e.g., "Lisette and her girlfriend, Taryn" or "Sheoran and their partner, Liam."
6. Talk about how hard it is to be LGBTQ+	Talk about bias and discrimination – but celebrate the positives and highlight LGBTQ+ leaders and role models.
7. Punish homophobic and transphobic language without explanation	It is imperative to intervene when homophobia or transphobia occurs. Punishing students without explaining why what they said or did was disrespectful and harmful, however, only teaches them to not say or do homophobic or transphobic things in front of an adult. Work to personalize bias in an effort to change their attitudes and behaviors for the future.

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We Tend To…	We SHOULD…
8. Teach to identities vs. behaviors	Review the topic area. If teaching about STI prevention, sexual behaviors put a person at risk, not their sexual orientation or gender identity. Debunk the myth that only people with particular body parts or who identify with a particular sexual orientation engage in certain behaviors. There are many ways to be sexual with another person.
9. Focus only on LGBTQ+ identities	Remember and reflect upon how we are all more than one identity. How our additional identities interact with our sexual orientation and gender identity creates unique experiences of discrimination or privilege for each of us. In addition, sharing one identity with another person does not mean our life experience has been or is the same
10. Teach as if our entire audience were heterosexual and cisgender	There is a tendency to address a group of learners as if they were all heterosexual and cisgender, discussing LGBTQ+ identities and individuals as "others." Statistically, there have to be LGBTQ+ learners, or cis-het learners with LGBTQ+ friends and family members in every learning environment. Acknowledge that. Avoid harmful activities like "The Heterosexual Questionnaire," and anything else that teaches to the power majority will ignoring the rest of the group.

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