SAFE SPACES & HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

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SAFE SPACE

This space welcomes all people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity
OUTLINE

• Presentation
  • What is a safe space
  • Creating safe spaces
  • Consistency
  • Being an Effective Ally
  • Policy & Legislation

• Creating Healthy Boundaries
• Compassion Fatigue & Vicarious Trauma
• Professional Reach & Code of Conduct
• Self Care
• Finding Support
• Literature & Resources

• Questions!
  • This is a safe space to get your questions answered!
TERMINOLOGY

- Homophobia & Transphobia
- Heteronormativity
- Cis gender
- Trans & Transgender
- The Gender Binary
WHAT DOES “SAFE SPACE” MEAN?

• A Safe Space:
  • A comfortable place to be yourself
  • Confidentiality for ability to share
  • No assumptions
  • Consistent
  • Culture of Respect
  • Lots of work

• What it means to be a safe space teacher:
  • Creating and inclusive environment for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities
  • Saving lives
  • Moving from risk to resilience
  • Informed questions and answers
  • Recognize your own stereotypes, biases, and language
CREATING SAFE SPACES - PHYSICAL

• Identify yourself as a safe person
  • Flag, poster, sticker, pin
• Flying the Flag, Walking the Walk, Talking the Talk
• Policy that is upheld
• Safe space posters
  • Loose effectiveness if left up when a teacher change has occurred
  • Take it down or take it with you!
• Identify anything in the space that reinforces heteronormativity or gender binary
• Labeling books with Rainbows!
CREATING SAFE SPACES – VERBAL/SOCIAL

• Language
  • Inclusive language “Friends”, “Students”, “Hooligans”, “Parents” “Partner”
  • Careful of assumptions
  • Break the binary
  • Pronouns

• Visible allies and role models
  • Create these moments in your lessons

• Address homophobia and transphobia when they happen
  • Teachable moments

• Recognize heteronormativity

• Strive for school wide consistency

• Build positive relationships!
CREATING SAFE SPACES – CURRICULAR

- English & Social
  - Discussion topics & literature
  - Role models in history & writing

- Science
  - Biology: reproduction and genetics
  - Chemistry: Molecular & Ionic Bonding

- Physics & Math
  - Question inclusion
  - NoHomophobes.com Graphs

- Languages
  - Gender neutral language presence
  - Language development

- Physical Education
  - Split by anything other than gender
  - Discussion of gender segregation in professional sports

- CTS/CTF
  - Career gender stereotyping
  - Role Models

- Fine Arts
  - Resistance Art
  - Expression of self

Representation is vital to a sense of belonging!
CREATING SAFE SPACES – THE STAFF ROOM

• Do not forget that you have sexual and gender minority staff in your buildings
  • Making staff feel welcome translates to students
  • Good practice!

• Gender neutral staff washroom

• Use of chosen name and pronouns
  • Verbally, emails, and in documentation if possible
  • Staff member comfort
CREATING SAFE SPACES – GSA & QSA

• Establishment and support of GSA or QSA by all school staff
  • United approach
• Students also need to have the knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ2S+ topics in order to address them with their peers
• Sharing circle – “Rock to Talk”

• Student-Teacher created ground rules
  • Respect
  • Confidentiality/Anonymity
  • Openness
  • Right to pass
  • Non-judgmental Approach
  • Claiming our own Opinions
  • Sensitivity to Diversity
  • Acceptance
  • Have a good time!
• Group Identified Safe & Unsafe topics
  • No fly zones
CONSISTENCY

• Without consistency, the safe space loses its meaning.
  • Consistent responses to homophobia & transphobia
  • Consistent inclusive language
  • Consistent positive praise for peer inclusion

• Strive for school wide
  • The more of a united front the more effective
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Journal of Counseling & Development

- 78% of trans students (K-12) reported some form of harassment related to their gender identity or expression
- 35% of trans students reported incidences of physical violence
- 12% of trans students reported incidences of sexual violence

- 96% of those reporting harassment experienced physical abuse in a school setting
- 83% of those reported verbal harassment in a school setting
  - Not limited to peers, also from teachers and staff.

- 90% of trans adults reported experiencing harassment on the jobsite
- 71% attempted to avoid discrimination by hiding their gender or transition.

From Journal of Counseling & Development Volume 92 April 2014: “I Am My Own Gender”: Resilience Strategies of Trans Youth
Anneliese A. Singh, Sarah E. Meng, Anthony W. Hansen
Why is it important?

Canadian School Statistics
2011 Egale Canada in association with Canadian Teachers Federation
% of Transgender or Two-spirited youth...

- 79% feel unsafe at school
- 74% reported being verbally harassed because of gender expression
- 49% reported being sexually harassed at least once in the school year
- 37% reported being physically harassed or assaulted at school

From Canadian Teacher’s Federation
Supporting Transgender and Transexual Students in K-12 Schools: Guide for Educators
Kristopher Wells, Gayle Roberts, Carol Allan
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Canadian School Statistics
Egale Canada Human Rights Trust

• 47% of trans youth thought about suicide and 19% had attempted suicide (2010)

• 28% of transgender and two-spirit people had attempted suicide at least once

From Canadian Teacher’s Federation
Supporting Transgender and Transexual Students in K-12 Schools: Guide for Educators
Kristopher Wells, Gayle Roberts, Carol Allan
However!

AAP Publications & Research

• “These findings suggest that familial support in general, or specifically via the decision to allow their children to socially transition is associated with better mental health outcomes among transgender children to present in everyday life as their gender identity rather than their natal sex is associated with developmentally normative levels of depression and anxiety.”

The risk comes from lack of support, not from being gender diverse!
Supported gender diverse students do not face the same risks!

From AAP Publications Pediatrics Volume 137 Number 3 March 2016:
Mental Health of Transgender Children who are Supported In Their Identities
Kristina R Olson PhD, Lily Durwood BA, Madeleine DeMeules BA, Katie A McLaughlin PHD
BEING AN EFFECTIVE ALLY

- Listen
- Be open minded
- Learn new things!
- Stand up and speak
  - Challenge Transphobia and Homophobia
  - Zero Indifference
  - Validate the identity of others
  - Defend pronouns
- Identify Privilege
- Be an advocate and good friend
- Remember that people make places safe or unsafe

‘Ally’ is not a noun, it is a verb
It is something you earn
IDENTIFYING UNSAFE SPACES

• In your school
  • Washrooms & Change rooms
  • Segregated programs or spaces

• In your classroom
  • Assuming heteronormativity and cis gender
  • Lack of Identification of the safe spaces and person(s)
  • Conversations and ignoring

• In GSA/QSA
  • Purpose of GSA/QSA for those attending
  • Disconnect between students and staff
STUDENT COMING OUT

• If a student chooses to disclose to you that they are not heterosexual or not cisgendered (or both):
  • Thank them for their bravery and for trusting you
  • Validate their identity
  • Ask what they need and if there is anything you can do to support them?
  • Ask about home support
  • Maintain confidentiality.
    • That student feels comfortable and safe with you, but not necessarily all people
  • Maintain that you are there for them and you will tackle it together
• Find the policy that stands behind you

• Edmonton Public Schools
  • Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Policy
  • Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Admin Regulation
  • Welcoming, Inclusive, Safe, and Healthy Learning & Working Environments
  • Respectful Working Environments Admin Regulation
  • Wellness of Staff and Students

• Edmonton Catholic Schools
  • Inclusive Communities - Administrative Policy 160
  • LIFE Framework

• Fort McMurry Public
  • Policy 19 – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
  • Policy 20 – Student Conduct/Welcoming, Caring, respectful and Safe

• Fort McMurry Catholic
  • OP 333 – Welcoming, Caring, Respectful, Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments
• Alberta Human Rights Act
• ATA Code of Professional Conduct
• ATA Declaration of Rights & Responsibilities for Teachers
• The Alberta School Act – Section 35, 45
• Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – Section 15
• Alberta Bill of Rights
• School Act
• Bill 10 – Gay-Straight Alliances
  • Bill 24 (Previously)
• Bill 8…
NOW WHAT?

• Now my classroom and I are a safe space. Now what?
  • Students coming to speak to you
  • Just want to eat lunch in your room, etc.
  • Other teachers sending students to you or asking for advice

• ESTABLISH HEALTHY BOUNDARIES
IMPORTANCE OF BOUNDARIES

• Why are boundaries important?

• What happens when we don’t look after ourselves first?

• What is the difference between sympathy and empathy?
  • How do they impact us differently?

• How do we become aware that we have unsafe boundaries?
UNSAFE BOUNDARIES

• There is a difference between being a safe space and being a caregiver
• When your own needs are not met you are more likely to experience:
  • Irritability
  • Feel overwhelmed
  • Avoidance behaviors
  • Burnout
  • Compassion Fatigue
  • Vicarious trauma

• Watch for changes in your own behaviour!
COMPASSION FATIGUE & VICARIOUS TRAUMA

- State of exhaustion and dysfunction as a result of prolonged exposure to compassion stress.
- Impact of hearing repeated emotion stories
- Impact of feelings of empathy and sharing pain and struggles

- A sudden reaction to a specific event or series of events
- A negative reaction to an event that has occurred directly or indirectly to a caregiver
- Moral Distress
HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

How do we ensure we are supporting others while having health boundaries to protect ourselves?

• Remember your Professional Reach as a teacher
• Develop strategies for dealing with higher needs/highly emotional students
• Self-Care
• Finding Supports
• Professional Development
• Know and respect your own limits – take time if you need it
PROFESSIONAL REACH & CODE OF CONDUCT

• Teacher responsibility versus psychologist or counselor responsibility

• Alberta Teacher’s Code of Conduct:

In relation to pupils

1. The teacher teaches in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice as to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence, socioeconomic background or linguistic background.

2. (1) The teacher is responsible for diagnosing educational or learning disabilities, emotional or behavioral concerns, and other conditions or situations that may negatively affect learning or personal development.
PROFESSIONAL REACH & CODE OF CONDUCT

• What is in the best interest of the pupil?
• What happens when you no longer feel qualified?
• Does not have to be you divulging
  • Involve the student
• Recognize when you are out of scope

4 The teacher treats pupils with dignity and respect and is considerate of their circumstances.

5 The teacher may not divulge information about a pupil received in confidence or in the course of professional duties except as required by law or where, in the judgment of the teacher, to do so is in the best interest of the pupil.
Canadian Psychology Code of Ethics:

In respecting dignity, psychologists acknowledge that each human being should be treated primarily as a person or an end in him/herself, not as an object or a means to an end, and is worthy of equal moral consideration. In doing so, psychologists acknowledge that all human beings have a moral right to have their innate worth as human beings appreciated and that this inherent worth is not dependent on a human being’s culture, nationality, ethnicity, colour, race, religion, sex, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, physical or mental abilities, age, socio-economic status, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition, or status. As such, psychologists do not engage in unjust discrimination based on such factors and promote non-discrimination in all of their activities.

- Psychologists have the same dignity clause as the Teacher Code of Conduct
- Protections for vulnerable individuals, confidentiality, and fair treatment.
- Responsibility for caring – seek out assistance if required
STRATEGIES FOR EMOTIONALLY HIGH NEEDS STUDENTS

“Hey, can we talk?”

- Set meeting times and dates
- Meet with more than one adult
- Self regulation strategies
- Journals/Writing
- Meetings are not always about talking
- Do you want me to talk or listen?
- Discuss outcome of reliving experiences over and over
- Staff contacting you about students
- Ask for help from another professional
  - You are not giving up on them or passing the buck, you are getting them what they need.
SELF-CARE

• What are you doing for yourself?
  • Put your own mask on first.

• Bubble baths… but more than that. It is different for everyone!
  • Be generous to yourself
  • Be less critical of yourself & others
  • Recognize when you are overthinking
  • Open up to others – respect confidentiality
  • Positive self talk
  • Meditate
  • Caring for pets or plants!
  • Schedule recharging time
  • Exercise
SELF-CARE

• Take a break and do something that you love
• Get out of the real world: Video Games, books, movies
• Engage in something new: movie, documentary, or read a new book
• Try something you are afraid to fail at
• Do something you’ve been procrastinating on
• Go out and do something wild that you’ve never done before
• Take a break! There is always someone who can fill in while you recoup
• Connect with your partner, family, friend
  • High, Low, Haha
• Get it out of your mind and your body
DEVELOPING SELF-CARE

• Give yourself permission to look after yourself
• Remember that self-care is a skill to be developed like any other.
  • Practice and try different approaches all the time, even in your highs
• Forgive yourself for your lows
  • You are learning to care for yourself
  • Are they are a little less frequent, less intense, or last less time than a years ago?
• Seek out a psychologist or other professional mental health care provider
• Teacher supports
  • Colleagues
  • Friends & Family
  • Staff QSA/GSA
FINDING SUPPORT

• Edmonton Public Teacher Local 37 – Queer Straight Alliance
  • Second Tuesday of the month
• Edmonton Catholic Local ## - Gay-Straight Alliance
  • Last Monday of the month
• Fort McMurray Local 48 – Gay Straight Alliance
  • Last Thursday of the month

• Resources in your school
  • Admin, Department head
  • Councilor
  • Trusted colleague with experience
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
SAFE SPACES & BOUNDARY DEVELOPMENT

• Mental Health First Aid
  • Mental health Commission of Canada
• Crisis & Trauma Resources Institute
  • Vicarious Trauma: Strategies for Resilience
  • Brief Focused Counselling Skills – Strategies from Leading Frameworks
• Gender and Sexual Diversity in Youth
• Mental Health Awareness and Support
• Wellness Strategies for the Helping Professional
• Catchment Groups!
• District SOGI Sessions
• ATA SOGI Sessions
• This one!!
RESOURCES

Organizations:
- Pride Center of Edmonton
- ASPECC
- Edmonton 2 Spirit Society
- Camp fyrefly & fyrefly in Schools
- iSMSS & The Landing
- PFLAG
- Alberta GSA Network
- Family Resilience Project
- SAFQEQY
- The Rainbow Pages
- QueerFlex
- TSER
- LGBT History Month.com

Documents:
- Supporting Transgender and Transexual Students K-12 by Canadian Teachers Federation
- PRISM documents

People:
- SOGI Consultants
- Safe Contacts
• Fiction/Autobiography
  • Lord of the Butterflies by Gibson (Poetry)
  • Simon vs the Homosapien Agenda by Albertalli
  • What If Its Us by Albertalli & Silvera
  • The Pants Project by Clarke
  • One in Every Crowd by Coyote

• Children’s Books
  • And Tango Makes Three by Richardson & Parnell
  • Neither by Anderson
  • The Family Book by Parr
  • Worm Loves Worm by Curato
  • Pride the Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag by Sanders
  • The Prince & The Knight by Haack

• Non- Fiction
  • PRISM Toolkit by Alberta Teachers Association
  • GSAs and QSAs in Alberta Schools by ATA
  • LGBTQ Voices in Education by Bloomfield & Fisher
  • Fit to Teach by Blount
  • A Two Spirit Journey by Chacaby & Plummer
  • Am I safe Here? By Short
  • Growing into Resilience by Grave & Wells
  • One Teacher in Ten by Jennings

ATA Library: Sandra Anderson
QUESTIONS!

- Anything!
- This is a safe space to ask.

Contact me at!
rmdlawrence@gmail.com