LGBTQ Glossary

LGBTQ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning or Queer

NOTE: Attempting to define and label people and communities is an on-going, ever-changing process—and one in which full agreement may never be reached. With that understanding, here is a glossary excerpted from the Welcoming Schools Guide (www.welcomingschools.org) which was developed by author Aimee Gelnaw, and vetted by the Human Rights Coalition.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY: A policy that states clearly that bias or discrimination against a particular group will not be tolerated. This discrimination includes both actions and words. A comprehensive anti-discrimination policy should include both actual and perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

BI: Short for bisexual.

BISEXUAL: A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to people of either sex.

BULLYING: Bullying is aggressive behavior or intentional harm carried out by one or more people. Usually the target is less powerful. Bullying may be physical or verbal or use indirect means such as exclusion. Bullying is usually seen as repeated aggressive behavior, but people who are bullied feel the impact after even a few incidents.

CO-PARENT ADOPTION: A family created by two adults both adopting a child. Often used in reference to two women or two men adopting a child.

COMING OUT: The process of becoming aware of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity, accepting it, acting on it and telling others. This process usually occurs over time and in stages. This process may occur in a different order depending on each individual.

DYKE: A derogatory term used to describe a lesbian or someone perceived as a lesbian — most often a woman who does not display traditionally feminine characteristics. For example, it may be used to insult a girl or woman who voices a strong opinion or one who is very good at sports. This term, when used outside of the LGBT community, is often used as a biased and derogatory term. Some lesbians have reclaimed the use of the word to refer to themselves in a strong, positive light.

FAGGOT OR FAG: This word is considered offensive to gay males. A derogatory term used to describe a gay male or a male perceived as gay, especially one who does not display traditionally masculine characteristics. Also used as an insult when a man or boy does something considered unmanly.
**GAY:** A generic term used to describe both men and women who are sexually and romantically attracted to someone of the same sex. Sometimes used just to refer to gay men. It is also used as a derogatory slur to describe anything, anyone or any behavior that does not meet the approval of an individual or a given group.

**GAY LIFESTYLE:** An inaccurate term. There is no one gay lifestyle, just as there is no one heterosexual lifestyle. (Picture a young lesbian living in the city, two gay dads living in the suburbs, an older lesbian couple living on a farm — all very different lifestyles.)

**GAY MARRIAGE:** Preferred phrases are equal marriage, marriage equality or marriage between same-sex couples. *Gay* marriage implies that it is something other than marriage — the legal civil marriage that is available to opposite-sex couples.

**GLBT AND GLBTQ:** Acronym for *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender*. The Q can stand for *Questioning* or *Queer*. The *Questioning* category is included to incorporate those that are not yet certain of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Also abbreviated as *LGBT* or *LGBTQ*.

**GENDER:** Refers to the socially constructed ways in which we live out our lives as male or female.

**GENDER EXPRESSION:** An individual’s characteristics and behaviors such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions that are perceived as masculine or feminine. Gender expression is not necessarily an indication of sexual orientation.

**GENDER IDENTITY:** An individual’s internal, deeply felt sense of being male, female or something other or in-between. This identity may or may not match the individual’s biological sex. Does not determine one’s sexual orientation.

**GENDER NON-CONFORMING:** A person who has or is perceived to have gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations. Gender non-conforming people may or may not identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

**GENDER ROLE:** The set of socially defined roles and behaviors assigned to females and males. These roles can vary from culture to culture.

**HARASSMENT:** Behavior meant to frighten, taunt or defame someone. Harassment can be physical, verbal, social or emotional in nature. All forms are destructive and have personal consequences for the victims.

**HETEROSEXISM:** The usually implicit assumption that heterosexuality is ideal, preferable to other sexual orientations and/or the only valid option.

**HETEROSEXUAL:** A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to members of the other sex.

**HOMOPHOBIA:** Originally used to describe fear of people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. More often today it is used to describe any level of discomfort or disapproval for people who are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. This often leads to bias, hatred and harassment of LGBT people.
HOMOSEXUAL: A person who is sexually and romantically attracted to members of the same sex. This term is appropriate in medical or scientific contexts.

IN THE CLOSET: A LGBT person who is not open about the lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender aspect of their identity.

INTERSEX: People born with varying degrees of the biological aspects of both biological males and biological females.

LESBIAN: A woman who is sexually and romantically attracted to other women.

LGBT AND LGBTQ: Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (and Queer / Questioning). Also abbreviated as GLBT and GLBTQ.

OUT: A term used to describe a LGBT person who is open about his or her sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This term comes from the expression “out of the closet,” which means being open about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

OUTING: Revealing the sexual orientation or gender identity of another person, usually without that person’s consent.

PRIDE (DAY AND/OR MARCH): Short for LGBT pride. The term is commonly used to indicate the celebrations that happen every summer that commemorate the Stonewall Inn riots of 1969, which are regarded by many as the birth of the modern LGBT rights movement.

QUEER: Historically a negative term for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. More recently reclaimed by younger LGBT people to refer to themselves. Often used to reference a more flexible view of gender and/or sexuality. Some people still find the term offensive. Others use it as a more inclusive term that allows for more freedom of gender expression. Also used in academic fields, such as queer studies or queer pedagogy.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: An identity based on whether someone is attracted to a person of a different sex, the same sex or both sexes (heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual). Everyone has a sexual orientation.

SEXUAL PREFERENCE: Avoid using this term. Preference implies a simple choice of whether or not you like something — such as preferring apples to oranges. It also implies that one chooses to be LGBT. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, sexual orientation is not a choice. “Sexual orientation probably is not determined by any one factor but by a combination of genetic, hormonal and environmental influences. In recent decades, biologically based theories have been favored by experts. ... Sexual orientation is usually established during early childhood.”

TEASING: Good-natured teasing generally involves a playful back-and-forth, is done with a friendly tone of voice or laughter, may be accompanied by affectionate gestures or expressions, can lighten a tense situation and does not lead to physical confrontations. Hurtful teasing is more often accompanied by an angry or
sarcastic tone of voice and angry body language, continues even when the person being teased doesn’t like it and can feel like a put-down or being made fun of.

Good-natured teasing can cross into hurtful teasing or bullying depending on a number of factors, such as the relationship between the teased and the teaser, the feelings of the person being teased, the intent of the person doing the teasing and whether sensitive issues are touched on, such as race, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity.

**TRANS:** Short for transgender.

**TRANSSEXUAL:** An individual who does not identify with his or her biological sex. Transsexual people sometimes alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally.

**TRANSGENDER:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. This term can include people who identify as transsexuals, cross-dressers, masculine-identified women, feminine-identified men, MTFs (Male to Female), FTMs (Female to Male) or intersex people.

**TWO-SPRIT:** When used historically, generally refers to Native Americans who displayed both feminine and masculine traits. These individuals were often highly respected as healers or leaders. Now, many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Native Americans use this term to refer to themselves.

**Another resource:** Visit this smart and sassy website for more terminology and a downloadable pdf of The Genderbread Person: [http://ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com](http://ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com)