

Gender-Inclusive Language

A Brief Introduction

Why inclusive language?

Inclusive language is speaking about people (individually or in groups) in a manner that does not use gender-based words. As a courtesy, avoid using gender-based words unless you are certain about a person's family structure, identity or relationship orientation. Instead use words that is inclusive of all families, identities and relationships. For example:

| | AVOID | CONSIDER USING INSTEAD |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Families | Mom, Dad | Caregiver(s), Parent(s), Guardian(s), Adult(s) |
| Identities | Boys, Girls | Everyone, everybody, Ya'll, folks, learners, students, they/their, persons, ask for pronouns |
| Relationships | Boyfriend, Girlfriend | Partner, date, boo/bae, Examples that normalize different relationship types |

Pronouns

We strive for our schools to be places where everyone is respected and valued for who they are, and we make conscious efforts to ensure that our culture and norms do not perpetuate oppressive practices. By being conscious of pronouns, we demonstrate respect for all people, whether transgender, gender nonconforming, nonbinary or cisgender. The following are common examples of pronouns used to describe some gender identities. Pronouns are always evolving. Never assume you know a person's pronoun.

Best Practices

- ✓ On the first day of class or group, offer to share your pronouns when introducing yourself and allow students to introduce themselves with names and pronouns.
- ✓ Share pronouns while facilitating check-ins and meetings with colleagues
- ✓ Ask in private one-on-one conversations about a person's pronouns, rather than make assumptions, if you are not clear
- ✓ Provide opportunities for students to update you on their name and pronouns. For example, announce to students over the course of the school year to check in with you privately if name/pronouns have changed
- ✓ It's okay if you make mistakes. Using new or different pronouns is a learning process. Always apologize immediately and correct yourself

| Pronouns | How to Use Pronouns (examples) | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| He/Him/His | He joked | I laughed with him | That joke is not his |
| She/Her/Hers | She joked | I laughed with her | That joke is not hers |
| They/them/Theirs (singular neutral) | They joked | I laughed with them | That joke is not theirs |
| Ze/hir/hirs (singular neutral) | Ze joked (pronounced "zee") | I laughed with hir (pronounced "here") | That joke is not hirs (pronounced "heres") |



For additional questions or assistance, please contact:
 LGBTQ Support Services ● School Health Programs
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