

12 Easy Steps on the Way to Gender Inclusiveness

1. Avoid asking students to line up as boys or girls or separating them by gender.
2. Avoid always using phrases such as “boys and girls,” “you guys,” “ladies and gentlemen” and other gendered expressions to get kids’ attention.
Alternatives: scholars, friends, leaders, readers, students, learners
3. Provide an opportunity for every student to privately share with you the name and pronouns they use.
4. Have visual images reinforcing gender inclusion.
5. When you find it necessary to reference gender, say “boy, girl, or something else.” Use terms like “gender expansive,” “cisgender” or “non-binary.”
6. Provide counter-narratives that challenge students to think more broadly about gender.
7. Find examples in the media and elsewhere that reinforce gender stereotypes or binary models of gender. Call them out and explore them.
8. Be intolerant of and interrupt openly hostile attitudes or references toward other people’s gender EVERY TIME you hear or observe them. Use these incidents as teachable moments.
9. Teach children specific language that empowers them to be proud of who they are and to defend others who are being mistreated.

10. Help students recognize and see the limitations of “all or nothing” language by helping them understand the difference between patterns and rules. Avoid using “normal” to define any behaviors.

11. Share personal anecdotes from your own life that reflect gender inclusiveness.

12. Do your own work! Unpack your own experiences with gender, your own gender biases, and the assumptions do you make about the gender of others.