A Teaching Technique to Improve School Connectedness among LGBTQ+ Students

Meagan Shipley, PhD, CHES, Caitlin Holden, MS, CHES, Elisa “Beth” McNeill, PhD, CHES, Cori Strahan, BS, & Caitlin Kahney
Learning Outcomes

By the end of the session, participants will:

● Describe the importance, regarding health and academic performance, of school connectedness for LGBTQ+ students

● Participate in an activity to identify levels of school connectedness among various school staff

● Discuss strategies for promoting school connectedness for LGBTQ+ students
School Connectedness: Positive Effects

School connectedness promotes:

- Positive student/staff relationships
- Classroom engagement & student learning
- School attendance
- Physical and emotional safety
- Healthy decision making skills
- Improved grades & academic achievement
- Overall school graduation/completion rates
Lack of School Connectedness: Negative Effects

**Increased incidence of:**
- Violence and bullying behaviors
- Disruptive behaviors
- Absenteeism
- Tobacco and substance use
- Risky sexual behaviors

**Lower prevalence of:**
- Classroom engagement
- School graduation/completion rates
LGBTQ+ Students & School Connectedness

LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately exposed to bullying and harassment, resulting in several negative health and academic implications including:

**Higher rates of:**
- Feeling unsafe at school
- Absenteeism
- Depression and anxiety
- Suicide attempts

**Lower rates of:**
- Self esteem
- Academic performance
- Sports & extracurricular involvement
Activity - Part I

1. At your table, use the key to identify your assigned role based on the color of sticker

2. As a team, place a sticker next to the individual’s picture if:
   i. You know their name **AND**
   ii. Can describe personal information about them
   *(Examples: interests, siblings, work, hobbies)*

1. Once completed, return to your seat

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sticker &amp; Role Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafeteria Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodial Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity Debrief - Part II

4. Analyze which pictures have no stickers and which pictures have every color represented. These are important questions to consider:

a. **Students with no stickers by their picture**: Why is a student not receiving any engagement, interaction, or support from a single adult in the school?

a. **Students with a lot of stickers by their picture**: Why is a student receiving so many interactions, support with adults in the school?
#OnePerson

1. Hang a picture of every student around the gym
2. Leave space for staff to write down anything personal -- not private -- they know about the student
3. Have a conversation to reflect on staff’s connectedness with students
4. Create a plan to make sure every student has a connection with #oneperson
5. Be that #oneperson for a student
Closing Remarks

Although today we used pictures of celebrities, this activity provides a visual representation of students who may feel low, average, or high levels of school connectedness. As a table discuss the following:

i. Is this applicable to my school/work setting? How or why?

i. What strategies could you use to promote school connectedness for LGBTQ+ students?
Strategies & Best Practices

- Acknowledge your own beliefs & biases
- Use correct terminology & inclusive language
- Don’t make assumptions
- Stop negative behavior → as an ally, be willing to call out students (or staff) who bully or harass other students
- Publicly support transgender and gender diverse students
- Advocate for GSAs (and other similar clubs) in schools
- Assure and respect confidentiality #oneperson
Questions?

ALL ARE WELCOME HERE ❤️