A Guide to using What Matters!

Use What Matters briefs to support professional learning in your school or district!

Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth Matter!

Why use What Matters to extend professional learning?

These brief, easy-to-read resources are a handy tool for evoking meaningful conversation and reflection during short professional learning opportunities. Because What Matters briefs deal with important issues — issues that really matter in school settings — they are ideal for helping educators examine practice, learn new strategies, and develop a plan for taking action.

How can I use it as a professional learning resource?

Use Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth Matters! to extend professional learning within staff meetings, professional learning communities, study groups, etc. Described in this guide is a Check In Circle/Chalk Talk activity that can be completed at a staff meeting or professional learning day.

Activity Introduction (55 Minutes Total)

This activity combines two group facilitation activities Check In Circle and Chalk Talk.

Check In Circle (10 – 15 Minutes)

Ask participants to sit in small groups. Each person takes a turn responding to the following prompt “What comes up for me when we start to talk about creating an inclusive and responsive learning community for Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth is ….” During this sharing, other group members do not respond or ask questions. This is an opportunity for each person to share his or her thoughts without discussion or deliberation. Each person has 1-2 minutes to share.

Silent Reading and Publication Discussion (20 Minutes)

Distribute Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth Matters and ask participants to silently read the entire publication.

After reading, each group engages in a discussion about information in the publication and generates 1 question regarding supporting Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Questioning Youth in school. Groups should write their question on chart paper. Questions should be written large enough so that it is easily read from a short distance and so that there is space on the paper that others can write comments or other questions. There should be one question per chart paper.

Chalk Talk (10 Minutes)

Post questions in different areas of the room. Instruct participants to use the chart papers as “silent conversation spaces” quietly reading each question and writing a response. Responses can be an answer to the question, a comment, or another related question. People can also read and respond to the comments of others.

Large Group Processing (10 Minutes)

Process the activities and the publication with the entire group.

What’s next?

Concern with equity in inclusive schools means paying explicit attention to the conditions and attitudes that create unsafe places for GLBTQ youth. This means that school staff must be intentional about engaging in specific actions and on-going professional learning about culturally responsive and inclusive practice to ensure that all students feel safe and a part of the school community. Use this conversation as an opportunity to advance equity in your school or organization.

Other suggested activities

* Organize What Matters Article study groups
* Jigsaw What Matters

* Check In Circle is adapted from National School Reform Faculty Harmony Education Center


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