

Flipping the Script on Gendered PHE:

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion

Currently, gender plays an outsized role in physical and health education (PHE). Gender is part of the very structure of PHE. For instance, in many schools, there are only two options for both changerooms and classes – male or female. This means that youth must select an option they may not be comfortable or feel safe with resulting in feelings of exclusion before class even begins.

Gender also informs our ideas about who is likely to succeed in PHE and influences our assumptions about the movements, skills, and activities that bodies can perform. Sometimes we are not even aware of the role that gender plays in PHE, but its presence can hinder participation for many youth. This pamphlet provides information about classroom and culture shifts you can embed in your programming to create more welcoming PHE environments.

Who are 2SLGBTQ+ youth?

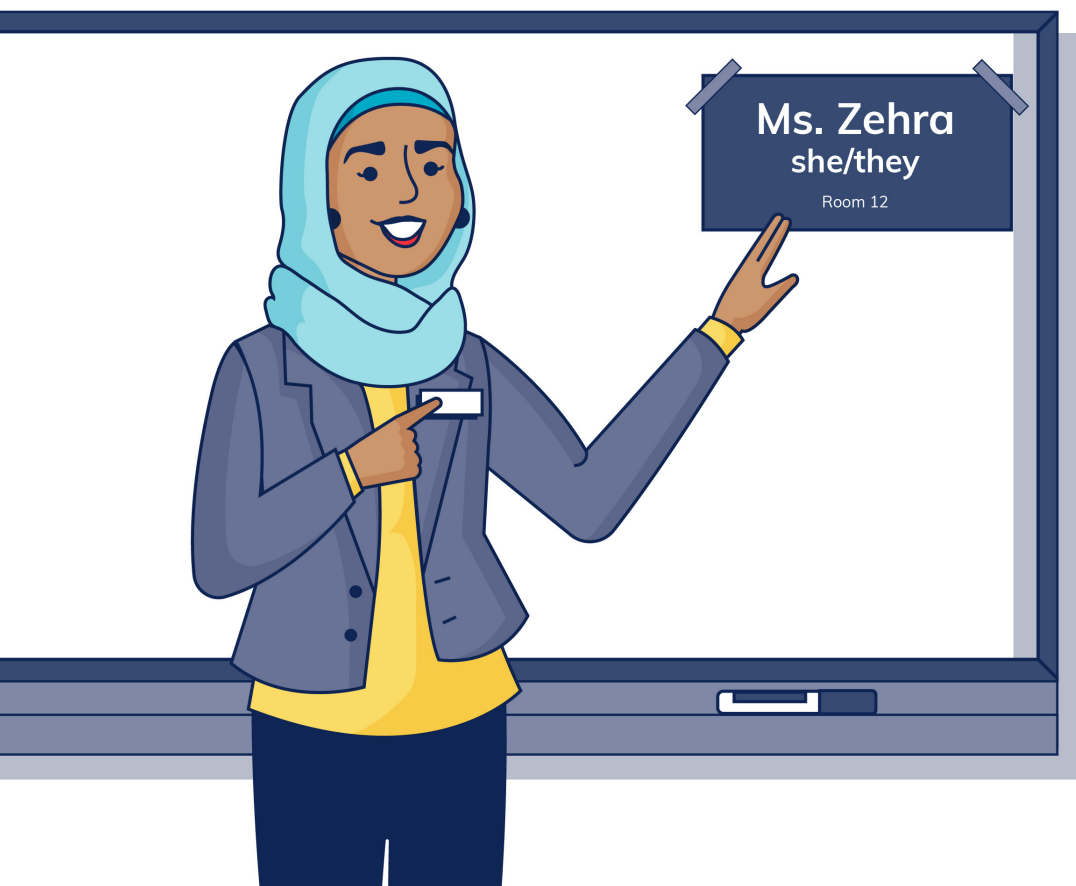
Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and other gender and sexual minority students. Sometimes we may know who these students are; however, often it is not possible to know who is 2SLGBTQ+ in our schools. Instead of

waiting for youth to come out to us, the recommendations we discuss below can guide you in creating inclusive programming that does not rely on knowing whether or not there are 2SLGBTQ+ students in the space.

1. Take Initiative to be an Ally

Having an adult ally in PHE can make a big difference for 2SLGBTQ+ youth. Instead of waiting for a student to approach you and ask for an accommodation, consider how you can communicate your awareness and support of gender and sexual equity.

One way that we let students know they are welcome is through the language that we use. Demonstrate an awareness of the importance of language by fostering a culture of respect. Being an ally involves respecting the words, names, and pronouns that youth use for themselves. Terminology changes quickly, and it can feel difficult to keep up with the latest vocabulary.





Alright folks,
choose whether
you'd like to lead
or follow!

- Tell students your pronouns and make it a practice to check-in with all your students about their pronouns*
- Distribute a survey at the start of the year or term that asks students their pronouns and any information they think would be helpful for you to know to support their participation in PHE
- Consider when and where gendered practices show up in the curriculum (e.g., if a dance unit has the boys lead and girls follow, shift to having everyone have a turn to lead and a turn to follow)
- Be mindful of the language you use (e.g., use "folks" or "everyone" and not "boys and girls")

*Pronouns and names can shift, so communicate your awareness to students and inform them that you would like to stay informed.

2. Lower the Barriers

PHE can be a particularly challenging educational setting for 2SLGBTQ+ students. We need to first understand the barriers that exist for youth participation. Then, we can think through how to lower these barriers and foster an environment for our students to thrive.



Barrier

Solution

The way the body is on display in PHE.



Offer spaces and activities where students do not feel their body is on display, such as inclusive places to change or offering a low impact activity choice.

There is no inclusive changeroom available.



Do not require students to change and allow them to participate in their street clothes.

Existing assumptions about physical ability, gender, and who excels in PHE inhibits participation and marginalizes students.



Consider gender assumptions that may unknowingly exist in your programming or at your school and how to address them. Shift your expectations of students and what they can succeed at in PHE.

There is only a male or female option for PHE class.



Shift to all gender classes.

3. Embed Variety and Choice

Whether we are putting students into teams, designing activities, or developing assessments, gendered expectations and stereotypes are part of PHE culture. One way to start shifting PHE culture is by reframing our understanding about student disengagement or lack of participation – it may be more about the practices and programming that exist in PHE than about the student. Shift the goals of lessons to prioritize engagement of all students.





Consider offering multiple modes of participation at a variety of levels for all activities and units. For instance, allow students to select either competitive, developing, or recreational. This structure acknowledges that even though youth may have different aims in PHE, they can still build their skills and develop a lifelong relationship with physical activity. Allowing students to work on different

goals across a spectrum also recognizes that youth may excel in some areas and need further practice in others. By being flexible, we can encourage students to challenge themselves by moving up levels when they feel more confident and encourage the development of knowledge, skills, and FUN in a physical activity environment.



For more information about 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, view our guidebook on **2SLGBTQ+ Inclusion in School-Based Physical Activity** at www.phecanada.ca/2SLGBTQInclusion

