



Building capacity for sexual health education.



Scroll down to:

- **Join** our January Network Meeting for school district administrators
- **Learn** about WA PREP resources
- **Read** *Why Gender-Affirming and Inclusive Language Matters*, including a guide to [Gender Inclusive Language in the Sexual Health Education Classroom](#)

Connect and Learn!

Network Meetings for School District Administrators

Join WA PREP staff and school district administrators from across the state for quarterly network meetings to:

- Discuss and share updates on sexual health education requirements and related policies
- Share successes and lessons learned
- Develop/get feedback on plans to support institutionalizing CSHE in your district
- Share strategies for parent/caregiver engagement and community outreach

[Click here to register](#) for the next CSHE Network Meeting!

This month's Network Meeting will provide districts a collaborative opportunity to discuss the challenges and potential solutions for CSHE implementation. In addition, it will provide a step-by-step guide for supporting teachers, communicating with parents/caregivers, and complying with legislative requirements.

Wednesday, January 26th, 10:30am-12:00pm

WA PREP

We're Here to Help!

Whether you are currently implementing Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE) or just beginning to develop a plan to meet the new [Washington State requirements](#), we have resources to support you. Our expert team is available to support with curriculum selection, working with your school board, educating parents/caregivers and community, providing curriculum walk-throughs and core skills training for teachers, and more. Contact Christine Hagstrom at chagstrom@cardeaservices.org for more information

Why Gender-Affirming and Inclusive Language Matters

Creating a welcoming educational environment is vital to ensuring that students, staff, and all members of the school community are supported. Using gender-affirming* and inclusive language is a great way to build a culture of respect and trust within school communities.

So, what is inclusive language?

Gender-affirming language decenters binary language and, by doing so, validates all students. Gender inclusive policies and practices are life affirming and connected to academic success. If students feel like their identities and experiences are reflected, they will be able to participate authentically in the classroom, build trust with peers and teachers, and retain the information taught in CSHE, which includes vital life skills. Research published in the [The Social Policy Report](#), and the [Journal of School Psychology](#) found that using gender-affirming language improves academic outcomes across content areas, and has a positive impact on social and health outcomes. To learn more about how to use gender-affirming language in the classroom, click on [Cardea's Inclusive Language Guide](#).

Did you know?

According to the [GLSEN 2019 National Climate Survey](#), 22.8% of students were prevented from using their affirmed name and pronouns. In addition, "59.1% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, 42.5% because of their gender expression, and 37.4% because of their gender."

Many students experience discrimination based on their gender or sexual identity. In fact, a [national study](#) conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that sexuality- and gender-expansive students reported the highest prevalence of violence and victimization among high school students.

Being supported amidst targeting can make a decisive impact on young people's lives. A [2019 National Survey](#) conducted by The Trevor Project found that "LGBTQ youth who report having at least one accepting adult were 40% less likely to report a suicide attempt in the past year."

Sexuality- and gender-expansive youths' vibrant and vast experiences cannot be fully conveyed through statistics. It is important, however, to recognize the serious health inequities that persist, and the steps adults can take to help. Shifting the language that we use is a simple change in our daily practice that can make a difference and, in some cases, has the power to save lives. [A study](#) supported by the National Institute of Mental Health found that when youth were able to use their affirmed name and pronouns, there was "a 29% decrease in suicidal ideation, and a 56% decrease in suicidal behavior." By practicing inclusion, we are signaling to young people that we care about them and that they matter.

The impact of language

Language shapes how we think and ultimately informs our actions. Terminology is constantly evolving, and this overview of the [Language of Gender](#) is a great place to start learning about the power of language.

Not only is inclusive language an excellent practice when building safer schools and healthier youth, it is also important in ensuring compliance with Washington State's [CSHE law](#). The law requires that instruction be inclusive to all students regardless of protected class status, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

What does this mean for educators?

Using inclusive language allows us to improve the lives of young people. It is also a cornerstone of trauma-informed CSHE. When we use gender inclusive language that is applicable to all students, they are more likely to invest in learning experiences which are invaluable to ensuring their future well-being.

Many students may not feel comfortable using their affirmed name and pronouns at home. By using inclusive language in the classroom, we ensure that students have at least one space where they can safely express themselves. For example, you can ask students to introduce themselves with their name and pronouns. As the instructor, you can model this practice and normalize it within all classroom settings. Another way to create an inclusive environment is to conduct a learning survey at the beginning of the class.

These are sample questions you could use on a learning survey:

1. What do you need to feel supported in your CSHE experience?
2. What are your name(s) and pronouns?
3. Do you feel safe in the place you are currently living?
4. Do you go by a different name or use different pronouns in the place you are currently living?
5. What type of learner are you?
6. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your learning needs or environment?

If you make a mistake...

For some of us, this terminology is new and can feel challenging or overwhelming. What do we do if we misspeak?

1. Acknowledge the mistake, apologize, and correct it.
2. Remind the class and ourselves that we are learning together, and each of us – including the teacher – will hit road bumps along the way.
3. Recognize that owning our mistakes and learning from them sets a healthy example for students.

These steps provide an opportunity to model the behaviors we ask of our students.

Being an effective ally to your sexuality- and gender-expansive students takes time. You might make mistakes, but all your efforts will make a difference in young people's lives.

*'Affirmed/ing' is the term to use when discussing gender, name, and pronouns that differ from what is assigned at birth. It validates how all students self-identify, and creates a sense of belonging, recognition, and validation.