

## **S1 — Episode 4 — Teaching Gender and Sexuality at School: Letters to Teachers**

*Goldstein, Tara and Audarson Gudmundson, Helgi. (Producers). (2019, January 1).*

Tara shares one of the letters from her new book *Teaching Gender and Sexuality at School: Letters to Teachers*.

Tara Goldstein: Hello, and welcome to Gender Sexuality School. I am Tara Goldstein and we're podcasting from Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Recently, I completed a book called *Teaching Gender and Sexuality at School: Letters to Teachers*. The letters discuss ways teachers can take up discussions of sexuality and gender with children and youth in their classrooms. In writing the letters, I have drawn upon a teacher education course on sexuality, gender, and schooling. I've taught for 16 years here at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Today, I'd like to read the last letter from the book. It's called takeaways. Here it is.

Dear teacher, over the last few years at the end of each of our classes, my students and I sit in a circle and share what we are each taking away from the discussions we had that day.

Takeaways give us an opportunity to reflect on an idea or practice that has mattered to us, provoked us in some way, and/or provided us with a new perspective on gender and sexuality.

In this last letter, I want to summarize the discussions I've included in this book, by sharing my takeaways from the experience of writing letters to teachers about teaching gender and sexuality at school. Here, in no particular order of importance, is a list of some of the important ideas, practices, and perspectives I'm taking away from the letters I've written to you. Number one, LGBTQ students and families don't want to be tolerated, they want to be expected, accepted, and supported for who they are. Number two, in order to do any good, equity policies that protect the rights of LGBTQ students and families have to be implemented.

Number three, gay straight alliances help schools develop a culture that creates a safer and more supportive learning environment for LGBTQ students and families. Number four, teacher allyship makes a difference in the lives of LGBTQ students and families. Number five, allyship without action is an oxymoron. Number six, not everyone's gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. Number seven, not everyone identifies as a boy or girl. There are boys, girls, and people who identify as both or neither. Number eight. When the words that describe transgender and gender diverse people do not even exist in the minds of teachers, the result is traumatic, and the trauma stays. Number nine, incidents of gender based and homophobic bullying must be addressed in classrooms and schools. Number 10, children and youth need support from adults to learn how to stop bullying. Gender-based and homophobic bullying is not necessarily anti-social behaviour. It is social behaviour that polices gender and sexuality in school. To stop bullying in a substantial and sustained way, schools need to create curriculum that teaches students that there are many ways to express their gender, and many ways to love. Number 12, sex education is like visiting a carnival, you can never do it all in one

day, and it can be fun and strange, and sometimes a little scary. Number 13, some people experience both racism and homophobia; we need to fight both together. Number 14, indigenous students who take time to respond to questions in class are thinking about their answers. Number 15, we all need to learn about the impact of residential schools on generations of Indigenous and Two-Spirit students and families and acknowledge the harm we've done. Number 16, gender is fluid and can change. Number 17, sexuality is fluid and can change. Number 18, parents and teachers need to listen to kids when they tell them how they feel about their gender. Number 19, people can identify as LGBTQ and Muslim or Catholic or Jewish or Anglican. Number 20, in 2016, the Anglican diocese of Toronto elected its first openly gay Bishop, Bishop Kevin Robertson, who is raising two children with his partner Mohan Sharma. Number 21, many children and youth are growing up in a culture of queer acceptance; schools have to catch up. Number 22, some children need to make more than one Mother's Day and Father's Day card. Number 23, parents and children living in LGBTQ families make strategic decisions around when to come out and when not to come out. Number 24, putting up posters supporting LGBTQ students and families without working to change school culture is like putting lipstick on a pig. And finally, number 25, creating a school culture that expects, accepts, and supports LGBTQ students and families requires intentionality, advocacy, activism, allyship, a long-term commitment and love. All the best, Tara.

Teaching Gender and Sexuality at School: Letters to Teachers will be out from the Taylor and Francis group at Routledge in December 2018. Information about ordering the book is available on the [LGBTQfamiliespeakout.ca](http://LGBTQfamiliespeakout.ca) website. Alright, that's our podcast for today. If you have any burning questions about gender sexuality and school, send an email to [info@LGBTQfamiliespeakout.ca](mailto:info@LGBTQfamiliespeakout.ca) with the subject line, Ask Gender Sexuality School. In future podcasts, I'll take listeners' questions about issues of gender and sexuality at school and try to answer them with the help of some amazing folks who have been thinking about gender and sexuality for a while. You can find this podcast at [WWW.LGBTQfamiliespeakout.ca](http://WWW.LGBTQfamiliespeakout.ca). This episode was produced with the support of the New College Initiative fund, and from Helgi Audarson Gudmundson, who is a Master of Education student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Thanks to the LGBTQ family speak out team member Kate Reid, who composed the music for the podcast. I'm Tara Goldstein, all the best.