



RESPECTFUL DEBATE: INCLUDING LGBTQIA+ PLAYERS ON AND OFF THE FIELD



[Photo courtesy of Troy Wayrynen - USA TODAY Sports](#)

Is it possible for sports to be inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ community?

Rationale: As students study the history of anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination in sports over the last fifty years, they will encounter divergent viewpoints on the progress that has been made in making sports inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ community. In this lesson, students will weigh opposing perspectives on the removal of barriers for LGBTQIA+ athletes, coaches, and fans to level the playing field and make sports fields and locker rooms safe spaces. Students will engage in a respectful debate, listen to both sides of the argument to regulate their emotions, build collective understanding and historical empathy for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Such skills are necessary for students to practice to support their efficacy in participating in and leading respectful debates for healthy civil discourse.

Objective(s): Students will analyze the history of homophobia and transphobia in sports. Also, they will evaluate - based on this history - whether or not sports have the potential to be transformed into inclusive spaces for members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Target Grade Levels: 5-8

Standards:

- **NJSLS-SS. 6.3.8.CivicsHR.1.** Construct an argument as to the source of human rights and how they are best protected.
- **NJSLSA.R9.** Analyze and reflect on how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- **NJSLSA.SL1.** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Focal SEL Skill: Social Awareness

- Demonstrate an awareness of the differences among individuals, groups, and others' cultural backgrounds.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the need for mutual respect when viewpoints differ.

Materials & Resources

- Notebook
- Pencil/Pen
- Computer connected to a projector for the teacher
- Chromebooks for students with internet connection
- Access to the video: [#OneTeam: Athletes stand up for inclusion in sport](#)
- Access to the web source: [Out on the Fields Timeline of Evidence of Homophobia and Transphobia in Sport](#)
- Copies of the articles "[Sports remain hostile territory for LGBTQ Americans](#)" by Rachel Allison and Chris Knoester, "[Transgender Athletes Face Bans from Girls' Sports in 10 U.S. States](#)", and "[Inclusiveness growing for LGBTQ athletes](#)" by [Diverse Issues in Higher Education](#)

Note: Due to the sensitive material consider building in breaks from the heavy nature of the content to help them process the material. Also, it will be essential to revisit and perhaps revise the Norms with the class, especially with how they focus on respecting others.

Timing: Two 45-minute lessons

Lesson Procedure:

Part I: Introduction & Preparation (30 minutes):

1. Homework Activity

Assign students the following vocabulary terms to define in their notebook so the terms can be accessed during the lesson. Please advise them to refer to [The LGBTQIA Resource Center](#) or [The Human Rights Campaign's Glossary of Terms](#). If time permits, you may review the terms for clarification and to deepen the learning.

- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Coming out
- Gender binary
- Gender non-conforming
- Heterosexuality
- Homophobia
- Homosexuality
- Lesbian
- LGBT
- LGBTQIA+
- Queer
- Questioning
- Sexuality
- Transgender
- Transphobia

2. Do Now (5 minutes)

As students get settled into class, tell them that ***“today we are going to engage in a respectful debate about the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ in sports. We will learn about the history of transphobia and homophobia by analyzing a timeline of 50 years of evidence and research. Then, we will read a recent article published by The Conversation to consider why, after decades of advancement, sports continue to remain less inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ people.”*** To prime their thinking about this issue, please share with them the [#OneTeam: Athletes stand up for inclusion in sport](#) video and record their reactions in their notebooks.

3. Introductory Activity (30 minutes)

To build their background knowledge related to the history of LGBTQIA+ inclusion in sports, post the following web source for students to explore: [Out on the Fields Timeline](#)

[of Evidence of Homophobia and Transphobia in Sport](#). In particular, have them take notes in the form of a T-chart (see attached) of efforts to include LGBTQIA+ people in sports and the effects of doing so.

4. Arrange Student Groups (to be done in advance)

Divide the class into two groups, one group will assume the “pro” side and the other half will assume the “con” side. Tell the students that ***“Today we will engage in an activity called Respectful Debate to practice the skill of perspective taking. This is a skill that you will need to be an effective and involved citizen in your school and community as well as a global citizen. It involves debating not just one side of the debate you agree with but also taking the side of a debate that you don’t agree with”.*** Inform the class that ***“taking the position of a side you disagree with is the essence of Respectful Debate and this part of the lesson will help you build mutual understanding on the topic”.***

5. Prepare for the Respectful Debate (35 minutes)

Distribute materials (optional in advance): Pass out copies of the articles ["Sports remain hostile territory for LGBTQ Americans" by Rachel Allison and Chris Knoester](#), ["Transgender Athletes Face Bans from Girls' Sports in 10 U.S. States"](#), and ["Inclusiveness growing for LGBTQ athletes" by Diverse Issues in Higher Education](#). Tell the students that ***“You are going to read two articles about the inclusion of experiences of LGBTQIA+ people in sports. As you read, please underline/highlight anything that stands out to you as ways that LGBTQIA+ have been included in sports and on the contrary, ways that they have experienced prejudice.”***

Feel free to assign the readings for homework and take notes on the key points to help students familiarize themselves with the issue and maximize class time spent on the debate portion of the lesson.

Generate ideas: Both sides have five minutes to write down as many examples as they can, to support their position.

Assign roles: You may wish to have students assign roles in their respective groups, determining who will be the *note taker*, the *time keeper*, *debaters*, and *debate researchers* who can go back to the lesson resources to gather key points made in the debate. Note the number of debaters can range from one student presenting every point to multiple students presenting fewer points each. Explain to the students that your role is to guide the students through the debate steps.

Part II: Engaging the Respectful Debate (15 minutes)

1. **Reconvene** as a whole class.
2. **Pro side starts the debate:** “Pro” side gives their position and supports with one or two examples to support their position.
3. **Con side summarizes** (“reflects back”) what the “pro” side said and confirms with the pro side whether they summarized accurately. If not, the “pro” side can offer clarifying statements. Then the “con” side gives their own position and supports with one or two examples.
4. **Pro side responds:** “Pro” side summarizes what the “con” side said and confirms with the “con” side whether they summarized accurately. If they did not, they can provide clarifying statements. The “pro” side then has the option of providing one additional example in support of their own position, if they wish.
5. **“Con” side responds:** “Con” side summarizes what the pro side said and confirms with the pro side whether they summarized accurately. If not, the “pro” side can provide clarifying statements. The “con” side then has the option of providing one additional example in support of their own position.

Part III: Debaters Switch Sides for Perspective Taking (15 minutes)

1. **Debaters will swap sides:** Using the same debate statement, have the “pro” side and “con” side switch and repeat steps 1-5 as well as the “generate ideas” and “assign roles” steps of the lesson preparation. The switching of sides is a *critical element of the lesson* to help stretch student thinking to see the topic from a different perspective.

Part IV: Reflection & Assessment (8-10 minutes)

1. Facilitate a conversation about the skill of “Perspective Taking”, which is the ability to see situations from multiple perspectives. Sample questions include:
 - Has your opinion changed at all about the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ athletes in sports from when we started? How so?
 - Did summarizing what the other side said and/or switching sides change your opinion? What about the summary was helpful?

- What lessons does this activity teach us about opinions we have today about issues in the news or historical events?
- How might debates like this help you question issues in history, current events, or the school, and consider other perspectives?
- How does exercising mutual respect for opposing views bring different results from debating opposing views?
- What did it feel like to disagree with someone's points of view but also hold appreciation for their point of view? How might this skill be helpful in society today?

Formative Assessment: After the discussion have students choose any one of the questions, or you may assign a question, to write in on a paper for an exit ticket or a digital padlet posting [padlet website](#). Padlet is a Google-chrome extension. Feel free to modify this step as you see fit for your learners.

Lesson Extension: Review some of the organizations (e.g., [Athlete Ally](#), [LGBT SportSafe](#), and [The You Can Play Project](#)) that have been established to make sports fields and locker rooms more inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ athletes. Use the research as inspiration to consider one way that you could make sports fields and/or locker rooms more inclusive spaces in your community and write a letter to relevant stakeholders. (Note to Teacher: Consider using the PLAN problem-solving strategy as a means of extending the lesson, too.)

Note-Taking Sheet

Cause	Effect
<i>EX: In 1982, Olympian Tom Waddell leads the organization of the first Gay Games, a safe space for LGBT athletes to compete.</i>	<i>Led to a court case and extensive media coverage about the need for gay people to receive "special" treatment by having their own tournament. They still exist today and serve as a means of raising awareness about homophobia in sports.</i>