

The Club Q Massacre: A Conversation Guide for Educators

On Saturday, November 20, 2022, there was a **shooting at an LGBTQ+ nightclub in Colorado**, where at least 5 people were killed and 19 were injured. Many young people and adults are feeling pain, grief, and anger, and can use a space where they can elevate their feelings and share what they need. This guide will support you to host conversations about this tragedy, whether with students, community members, or peers, which in turn would deepen relationships, share resources, and show solidarity.

Educators: Classroom Conversations

Note: This may be the first time some learners may be speaking about LGBTQ people. For additional resources on discussing LGBTQ+ inclusion with your students, visit [GLSEN's Elementary Resources page](#).

Grades K–5

Select a time of day when students are calm and ready to have a serious discussion (such as community meeting). If possible, invite another staff member (such as an aide or social worker) to be in the room during the conversation, in case individual students need personalized support.

Use clear and simple language. It is important to not overwhelm students with details, practice using short clear sentences to explain what happened and to invite students into the conversation.

Sample Conversation Starter & Questions:

- Something sad happened this weekend to a group of people in our country. At a place in Colorado where many LGBTQ+ people there go to dance and enjoy themselves, someone showed up and attacked the people there. At least five people died, and other people got badly hurt.
- Sometimes, there are people who don't understand or like other people.
 - Sometimes those people do things to hurt the people they don't like or understand.
- Does anyone have any questions or feelings they want to share?
- Why is it important to be kind to everyone?
- How can we practice being kind to everyone?
- What can we do when we see someone being unkind, or when we are being unkind ourselves?
- How can we make sure that our classroom community is safe for everyone?

It is important to invite students to ask questions about what happened. It's okay to tell students that you don't know the answers to certain questions.

Encourage students to share how they're feeling by journaling, discussing in small groups, or drawing a picture.

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For older elementary students, if students are interested in taking action after the discussion, you can offer for them to connect with a student-run GSA club, to raise funding for the victims and their families, or to take another action. You can share GLSEN's GSA Guide if students are interested in starting a GSA.

Let students know who they can reach out to in your school community if they want to continue discussing or have more questions.

Close the conversation in a positive way by asking students to share something that makes them special or by completing the Garden of Kindness activity.

Grades 6–12

Coordinate with other staff to determine when during the day these conversations will happen, and who should be in the room for them.

- For example, you may want to align with colleagues so all students have this conversation either during an advisory block or a social studies block.

Share a news article with students about the tragedy. Make sure that you preview the article ahead of time to ensure that it is the right fit for your class. If you aren't able to dedicate enough time for students to review the article, you can use language such as, "This weekend at an LGBTQ+ bar in Colorado, someone came in and killed at least five people and injured many more."

Create an environment that allows students to ask questions safely. It is okay to tell students that you don't know the answers to certain questions.

Sample Conversation Questions:

- Have you heard about this already? How did you feel when you heard it or how do you feel now?
- What impact do you think this has on our communities?
- Why do you think things like this happen?
- How can we make sure that our classroom community is a safer space?
- What can we do to support each other?

Create space for students to share how they're feeling, either whole-group, with a partner, or by journaling. Be sure to let students know if you would like them to share what they are writing or talking about with the full group before you give the instruction.

Provide information on where students can access additional support after the conversation, such as a school counselor or psychologist or community center.

Understand that while the conversation may allow students a space to process grief and elevate feelings, some students may be interested in taking action after the discussion. You can offer to connect them to a student-run GSA club. They also may come up with some ideas themselves, such as raising money for the victims and their families. Students can also sign up to be a part of GLSEN's **National Student Network**.

Close the conversation by asking students to share a one word check out, you can also consider having them complete an LGBTQ+ affirming activity from **One Brick at a Time: Building Inclusive Classrooms**.

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GSA Club Advisors: GSA Conversations

Be prepared for a wide range of responses, feelings and emotions from students. Grief, rage, fear, sadness, numbness, dissociation are all valid ways for students to be feeling during this time. It is important to allow students to process the way that they need to, and not pressure anyone to 'see the bright side' or come up with a solution.

Build a safer space for students to share their feelings, thoughts and needs by working with student club leaders to generate group agreements or norms prior to starting the conversation.

Encourage students to have a dialogue with one another, try not to drive the conversation, but to allow students to talk through things as they need to.

Provide information on where students can access additional support after the conversation, such as a school counselor or psychologist or community center.

Center community care. It is important to highlight the ways in which we can provide care and support to one another during these times. Spend some time identifying ways students and affirming adults can work together to keep each other safe.

Acknowledge the history of the LGBTQ+ liberation movement. Clubs like Club Q in Colorado have been sites of LGBTQ+ liberation and resistance for generations. Resources like the [Stonewall Outloud Toolkit](#) is a great place to start.

Best Practices

Work to establish trust with any youth you are having this conversation with. This might include sharing why you want to have this conversation, what outcomes you want to come from the conversation and how you are going to have the conversation.

Be open to perspectives and feelings of others, including young people - avoid dismissing their experiences due to their age. It is important to remember that the feelings and perspectives of students are valid and informed by their life experiences.

Consider looking to other adults, including elders, as well as youth-serving professionals, such as educators and youth workers, for guidance and resources on how to support students in having this conversation.

Don't compare generational trauma or other traumatic acts of violence against communities against one another. Hate in any form, at any time is unacceptable and can be overwhelming to discuss.

Establish a clear container for the conversation. Let students know exactly how you would like them to participate in the conversation and include some time to debrief at the end.