

ATHLETE IS AGENDER

TRUE STORIES OF LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN SPORTS

Edited by Katherine Locke and Nicole Melleby
Illustrated by Jess Vosseteig

TEACHING TIPS

Readers respond in many ways, including: making connections to themselves, their communities, and their experiences; pursuing their curiosity through discussion, inquiry, and self-expression; and altering their attitudes and behaviors. This guide provides suggestions and resources for supporting and extending students' authentic reading responses. Select activities and resources that best meet the needs and interests of your students.

Because conversations about gender and identity can be personal, it's important to model and reinforce a safe, respectful learning environment. Make space for all voices and experiences. Remind students that everyone deserves dignity and acceptance in your class and school community. Include your school counselor in planning and discussion as necessary to meet students' needs.

READ AND DISCUSS

Read aloud the Introduction to *Athlete Is Agender* and discuss the book's opening remarks with students. What are the editors' purposes for creating this book? What information or ideas stand out? What questions do students have? Record their questions on chart paper or use an online platform like Padlet. Students' questions can guide discussions and inquiry throughout your study of this book.

Read aloud both the "A Note on Pronouns" and "What Is Title IX? And Why Does It Matter?" sections or provide students time to read them independently. Guide students through the same reflective exercise. What information or ideas stand out? What questions do they have? Students can list their questions in a paper or digital notebook and revisit them as they read and discuss *Athlete Is Agender*.

Sports often reflect the cultural beliefs of the societies they exist in—including traditional beliefs about gender. Work with students to develop a grade level accessible definition of "gender" and "stereotype" using examples students recognize such as "only boys play football" or "cheerleading is not a sport."

Ask students guiding questions if they need scaffolding, such as: How have you been taught that athletes are supposed to look and behave? What abilities and talents are connected to specific genders? How can these stereotypes be limiting or harmful?

Talk with students about where stereotypes come from and invite them to notice the gender stereotypes they experience and observe over the next several days. You can add these observations to the class chart or students can record them in their notebooks.

Select from the following prompts and activities as time and interest allow. You may guide students to consider specific essays or the complete anthology.

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

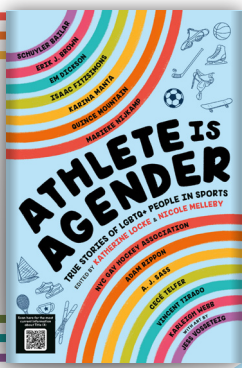
1. Have you ever felt like you didn't fit into other people's label or expectation for you? What helped you feel seen or understood?
2. In Katherine Locke's essay, "For the Love of a Horse; Love of a Body: Horse Riding and Finding My Strength," the author reflects, "Turns out that loving a sport means you can learn to love yourself, too (p. 104)." Invite students to respond in writing or discuss, "What does this quote mean to you?" "Have you ever felt more connected to yourself because of an activity or interest?"
3. Invite students to choose one question from the "What Makes You Feel Strong?" section (pp. 195 & 196) and write a personal response exploring the question and their reaction to it.
4. Identity Maps: Have students create visual "identity maps" including aspects of their interests, values, personalities, and roles (sibling, athlete, musician). Encourage creativity and privacy (sharing optional).



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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

5. Ask students, "What kinds of changes would make your community more inclusive for everyone?" Create opportunities and offer resources for students to investigate local groups that are working for equity and inclusion.
6. Work as a class to design and conduct an anonymous survey about inclusion in school sports or clubs. Share results with participating groups. What trends did you identify from the responses? What needs matter most to your community?

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

7. Invite students to research one of the athletes featured in *Athlete Is Agender*. Examine their background, influences, accomplishments, and pivotal life experiences. Ask students to consider how this athlete is a role model to other athletes and advocates.
8. Students can design advocacy posters calling for inclusivity in school athletics. Use tips from the "How to Be a Good Teammate and Ally" section to design messages or images. Extend by comparing with historical protest art (e.g., civil rights movement, feminist art of the 1970s). If possible, submit to a local campaign or display in school/community spaces.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Athlete Ally. A nonprofit organization promoting LGBTQ+ participation in sports. www.athleteally.org

Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies for Teaching Social Comprehension by Sara K. Ahmed (Heinemann, 2018). Educator resource for teaching social comprehension and fostering students' positive identity development. Includes suggestions for identity mapping and reflective journaling, class discussion, and literacy activities.

www.heinemann.com/products/e09970.aspx

Gender Diverse Youth Sports Inclusivity Toolkit. A resource guide for inclusive transgender and nonbinary youth sports best practices.

genderdiversity.org/gender-diverse-youth-sport-inclusivity-toolkit/

The Trevor Project: A Guide to Being An Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Young People.

An introductory educational resource that covers a wide range of topics and best practices on how to support transgender and nonbinary people.

www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/guide/a-guide-to-being-an-ally-to-transgender-and-nonbinary-youth/

New York University: Trans Inclusive Practices in the Classroom. Cultivating More Trans and Non-binary Inclusive Classroom Settings.

<https://www.nyu.edu/life/global-inclusion-and-diversity/learning-and-development/toolkits/trans-inclusive-classrooms.html>



These Teaching Tips were prepared by Donalyn Miller. Find her at bookwhisperer.com, theauthorvillage.com, on Twitter at @donalynbooks, and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/donalynbooks.



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