

How to queer your educational experience

by Coral Maloney

DO-GOODER ALERT: *These ideas for students of all ages are not exhaustive or refined. Most of them require nuanced and mindful attention. Advice: Do your best, with kindness. Be prepared to be challenged.*

1 Use *they* for all instructors and classmates unless they verbally inform you of their preferred pronoun. Do this in casual conversations as well as during formal presentations. Or, avoid pronouns altogether and just use people's names a lot (yes, it can be awkward).

2 Ask yourself why you're even in school.

3 Look up Coy Mathis, the 6-year-old transgender girl in Colorado who was recently barred from using the girls' restroom at her school, and whose parents are homeschooling their kids as they take the school board to court. Then find out what your local school board's policy is.

4 Start a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) in your school, workplace or church. Weather backlash by finding supportive people doing similar work, and by taking breaks. Expect – and welcome – positive feedback.

5 Slip info about famous queer historical figures into textbooks at the library or bookstore. Make sure they're not all white men. History is diverse.

6 Learn how indigenous cultures have historically valued queer people.

7 Draw a map of the world and circle the countries you know something about. Look up the places you've never heard of. Ask yourself why you've never heard of them.

8 Read fairy tales but change male pronouns to female pronouns. Then change parts of the story that conflict with what you believe in most. Then write a completely different fairy tale and share it. Then _____.

9 Love yourself in your favourite form. Don't hide how you feel.

10 Quit school. Find other people who've quit school. Go back, but switch programs. If you were in welding, take art history. If you were in sociology, take physics. Make connections between your interests.

11 Assume that everything is interrelated, and what you do matters.

Coral Maloney lives in Winnipeg. Coral's favourite teachers are time and place, and all the living that happens there.