

The Gender Inclusive Committee at California School for the Deaf had the goal of creating a webpage with ASL signs and definitions for LGBTQIA+. We knew that we wanted to include the word, definition and sign. Leah Bornstein led the project.

We recruited various persons from our campus who were interested in being signers for the webpage. It was an amazing process. We learned a lot as we discussed the meaning for each of the words, and our discussions included many of our life stories. After we had fully analyzed the meaning for a word, we then translated it into ASL. We actually included a few signers who were heterosexual. We were thrilled to have their involvement and their support. For each word, we went through a process to come up with the translation. First, the person would get up to sign the word. They would receive feedback about their translation. After that, they would get up and try to sign it again. We learned a lot about different gender identities... gender expression, sexual orientation, and phobias. The whole process was very deep. It was a lot of work analyzing all those words.

We got in touch with different community leaders because we wanted to have consistency with the sign choices. For some of the words, we decided that the best option was just to spell them. One example was the word *queer*. Many people sign *queer* as “rainbow”. We decided it would be better to spell it because there is so much deep and heavy history behind the word. We needed to find the right sign based on the history of the queer movement. Originally, the word *queer* was used to mock or label someone, but it was reclaimed to become one of the most powerful words in the Queer Community. We couldn’t find a sign that fully fit the meaning so we decided to spell it.

Really, I can even put into words how proud I am to have been a part of this. The Gender Inclusive Committee has a very important role on campus. Many Deaf school and mainstreamed programs don’t have a program like this. And it means a lot to have LGBTQIA+ resources on our CSD website. You can navigate through that section of the website to find books, vocabulary, appropriate curriculum for each grade level. How families can have meaningful discussions with their children. It is not only for California; it is for all over. Our goal is to have LGBTQIA+ resources available to everyone.

We are also proud to have so many great leaders and role models right here on campus so that our students are able to thrive on their life journey and be themselves. California School for the Deaf is truly a model for the nation.

The Gender Inclusive Committee would like to thank everyone who did the signing for this project as well as the videographers. Thank you from the Gender Inclusive Committee!