

# Serving and Honoring Gender Diversity in Education: A World of Possibilities

A Conference Presentation

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By

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Gender diversity is a global issue ranging world-wide from acceptance to persecution. Quite often acceptance and support for these students are found **first** in gifted programs, but educators continue to ask for advice, support, and resources in dealing with gender diversity issues. Addressing these issues in the classroom is important to support LGBTQ+ students and to inform all students on sexual minority/gender issues in order to create understanding and empathy for LGBTQ+ youth. A current, important side effect in the field of gifted education is the growing concern about the social and emotional nature of giftedness and meeting the needs of special populations within the gifted population. This includes the special population of gifted Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The National Association for Gifted Children has addressed this rising concern by revising its *Position Statement on GLBTQ* (NAGC, 2015) and publishing one of the first *NAGC Select Series: Needs and Approaches for Educators and Parents of Gifted Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Students* (Friedrichs, Manzella, & Seney, 2017). This is not just an issue in the United States, as evidenced by *National Geographic's* special issue entitled: *Gender Revolution* (Goldberg, 2017) and *Time Magazine's* themed issue on gender issues, entitled *Beyond He or She: How a new generation is redefining the meaning of gender* (Steinmetz, 2017).

We are beginning to recognize, to name, and to attend to this *elephant in the room*. In this session, some of these issues will be identified and guidance and resources will be provided for individuals who are seeking to serve and honor LGBTQ+ students. The rapidly changing and growing definitions that are being used by the LGBTQ+ community, by psychologists, and by social workers will be discussed. This is important for understanding the many variations of gender

identity in this population in order to identify and to respond to their needs. Educators, parents, and other invested professionals need to be aware of how each group and members within each group self-identifies, so that we approach and respectfully address the needs and concerns of members within each of these groups.

Strategies, guidelines, and resources to support these gifted youth will be presented. One significant strategy to be shared is to encourage the investigation of the successes of prominent LGBTQ adults, both historical and current individuals, thus providing positive role and identification models. In addition, suggestions for appropriate LGTBQ friendly curriculum will be provided. A model lesson plan with gender diversity inclusion will be shared as time permits. The focus of this session, is to provide strategies, guidelines, and resources to understand, to support, and to nurture gifted LGBTQ+ youth.

**Please Note:** The terms LGBTQ and GLBTQ are used interchangeably here. LGBTQ seems to be the more current usage, but GLBTQ is used when referenced from a specific resource.

### **Talking Points for This Session:**

Talking Point One: GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum Defined

Talking Point Two: Why is having GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum important?

Talking Point Three: Guide Lines for Developing GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum

Talking Point Four: What are some resources? And review a suggested Unit on Forms of Poetry.

**Talking Point One:** *Defining GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum: The Term GLBTQ [or LGBT] Inclusive Curriculum is also used.*

- GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum exists when study is based on lessons that avoid bias and include positive representations of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning [GLBTQ] people, history, and events.
- GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum is inclusive and affirming of all students.
- GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum promotes safer school environments for all students.
- This inclusive curriculum results in less hostile school experiences and increased feeling of connectedness to the school community.
- Unfortunately, the vast majority of students do not receive a GLBTQ inclusive curriculum.
- The Concept of Curriculum as Window and Mirror (Style, 1996)
  - Curriculum can serve as a mirror that reflects individuals and their experiences back to themselves.

- Curriculum can serve as a window when it introduces and provides opportunities to understand the experiences and perspectives of those who possess different identities.
- When applied to GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum, these mirrors and windows help create a more positive environment and healthy self-concept for GLBTQ students while raising the awareness of all students.

**Talking Point Two:** *Why is having GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum important?*

- GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum benefits ALL STUDENTS by:
  - Exposing them to more inclusive and accurate accounts of history. Helping them to have better understandings of GLBTQ people and their historic contributions.
  - Encourages them to question stereotypes about GLBTQ people.
  - Promotes acceptance of all people who differ from themselves.
- GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum benefits GLBTQ STUDENTS by:
  - Validating their existence and experiences
  - Reinforces their value and self-worth
  - Provides space for their voice.
- Goals/Principles of GLSEN LGBT Curriculum: Incorporate LGBT history, themes, and people into your curriculum!
  - Ensure that your LGBT students see themselves reflected in your lessons.
  - Create opportunities for all of your students to gain a more complex and authentic understanding of the world around them.
  - Encourage respectful behavior, critical thinking, and social justice.
  - GLSEN website has examples of prepared curriculum units. Very Good!

**Talking Point Three:** *Guide Lines for Developing GLBTQ Friendly Curriculum*

- The first question, we must ask is: *What do I need to do to make the lessons I teach more GLBTQ Friendly?*
- Analyze and identify the extent to which GLBTQ issues and content is already present in current curriculum.
- Then fill in the gaps with lessons, material, content, etc. that provides opportunities to deepen students' understanding of their world, GLBTQ people, history, and events.
- Insert into your content area, the contributions of GLBTQ individuals. When you are studying an area or individual acknowledge the gay identities. For example, if looking at the Scientific Method, acknowledge the gay identity of Frances Bacon, who is credited with the creation of the Scientific Method, or in looking at the works of authors such as Oscar Wilde.

➤ **PLANNING: Lessons for LGBTQ+ Inclusion**

- History: Include civil rights leader Bayard Rustin [1912-1987] when teaching about the 1963 March on Washington.
- Art and Science: Acknowledge the gay identity of Francis Bacon (creator of the Scientific Method) or Frida Kahlo's [1907-1954, Mexican Artist] bisexuality when studying their works.

**Talking Point Four: Resources**

- GLSEN Resources: [www.GLSEN.ORG](http://www.GLSEN.ORG)
- G-Squared: [www.gsquaredyouthadvocate.com](http://www.gsquaredyouthadvocate.com).
- List of GLBTQ people: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_gay,\\_lesbian\\_or\\_bisexual\\_people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_gay,_lesbian_or_bisexual_people)
- List of GLBTQ people: <http://algbtical.org/index.htm>
- NAGC Position Statement on *Supporting Gifted Students with Diverse Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities*.
- A good list of Definitions: <https://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-lgbtq-term-definitions/>

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# Unit Lesson Blueprint

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**Subject:** Language Arts: 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> Grades [GT]

**Date:** November, 2018

**Title of Unit:** Exploring Forms of Poetry

**Summary/Goals:**

In this unit, students will explore various poetical forms, analyze the forms, and select at least two formats on which to model of their own writing. Point-of-view will be discussed as important element in this unit as well. The *Affective Goal* is to sensitize students to GBLTQ issues, especially bullying and violence.

**Standards:** *Common Core Standards: English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Literature » Grades 11-12*

*Key Ideas and Details:* CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3 [Impact of Author's Choices]

*Craft and Structure:* CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6 [Point-of-view]

*Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:* CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7  
[Multiple Interpretations]

**Resources:** *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* by Lesléa Newman

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**Read Aloud:** Selections from *Out of Wonder: Poems Celebrating Poets* by Kwame Alexander

**Activities:**

1. Introduce *Out of Wonder*: its concept and background. After selecting and reading several poems provide time for students to react via class discussion:
  - a. What caught their ear?
  - b. What inspired them?
  - c. What is their reaction to contemporary poets writing in the styles of their favorite poets?
  - d. Are you aware of the poets celebrated?
  - e. The purpose of this discussion is to make them comfortable with poetry, its style, and its use of words and phrases. See especially Alexander's definition of poetry in the *Preface*, second paragraph.
2. If at all possible, have multiple copies and have students read before discussing.
3. Introduce the book, *October Mourning*:
  - a. Provide back ground on the author:

- i. Author of *Heather Has Two Mommies* (2016 new edition), *Mommy, Mama and Me* (2009) and *Daddy, Papa and Me* (2009): Children's books depicting diversity of families.
  - ii. Author of short story: *A Letter to Harvey Milk*, which has been adapted for the stage, is another genre that could be investigated.
- 4. Direct student's attention to page 105: *Explanation of Poetic Forms*.
  - a. Using these pages as a guide, refer back to the various poems and discuss the form, noting the point-of-view from which it is told.
  - b. How do the different points-of-view impact both the form and the message?
- 5. Have students individually or in teams or triads research and investigate selected forms. The results of this research are to be shared with the class. Students may self-select which forms they will research or they can be assigned in order that all forms are covered.
- 6. Students will select at least two formats as a model for their own poems, which they will write.
- 7. The students' poems will be evaluated by **student-designed** rubrics that reflect the selected format.

### Projects:

Student writing of at least two forms identified in *October Mourning*.

### Evaluation:

Evaluation by Student Designed Rubrics. If unfamiliar with rubrics appropriate for gifted learners please see: *Assessing Differentiated Student Products: A Protocol for Development and Evaluation* (2014, Prufrock Press) by Julia Roberts and Tracy Inman.

### Notes:

- 1. *Out of Wonder* is a collection of 20 poems written by three contemporary poets who write in the style of a designated favorite poet. The poems provide another model for writing.
- 2. One purpose of this unit is to introduced a GLBTQ Friendly study of poetry and poetical forms. The situation and background of this novel should be discussed, best after the book has been read.
- 3. The recent move of Matthew Shepard's ashes to the National Cathedral, Washington D. C. in October of this year makes this unit very contemporary and further emphasizes the importance of the issue covered in the book. News coverage and filming of this event could well be introduced.
- 4. Extension (Optional): Have students identify GLBTQ poets and research their lives and works.
- 5. Other Resources for Extension:
  - a. *A Letter to Harvey Milk: Short Stories* (2004, U of Wisconsin Press) by Lesléa Newman.
  - b. *Archive of Hope: Harvey Milk's Speeches and Writings* (2013, U of California Press) by Harvey Milk and Jason Edward Black.
  - c. *A Letter to Harvey Milk: The Muscial*: Lyrics by Ellen M. Schwarts, with additonal lyrics by Cheryl Stern, Music by Laura I. Kramer, and book by Jerry James, Schawarz, Stern, and Kramer.