



# Gifted LGBTQ Toolbox

## *For Teachers*

### Contents

Introduction .....	1
Curriculum, Instructional Strategies, and Planning .....	5
Professional Development.....	8
References and Resource .....	10



## Introduction

Many educational groups are concerned about how best to meet the particular needs of students with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. District and school leaders plan for educational opportunities and teacher education that respond to the learning needs of all students. However, not all districts and schools have leaders and teachers with backgrounds in gifted and talented education who *also* know how best to address the particular needs of gifted students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and/or questioning (gifted LGBTQ).

Due to the limited information available about gifted learners with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, NAGC convened a task force of administrators and educators to develop tools that classroom educators can use to inform themselves and leverage as the starting point for advocacy and implementation of services for gifted LGBTQ students.

The materials in the toolbox address:

- the rationale for gifted LGBTQ support services
- the critical elements of gifted LGBTQ education programming
- suggestions for addressing gifted LGBTQ student social-emotional needs



NAGC believes in supporting the success of all gifted students. Factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, level of English proficiency, socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual orientation, and gender identity should not become barriers to opportunities for gifted students. The purpose of this toolbox is to supply information specific to enabling gifted LGBTQ students to participate and thrive in school. NAGC recommends that educators demonstrate understanding of these students and support them in maximizing their potential.

Changing the historical trend of discrimination against gifted LGBTQ students and the lack of role models in curriculum and educational resources requires a commitment to long-term, systematic evaluation of curriculum and program improvement. They may not only feel different from other youth because of their gifts, but may also feel isolated due to their sexual orientation and/or gender expression (Cross, 2013; NAGC, 2015; Sedillo, 2013; Treat, 2008, 2016; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009). Interventions are necessary to support unique psychosocial needs of gifted LGBTQ students (Friedrichs, 2012; Peterson & Rischar, 2000; Treat, 2016; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009). Administrators, teachers, and counselors require specific, ongoing professional development to understand the needs of gifted LGBTQ students (NAGC, 2015; Sedillo, 2013; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009). To ensure success for gifted LGBTQ students, NAGC recommends these areas of focus:

1. Curriculum, Instructional Strategies, and Planning
2. Professional Development



Before these two areas of focus are addressed, there is statistical information that provide support and/or rationale for the recommendations contained in this toolbox.

### Statistical Information

LGBTQ students in American schools continue to face aggression and negative environments on a regular basis. (GLSEN, 2016):

- 98.1% LGBTQ students heard “gay” used in a negative way (e.g., “That’s so gay”) at school; 67.4% heard these remarks frequently or often, and 93.4% reported that they felt distressed because of this language.
- 95.8% of LGBTQ students heard other types of homophobic remarks (e.g., “dyke” or “faggot”); 58.8% heard this type of language frequently or often.
- 95.7% of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks about gender expression (not acting “masculine enough” or “feminine enough”); 62.9% heard these remarks frequently or often.
- 85.7% of LGBTQ students heard negative remarks specifically about transgender people, like “tranny” or “he/she”; 40.5% heard these remarks frequently or often.
- 56.2% of students reported hearing homophobic remarks from their teachers or other school staff, and 63.5% of students reported hearing negative remarks about gender expression from teachers or other school staff.

These statistics inform educators and parents about the experiences of LGBTQ students in school. When the element of giftedness is compounded with gender/sexual minority status, the students are, in the view of classmates, teachers, and



administrators, twice other. This dual status makes these youth even more vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse at school than either giftedness or gender/sexual minority status would on its own (Manzella, 2012).



## Curriculum, Instructional Strategies, and Planning

LGBTQ students are present in every school across America regardless of whether they have publicly identified themselves as such (Southern Poverty Law Review, 2017). The following recommendations should be taken into consideration when preparing appropriate curriculum, instructional strategies, and programmatic planning for gifted LGBTQ students:

- Confirm programming and assessments that accommodate the ways gifted youth with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities display intellectual, academic, creative, artistic, and leadership excellence. (Friedrichs, 2012; Friedrichs, Manzella, & Seney; 2017; Treat, 2008; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009).
- Ensure that curriculum, including curriculum for gifted youth, includes positive examples of individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (National Association for Gifted Children, 2015; Treat, 2008; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009).
- Incorporate LGBTQ issues as a natural part of classroom conversations (Sedillo, 2016; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009). However, refrain from using an “out” gifted LGBTQ student to act as a spokesperson for gay-rights issues in the classroom, Though the student may be informed on the topic, he or she might not be comfortable being the voice for LGBTQ students in class or on campus (Keener, 2013).
- Provide academic programming that empowers these students to develop their



unique learning potential and interests. Include sexual-minorities in the standard curriculum and whole-classroom discussions of sexual-minority topics (National Association for Gifted Children, 2015; Peterson & Richar, 2000; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009).

- Understand that home/residence issues (not out at home, abusive family members, homelessness, economic/logistical challenges) may make attending class difficult, creating the need for tailored approaches to grading—including options that may not penalize for absences (Manzella, 2014; Sedillo, 2013).
- Ensure that career education avoids stereotypes and encourages LGBTQ students to consider careers that are appropriate for their talents and interests (NAGC, 2015; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009).
- Check that non-traditional gender roles are honored and included in classroom discussions and in curricula (Sedillo, 2016).
- Provide college counseling that contain universities supportive of sexual-minority youth (Friedrichs, 2012).
- Include positive role models in gifted education—experts and community members who have diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (e.g., guest speakers, mentors, job shadowing, internships with culturally-sensitive mentors, etc.) (NAGC, 2015; Sedillo, 2013; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009).
- Verify programming efforts address a range of academic, social-emotional, and career needs related to the healthy, affirming development of gifted students with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, including provisions for student



safety, acceptance and appreciation of these students, and development of self-advocacy abilities in these students and for those with same-gender parents (NAGC; 2015; Pearson, Muller, & Wilkinson, 2007).

- Use gender-neutral language in school correspondence and documentation that respects diverse sexual orientations and gender identities of parents/guardians, educators, and students (NAGC, 2015; Sedillo, 2016; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009).
- Work toward safe schools/safe zones to protect and nurture the unique sensitivities of Gifted LGBTQ youth (NAGC, 2015; Sedillo, 2016).
- Provide opportunities to participate in Gay, Straight, Alliance / Queer, Straight, Alliance (GSAs/QSAs) (Sedillo, 2013; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009).
- Develop policies to accommodate gender expression that may not conform to social stereotypes (Sedillo, 2016; Whittenburg & Treat, 2009).
- Help families nurture LGBTQ students' special strengths, healthy social and emotional development, and self-advocacy skills for both in and out of school ([NAGC, 2015](#); Sedillo, 2013, 2016).
- Ally yourself with LGBTQ students. Visible support and small acts of kindness can do a lot to help these students feel safer, less lonely, and worthy of respect and kindness (Southern Poverty Law Review, 2017).





## Professional Development

- Teachers and gifted coordinators should participate in professional development that allows them to enhance their cultural responsiveness and creation/sustainment of safe and productive environments for these gifted LGBTQ (Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan, 2008; NAGC, 2015).
- The unique educational needs and learning characteristics of gifted LGBTQ students should be emphasized in professional development (NAGC, 2015).
- Increasing curricular visibility, to support gifted students from diverse gender/sexuality backgrounds in seeing themselves reflected in the full range of academic subjects, should be a focus for educators learning about and dedicated to supporting these students (NAGC, 2015).
- Educators should be provided opportunities to study the literature and conduct research pertaining to gifted LGBTQ students. (NAGC, 2015; Sedillo, 2015; Treat, 2008).
- Educators at all levels should examine the difference between tolerance (which implies enduring the differences of others) and integration (which supports integrating in the strengths of all students) when seeking strategies to create positive classroom environments (Danuta Walters, 2014).
- Institute a “no tolerance” policy regarding homophobic remarks. Confront slurs/slights that students and staff may overhear. A large number of students use terms like “That’s so gay!,” “dyke,” and “fag” without thinking, but need to be



told in no uncertain terms that such speech is not acceptable (Southern Poverty Law Review, 2017).



## References and Resource

- Briggs, C. J., Reis, S. M., & Sullivan, E. E. (2008). A national view of promising programs and practices for culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse gifted and talented students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 52, 131–145.
- Cianciotto, J., & Cahill, S. (2003). *Education policy: Issues affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth*. New York, NY: The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute. Retrieved from [http://www.thetaskforce.org/static\\_html/downloads/reports/reports/EducationPolicy.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/EducationPolicy.pdf)
- Cross, T. (2013). *Suicide among gifted children and adolescents*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Danuta Walters, S. (2014). *The tolerance trap: How god, genes, and good intentions are sabotaging gay equality*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Friedrichs, T. P. (2012). Counseling gifted GLBT students along paths to freedom. In T. L. Cross & J. R. Cross (Eds.), *Handbook for counselors serving students with gifts and talents* (pp. 153–174). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Friedrichs, T., Manzella, T., & Seney, R. (2017). *Needs and approaches for educators and parents of gifted gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students*. Washington, DC: NAGC.



- Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN). (2016). *GLSEN 2015 National School Climate Survey: Executive Summary*. Retrieved from <https://www.glsen.org/article/2015-national-school-climate-survey>
- Keener, A. G. (2013). G-squared: Supporting your gifted LGBT student. *SENGVine*, 105. Retrieved from <http://sengifted.org/g-squared-supporting-your-gifted-lgbt-student/>
- Manzella, T. R. (2012). *Twice other: Cultural challenges faced by gifted and GLBTQ adolescents* (Unpublished master's thesis). Metropolitan State University, St. Paul, MN.
- Manzella, T. R. (2014, July/August). A parent's perspective: Gifted and GLBTQ. 2e: *Twice Exceptional Newsletter*, 1–3.
- Pearson, J., Muller, C., & Wilkinson, L. (2007). Adolescent same-sex attraction and academic outcomes: The role of school attachment and engagement. *Social Problems*, 54, 523–542.
- Peterson, J. S., & Rischar, H. (2000). Gifted and gay: A study of the adolescent experience. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 44, 149–164.
- National Association for Gifted Children. (2015). *Supporting gifted students with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities*. Retrieved from <http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Position%20Statement/GLBTQ%20%28sept%202015%29.pdf>



- Sedillo P. J. (2013). A retrospective study of gay gifted, young adult males' perceptions of giftedness and suicide (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest. (UMI No. 3601219).
- Sedillo P. J. (2015) Gay gifted adolescent suicide and suicidal ideation literature: Research barriers and limitations. *Gifted Child Today*, 38, 114–120.
- Sedillo, P. J. (2016, November). A response to the six social/emotional issues for Gifted LGBTQ students. *Teaching for High Potential*, 7.
- Southern Poverty Law Review. (2017). *Tips for teachers: Ally yourself with LGBT students*. Retrieved from <http://www.tolerance.org/toolkit/tips-teachers-ally-yourself-lgbt-students>
- Treat, A. R. (2008). *Beyond analysis by gender: Overexcitability dimensions of sexually diverse populations and implications for gifted education* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest. (UMI No. 3344606)
- Treat, A. R. (2016, November). Gifted LGBTQ social-emotional issues. *Teaching for High Potential*, 6–7.
- Whittenburg, B., & Treat, A. R. (2009). Shared characteristics of gifted and sexually diverse youth. In N. L. Hafenstein & J. A. Castellano (Eds.), *Perspectives in gifted education: Diverse gifted learners* (Vol. 4, pp. 130–165). Denver, CO: University of Denver.

## Resources



- Blumfield, W. J. (2016). *Some notable same-sex and all-sex loving and gender non-conforming personalities in history*. Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/29512758/Some\\_Notable\\_Same-Sex\\_and\\_All-Sex-Loving\\_and\\_Gender\\_Non-Conforming\\_Personalities\\_in\\_History](https://www.academia.edu/29512758/Some_Notable_Same-Sex_and_All-Sex-Loving_and_Gender_Non-Conforming_Personalities_in_History)
- Cohn, S. J. (2003). The gay gifted learner: Facing the challenge of homophobia and antihomosexual bias in schools. In J. A. Castellano (Ed.), *Special populations in gifted education: Working with diverse gifted learners* (pp. 123–149). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- College Choice. (2017). *50 best colleges for LGBTQ students*. Retrieved from <http://www.collegechoice.net/rankings/50-best-lgbt-friendly-colleges-and-universities/>
- Cross, T. L., Gust-Brey, K., & Ball, P. B. (2002). A psychological autopsy of the suicide of an academically gifted student: Researchers' and parents' perspectives. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 46, 247–264.
- Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 national school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York, NY: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.
- Madrone, K.H. (2017). *12 ways to make your classroom safe for LGBTQ students*. Retrieved from <https://freespiritpublishingblog.com/2017/08/21/12-ways-to-make-your-classroom-safe-for-lgbtq-students/>



Manzella, T. (n.d.). *G2 youth advocate*. Retrieved from

<http://gsquaredyouthadvocate.com/>

Manzella, T. R. (2014, July/August). A parent's perspective: Gifted and GLBTQ. 2e: *Twice Exceptional Newsletter*, 1–3.

Manzella, T. R. (2014, October). Home for the holidays: Reducing the stress for your gifted GLBTQ kid. *Parenting for High Potential*, 2–3.

Peterson, J. S., & Ray, K. E. (2007). Bullying among the gifted: The subjective experience. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50, 252–269.

Treat, A.R., & Whittenburg, B. (2006). Gifted gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender annotated bibliography: A resource for educators of gifted GLBT students. *Journal of Secondary Gifted Education*, 17(4), 230–243.

## Web Links

- **Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**: GLSEN's goal is to ensure that each member of every school community is valued and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

<https://www.glsen.org/>

- **GSA Network**: Connects school-based GSAs to each other and community resources through peer support, leadership development, and training.

<https://gsanetwork.org/>



- **Safe Schools Coalition:** Offers resources in support of LGBTQ youth for educators, parents/guardians, and youth, including resources for youth and by topics, type, people who use them, and location.

<http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org/>

