
**APPROPRIATE EDUCATION FOR
GIFTED GLBT STUDENTS**

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) periodically issues policy statements dealing with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. Policy statements represent the official convictions of the organization.

All policy statements approved by the NAGC Board of Directors are consistent with the organization's belief that education in a democracy must respect the uniqueness of all individuals, the broad range of cultural diversity present in our society, and the similarities and differences in learning characteristics that can be found within any group of students. NAGC is fully committed to national goals that advocate both excellence and equity for all students. We believe that the best way to achieve excellence and equity is through differentiated educational opportunities, resources, and encouragement for all students.

Many educational groups, at the national, state, and local levels, are concerned about how best to meet the particular needs of students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT). NAGC, which has an organizational policy of non-discrimination toward GLBT persons, supports practices of equitable and sensitive treatment of GLBT youth and recommends that educators demonstrate understanding and equity toward gifted GLBT students in their schools.

Similar to other gifted youth, GLBT students may have strengths in any of the federally defined areas of giftedness: intellectual development, academic achievement, creativity, visual and performing arts, and leadership. Further, like other gifted youth, these students are present across races, genders, ethnic groups, income levels, geographical locations, religions, and abilities/disabilities. However, unlike most other groups of gifted students, GLBT youth may be placed in social-emotional double jeopardy: they may not only feel different from other youth because of their gifts but they may also feel isolated due to their sexual identities. These young people may experience unusually high rates of verbal and physical harassment, substance abuse, sexually-transmitted diseases, homelessness, and differential access to school services that can contribute to substantial problems such as dropping out of school, contemplation and completion of suicide, and many other by-products of social alienation.

It is critical to note that GLBT youth may be known or not known as sexual minorities to educators. Regardless of whether these youth are “out” or “not out” as GLBT persons, the assessments and programming that they receive should be sensitive to GLBT culture, taking into account the special ways in which gifted GLBT youth may display intellectual, academic, creative, artistic, and leadership excellence. Both in classrooms and school libraries, programming efforts for gifted GLBT youth should address a range of academic, affective, and career needs related to their development as gifted *and* GLBT people. Academic programming should be differentiated, empowering gifted GLBT students to develop their unique learning potential and interests in GLBT-sensitive school settings. Affective programming needs to provide for student safety, evoke acceptance and appreciation, develop social skills, and nurture self-advocacy abilities. Career education should encourage gifted GLBT youth to consider a range of careers as wide as the span of their talents and interests rather than urge them into stereotypically gay or stereotypically straight positions in which they must submerge their true identities.

Whether engaged in academic, affective, or career programming, educators dealing with gifted GLBT students must model openness, fairness, and sensitivity regarding sexual-orientation issues. Because school environments may not support GLBT students, pre-service and in-service teachers, counselors, and other educational professionals must be trained specifically to create a safe and productive environment for gifted GLBT youth. A GLBT-supportive school atmosphere encourages adult and student acceptance of others and creates an environment where students develop self-understanding and pride. Only through such purposeful support of these students' development as *both* gifted *and* GLBT will these students be able to develop fully.