Helping LGBTQIA+ Students Thrive: Educator Responsibilities

Jennifer L. Martin, Ph.D.
Kerry John Poynter, M.A.
Jennifer L. Martin is an assistant professor in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Illinois at Springfield. Prior to working in higher education, Dr. Martin worked in public education for 17 years, 15 of those as the department chair of English at an urban alternative high school for students labeled at-risk for school failure in metropolitan Detroit. She is the editor of Racial Battle Fatigue: Insights from the Front Lines of Social Justice Advocacy (Recipient of the 2016 AERA Division B’s Outstanding Book Recognition Award), and co-author of Teaching for Educational Equity: Case Studies for Professional Development and Principal Preparation, Volumes 1 and 2 (Roman & Littlefield). Her most recent edited volume is Feminist Pedagogy, Practice, and Activism: Improving Lives for Girls and Women (Routledge, 2017).
Kerry John Poynter

Kerry Poynter has over 20 years of experience working with gender and sexual minority students in higher education at a number of institutions including Columbia University, Duke University, New York University, and Western Michigan University. His work with Lavender Graduation ceremonies was cited by *Instinct Magazine* as the best of LGBTQ offerings on college campuses. He is the editor and author of *Safe Zones: Training Allies of LGBTQIA+ Young Adults* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017) and has articles that appear in About Campus, *The Journal of LGBT Youth*, *The New Directions in Student Services* series, and *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*.
Objectives

Participant Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the LGBTQIA+ acronym, and various associated vocabulary terms.
2. Understand LGBTQIA+ based bullying and harassment and their implications for students.
3. Understand concrete steps to take to become a better supporter of LGBTQIA+ students, and strategies to create more inclusive classrooms for LGBTQIA+ students.
Why Should I Care?

★ LGBTQ history curriculum: mandated in four states and this number will likely increase.
★ Title IX
★ Bullying/Harassment/Suicide rates
★ Would you be ready to teach topics inclusive of sexual and gender minorities?
★ How would you prepare?
Why is this Topic Important: Stats

★ **Health:** LGBTQ+ youth who reported higher levels of family rejection during adolescence are three times more likely to use illegal drugs.

★ **Family & Shelter:** Studies indicate that between 25% and 50% of homeless youth are LGBTQ+ and on the streets because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in foster care, juvenile detention, and among homeless youth.

★ **Harassment & Violence:** About two-thirds of LGBTQ+ students reported having ever been sexually harassed (e.g., sexual remarks made, being touched inappropriately) in school in the past year. The average GPA for students who were frequently physically harassed because of their sexual orientation was half a grade lower than that of other students.
Stats on Sexual & Gender Minority Youth

CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2017):

★ 1.3 million kids, or roughly 8% of all high school students in America, report being lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

★ Nearly 18% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students reported having been raped at some point in their lives—more than three times the rate of straight students.

★ Twice as likely to be bullied, both online and on school property, and more than twice as likely to stay home from school to avoid violence they felt might befall them on the way there, or on school grounds.

★ Almost 30% had attempted suicide, more than four times the rate for straight students, and 60% reported feeling “sad or hopeless,” twice the rate of their straight peers.
Stats on Sexual & Gender Minority Youth (GLSEN)

★ LGBTQ students are at particularly high risk for harassment, which underscores the need to ensure that they have equal access to education.
★ GLSEN’s survey found that about 70 percent of LGBTQ students experienced verbal harassment at school based on their sexual orientation, and more than half reported harassment based on gender expression or gender identity.
★ Nearly 30 percent of LGBTQ students were physically harassed for their sexual orientation while almost a quarter were physically harassed for their gender expression or gender identity. More than 57 percent of LGBTQ students reported being sexually harassed.
★ This mistreatment has significant negative effects, such as causing the affected students to miss school, which leads to lower GPAs and a decreased desire to pursue postsecondary education.
Stats on Sexual & Gender Minority Youth

Department of Education Complaints:

- Transgender students were overrepresented; 42.6 percent of all SOGI-related complaints were filed based on gender identity, even though transgender students make up between 6 and 21 percent of the LGBTQ student population.
- Harassment was the most frequently occurring allegation in the dataset, with 75.9 percent of all complaints alleging sexual or gender harassment. Comparing the data with other publicly available Department of Education information from fiscal years 2013 through 2016, allegations of harassment appeared more frequently in complaints based on LGBTQ identity than in the general population—72.5 percent versus 19.9 percent.
- One in 6 complaints—14.8 percent—resulted in an action involving a correction in the school’s policies or practices to benefit the student.
A Word on Title IX

“LGBTQ students *do* have legal protections under Title IX, even if the Department of Education is failing to enforce them. More and more courts have accepted the logical conclusion that discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity are inherently forms of sex discrimination. In 2016 and 2017, the U.S. appellate courts for the 6th and 7th circuits, respectively, held that barring a student from using sex-segregated facilities in accordance with their gender identity was a violation of Title IX, joining dozens of federal district courts as well as a number of circuit courts who had previously held that anti-transgender discrimination was a form of sex discrimination” (Center for American Progress).
Federal Government/New Challenges

★ Devos and Sessions: Revoke the Obama Administration’s Title IX guidance detailing schools’ obligations to transgender students

★ LGBTQ+ students are still entitled to the legal protections of Title IX; however, the above action clouded schools’ understanding of their obligations to transgender youth—opening them up to potential legal actions.

★ The Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights now frequently dismisses cases of discrimination filed by LBGTQ+ and their families.
Gender, defined

“The concept of gender is constantly evolving and is viewed by many as a socially constructed phenomenon, as performative, as a fluid and potentially ever-changing amalgamation of clothing, behaviors, gestures, speech patterns, and the like, subject to the milieu of which one is a member. Once thought to be essentially tied to biological sex, gender is now conceived as more prone to individual choice and level of comfort, and not inextricably linked to biology” (Martin, 2017).
Terms: Things to Consider

- Sexual Orientation vs. Gender Identity
- Allies versus experts
- Some common terms
- Gender ≠ Sexual Orientation
- Who one loves has nothing to do with how they express gender
The Genderbread Person v3.3

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don’t. Like Inception. Gender isn’t binary. It’s not either/or. In many cases it’s both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for gender understanding. It’s okay if you’re hungry for more. In fact, that’s the idea.

Gender Identity

Woman-ness
Man-ness

How you, in your head, define your gender, based on how much you align (or don’t align) with what you understand to be the options for gender.

Gender Expression

Feminine
Masculine

The ways you present gender through your actions, dress, and demeanor, and how those presentations are interpreted based on gender norms.

Biological Sex

Female-ness
Male-ness

The physical sex characteristics you’re born with and develop, including genitalia, body shape, voice pitch, body hair, hormones, chromosomes, etc.

Sexually Attracted to

Nobody
(Women/Females/Femininity)
(Men/Males/Masculinity)

Romantically Attracted to

Nobody
(Women/Females/Femininity)
(Men/Males/Masculinity)

For a bigger bite, read more at http://bit.ly/genderbread
Vocabulary

★ LGBTQIA+ (Gender and Sexual Minorities)
★ Lesbian (Sexual Orientation)
★ Gay (Sexual Orientation)
★ Bisexual (Sexual Orientation)
★ Trans (Gender)
★ Queer (Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity)
★ Intersex (Biological Sex)
★ Asexual (Sexual Orientation)
★ Pansexual (Sexual Orientation)
★ Ally (Affirming Heterosexual or Cisgender Person)
★ Cisgender (Gender)
# Gender Pronouns

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>Her</td>
<td>Hers</td>
<td>Herself</td>
<td>She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>Him</td>
<td>His</td>
<td>Himself</td>
<td>He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>Them</td>
<td>Theirs</td>
<td>Themselves</td>
<td>They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ze</td>
<td>Hir/Zir</td>
<td>Hirs/Zirs</td>
<td>Hirself/Zirself</td>
<td>Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, go to transstudent.org/graphics
Issues Impacting Schools

★ Name changes
★ Records
★ Restroom and Locker Room Access
★ "Outing" students
★ Using Affirmative Terms
★ Effective Bullying Response: Inclusive of Transphobia/Homophobia/Gender Stereotypes
★ What else?
What Can You Do?

★ **Bystander intervention tips:**
★ Reduce defensiveness and shame: Refrain from calling them “homophobic,” “transphobic,” or “sexist.”
★ Engage in conversation - use active listening: “Can you tell me more about that?”
★ Find commonality in a good education and respect for all.
★ **How to ask about pronouns and names? THE FIRST DAY.**
Proposed Pronoun Activity!

- Name: ________________________________

- Name you want me to call you in class: ________________________________

- Pronouns (ex: He/him/his, She/her/hers, They/them/their): ________________
  - May I use these pronouns in front of the class? YES NO
  - May I use these pronouns when I contact home? YES NO
  - May I use these pronouns in front of other teachers? YES NO
  - Would you like to follow up with me (in a private conversation) about your pronouns? YES NO

- Tell me three things about yourself. This could be interesting facts, hobbies, or just things you want me to know about you. Use the back of the paper if needed.
Details: First Day “Get To Know You” Tool

Directions:

★ For your eyes only!
★ Keep in class binders to reference when you need.
★ One of many community building activities on the first day.
★ Explain the purpose of each question so students understand.
★ Share your own pronouns as example.
★ Tool created by Mx. Ace Schwarz, GLSEN’s 2019 Educator of the Year.
Pronouns: First Day “Get To Know You” Tool

★ Name: _____________________
★ Name you want me to call you in class: _______________________
★ Pronouns (ex: He/him/his, She/her/hers, They/them/theirs: _______________
  ○ May I use these pronouns in front of the class? YES  NO
  ○ May I use these pronouns when I contact home? YES  NO
  ○ Would you like to follow up with me (in a private conversation) about your pronouns? YES  NO
★ Tell me three things about yourself. This could be interesting facts, hobbies, or just things you want me to know about you. Use the back of the paper if needed.
Top Ten: What Can You Do?

★ Ask for preferred names
★ Ask for pronouns on first day
★ Share your own pronouns
★ Attend or facilitate a training for educators/colleagues
★ Hang a supportive sign
★ Incorporate sexual and gender minorities in your curriculum
★ Post a bulletin board about important LGBTQIA+ people in history
★ Tell your colleagues and friends to join you: Share your ideas and success!
★ Interrupt offensive humor and comments
1. 2018: a French teacher at West Point High School in Virginia, was fired for refusing to refer to a trans student as a male, instead avoiding any pronouns at all. The school board voted 5-0 for his firing.

2. 2018: Brownburg, Indiana, a former orchestra teacher at Brownsburg High School says he was forced to resign because he refused to follow a policy that requires teachers to call transgender students by their preferred name instead of their birth name.
Where do you stand on the first amendment issue?
Case Study: Ripped from the Headlines
★ Facts: Mx. Delasandro teaches 7th grade math at a public middle school
★ Mx. Delasandro identifies as trans, and explains the prefix of Mx, as opposed to Ms. or Mr.
★ In order to help the students understand, Mx. Delasandro passes out the Genderbread person, and briefly explains gender
★ A few days later, a few parents complain, and the story is leaked via social media
★ As the administrator, what do you do?
GSAs

“A Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is a student-run club, typically in a high school or middle school, which provides a safe place for students to meet, support each other, talk about issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and work to end homophobia and transphobia. There are three typical functions of a GSA club: Support, Social, and Activist” (quoted from https://www.gsanetwork.org/get-involved/start-gsa)

https://www.gsanetwork.org/get-involved/start-gsa
Policy Prescriptions

1. Do not confuse harassment with bullying

2. Understand that bullying behavior may also violate anti-harassment/discrimination laws

3. Adopt policies and procedures that provide for a “prompt and equitable” response and resolution to reports of bullying

4. Be prepared to deal effectively with issues of gender based bullying/harassment; train staff

5. Train human resource officers and school officials on the danger of stereotypes based on gender, and on responsibilities to adhere to the requirements of federal civil rights laws
Questions?
Educator Resources

★ GLSEN Resources: https://www.glsen.org/educate/resources
★ For Educators: Supporting LGBTQIA+ Youth: https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-educators/supporting-lgbtqia-youth-resource-list
★ LGBTQ K-12 Education A select annotated bibliography: http://www.ala.org/rt/sites/ala.org.rt/files/content/professionaltools/LGBTQ%20K-12%20Education%20Guide.pdf
Additional Resources

Us Versus Hate:

http://usvshate.org/

LGBTQIA+ Terminology PDF:
https://www.uis.edu/gendersexualitystudentservices/about/lgbtqaterminology/
Thank you!

Dr. Jennifer Martin: jmart315@uis.edu

Kerry Poynter: kpoyn2@uis.edu