

# Developing LGBT-Inclusive Classroom Resources



## BEST PRACTICE:

### Inclusive and Affirming Curriculum for All Students

One way that educators can promote safer school environments is by developing lessons that avoid bias and that include positive representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, history, and events. For LGBT students, attending a school with inclusive curriculum is related to less-hostile school experiences and increased feelings of connectedness to the school community.<sup>i</sup>

*Unfortunately, the vast majority of students do not receive an LGBT- inclusive curriculum.<sup>ii</sup>*

## THEORY:

### “Curriculum as Window & Mirror” Emily Style (1996)

Style introduced the idea of curriculum as a means to provide students with windows and mirrors. Curriculum can serve as a mirror when it reflects individuals and their experiences back to themselves. At the same time curriculum can serve as a window when it introduces and provides the opportunity to understand the experiences and perspectives of those who possess different identities. Curriculum should be balanced and include various windows and mirrors for each student.<sup>iii</sup>

Applied to LGBT-inclusive curricular content, these mirrors and windows can help create a more positive environment and healthy self-concept for LGBT students while also raising the awareness of all students.

## REFLECTION:

How inclusive is my curriculum of LGBT people, history and events?

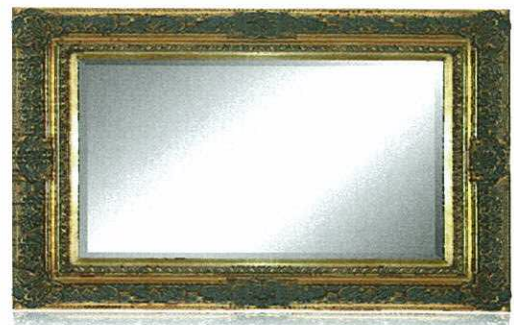
## REFLECTION:

How can I ensure that my lessons provide “mirrors” and “windows” for all of my students?



### LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum benefits ALL STUDENTS by:

- Exposing them to more inclusive and accurate accounts of history
- Helping them have better understandings of LGBT people and their historic contributions
- Encouraging them to question stereotypes about LGBT people
- Promoting acceptance



### LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum benefits LGBT STUDENTS by:

- Validating their existence and experiences
- Reinforcing their value and self-worth
- Providing space for their voices

## PLANNING: Lessons for LGBT Inclusion

Educators should spend time identifying the extent to which LGBT-related content is present in their current curriculum. Care should be taken to fill gaps while looking for opportunities to deepen student understanding of their world.

### REFLECTION

What do I need to do to make the lessons I teach more LGBT-inclusive?

LGBT people, history, and events can be easily inserted into most content areas. A few examples might be:

- History: Include civil rights leader Bayard Rustin when teaching about the 1963 March on Washington
- Art and Science: Acknowledge the gay identity of Francis Bacon (creator of the Scientific Method) or Frieda Kahlo's bisexuality when studying their works

## CONSIDERATION:

### Ensuring Coherent Curriculum

At times, educators' efforts to be inclusive and supportive can lead to curricular "fragmentation," or "isolation." This occurs when topics are taught without context and/or are positioned in such a way that they fail to connect to the big ideas of the topic being studied, such as when LGBT themes are only introduced during LGBT History Month (October) or LGBT Pride

### REFLECTION

How can I control for bias in the lessons I teach, especially as it relates to LGBT issues?

Month (June). Additional fragmentation occurs when educators include only lesbians or gay men to the exclusion of bisexual and transgender people, or when lessons fail to represent ethnic, racial and other forms of diversity that exist among LGBT individuals.

### REFLECTION

What other pedagogical practices do I need to consider to make my classroom a safe, respectful and inclusive learning space for all students?

## COMMON CORE: Connecting Curriculum to Standards<sup>iv</sup>

Implementation of the Common Core State Standards is one way that many states and school districts are making efforts to ensure quality education for all students. The examples below demonstrate how an examination of the standards and themes can lead to locating opportunities for the natural inclusion of LGBT-related content in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, and Mathematics.

### Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

#### Writing Core Standard for Grades 6-12

*Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.*

#### SUGGESTED LGBT-INCLUSIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:

Assign students to read about the landmark *Loving v. Virginia* case that ended interracial marriage bans in the U.S. Have students write an essay comparing and contrasting past bans on interracial marriage with current restrictions on same-sex marriage.

#### Writing Core Standard for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects 9-12

*Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.*

#### SUGGESTED LGBT-INCLUSIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:

Assign students to answer the question, "In what ways do membership policies of national youth organizations vary and what impact might those policies have on individual youth?" In particular, students can research and report on the policies of the Boy Scouts of America and other youth leadership groups present in their community (e.g., Girl Scouts of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Camp Fire USA, etc.).

## Common Core State Standards for Mathematics

### High School — Statistics and Probability Interpreting Categorical and Quantitative Data S-Id

*Summarize, represent, and interpret data on a single count or measurement variable. Summarize, represent, and interpret data on two categorical and quantitative variables.*

#### SUGGESTED LGBT-INCLUSIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:

Assign students to analyze LGBT demographic trends as reflected in the 2010 Census Results. Assign small groups to create a chart or graph illustrating national or state-level trends on a specific topic (e.g., number of same-sex couples, number of same-sex couples raising children, number of adopted or foster children in LGBT-headed households, etc.).

### Grade 7 — Statistics and Probability 7.SP Use random sampling to draw inferences about a population.

*Understand that statistics can be used to gain information about a population by examining a sample of the population; generalizations about a population from a sample are valid only if the sample is representative of that population. Understand that random sampling tends to produce representative samples and support valid inferences.*

#### SUGGESTED LGBT-INCLUSIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:

Use GLSEN's 2011 National School Climate Survey in a mini-lecture to demonstrate population samples as they relate to the experiences of LGBT students.

## RESOURCES: WWW.GLSEN.ORG

The following GLSEN resources (and accompanying lesson plans) may be helpful when designing new lessons or adding LGBT content to previously taught curriculum.



## ThinkB4YouSpeak

## Unheard Voices

*An LGBT History Resource*

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<sup>i</sup> 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: GLSEN.

<sup>ii</sup> ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Style, E. (1996). Curriculum as window & mirror. *Social Science Record*, 33(2), 21-28.

<sup>iv</sup> Authors: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers  
Title: Common Core State Standards

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