

## LGBTQ+ IDENTITY: TOOLKIT FOR TEACHERS

### NOTE FROM AN EDUCATOR

*“Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of a larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.”*

— *Rudine Sims Bishop*

This offering to teachers has been developed to create the opportunity for LGBTQ youth to have exposure to mirrors and all youth to peek through the windows that society at times wants to ignore (demonize and often destroy). Research has taught us that exposure to an inclusive LGBTQ affirming curriculum impacts culture within school environment in positive ways (cite GLSEN). It creates necessary dialogue, possibility models for those often not represented in larger societal narratives and reduces bias among those not from the LGBTQ community by providing a human experience to the diversity of our world. As educators it is our responsibility to include all stories that represent our collective narrative but LGBTQ communities are often left out. Within a heterosexist society, it is our imperative to deconstruct and unlearn the structures of an assumed normativity that hamper inclusion. The benefits to knowing how these structures impact our interactions with students and the stories we prioritize through this frame will create expansive possibilities for us as educators. Through this work we are also called to challenge our limited understandings of gender from a binary lens. The work to generate spacious constructs of gender impacts all our lives. It allows us to surpass the societally imposed limitations of our humanity. Limited gender constructs impacts our behavior in deep unacknowledged ways that begins at the time of our birth. These constructs influence our understanding of who we should be in the world, how we should physically move in the world and the possibilities we understand for others. With the great diversity in our society, we know now that the binary has created limitations that often lead to disparities for economic opportunities, educational attainment and health outcomes. These limitations can be overcome through a concerted effort to examine how diversity in gender expands the possibility for all of humanity. Our transgender and gender liberated gender non-conforming (GNC) children deserve the opportunity to reach their highest goals within a society that does not see them as damaged or not worthy. We call all educators to meet this challenge of inclusion for all students, to provide affirming images of all families, to celebrate the diversity we know possible within gender and sexuality. To not do so will result in ongoing isolation for LGBTQ youth, marginalization of LGBTQ families and to contribute to the limited understanding that larger society has of our LGBTQ communities.

Through the hard work of WNET New York Public Media we can now access resources of those stories most in need of elevation. As the founding organization of Harvey Milk School, [Hetrick-Martin Institute](#) has been dedicated for the last three decades to creating learning environments that are responsive,

inclusive and celebratory of the life narratives of LGBTQ people. We are thrilled to support the *First Person* series and the *LGBTQ+ Identity: A Toolkit for Teachers Collection* as a teacher's tool to beginning the life long journey of inclusion. While we know that the unlearning of constructs imposed by society is a process that requires commitment and humility we hope that the resources in this collection are the beginning step towards transformative thought for students and teachers alike.

*Lillian Rivera*

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## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The *LGBTQ+ Identity: A Toolkit for Educators Collection* offers a series of 15 digital media resources j help administrators, guidance counselors, and educators understand and effectively address the complex and difficult issues faced by LGBTQ students. The collection features short segments of video content from WNET's groundbreaking LGBTQ series *First Person*, a digital series that delivers candid personal narratives illustrating larger conversations about gender, sexuality, social norms, and identity development. The video content is scaffolded by educational resources (informational text, conversation guides, discussion questions, and teaching tips) to facilitate their use in educational settings.

When used in tandem, the videos and accompanying educational resources will help promote understanding, awareness, and self-esteem. The collection will be distributed free of charge through [PBS LearningMedia](#). PBS LearningMedia is the destination for high-quality, trusted digital content and solutions that inspire students and transform learning. PBS LearningMedia engages educators and learners at all levels with content from America's #1 Educational Media Brand.

## **TERMS TO KNOW**

**AFAB** | Assigned female at birth.

**Ally** | A person who is not LGBTQ but shows support for LGBTQ people and promotes equality in a variety of ways.

**AMAB** | Assigned male at birth.

**Androgynous** | Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.

**Asexual** | An individual who is not sexually attracted to other people or desires sexual activity, either in or outside a romantic relationship.

**Assigned Sex at Birth** | Refers to the sex designation recorded on an infant's birth certificate, should such a record be provided at birth.

**Binary** | The idea that there are only two genders—male and female.

**Biphobia** | Prejudice, fear or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

**Bisexual** | A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

**Boi** | A term used within the LGBTQ community to refer to a person's sexual or gender identity—specifically when an individual prefers a more “masculine” appearance.

**Cisgender** | An adjective describing a person whose gender identity corresponds to their assigned sex at birth. For example, an individual who was assigned the sex designation of female at birth and whose gender identity is female.

**Closeted** | Describes an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Coming out** | The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates his or her sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others. The process of coming out is ongoing and happens many times throughout a person’s life.

**Gay** | An individual, often a male identified person, who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.

**Gender dysphoria** | Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth sex is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the term - which replaces Gender Identity Disorder - "is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."

**Gender-expansive** | Conveys a wider, more flexible range of a person’s gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system.

**Gender Expression** | The way a person expresses gender to others in ways that are masculine, feminine or androgynous, such as through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, name, pronouns, activities, voice or mannerisms. (Note: Gender expression can vary depending on one’s culture as well as changes in social norms and expectations, such as shifts in clothing and hairstyles.)

**Gender-fluid** | According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a person who does not identify with a single fixed gender; of or relating to a person having or expressing a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

**Gender Identity** | A person’s gender-related identity, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person’s physiology or assigned sex at birth. Everyone has a gender identity. Gender Identity is a person’s inner sense of being a man or a woman, some combination of both, or neither.

**Gender Neutral** | Not belonging to a specific gender.

**Gender Nonconforming** | An adjective used to describe an individual whose gender expression does not conform to the social expectations or norms or stereotypical expectations for a person of that sex assigned at birth. Gender nonconforming individuals may identify as male, female, some combination of both, or neither.

**Gender Pronouns** | The pronouns an individual uses for themselves (e.g., she, her, he, him, they, them, theirs, ze).

**Genderqueer** | Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

**Gender Transition** | Refers to the process in which transgender individuals begin to assert an identity that's affirming. During gender transition, individuals may begin to live and identify with their authentic gender identity and may dress differently, adopt a new name, and use pronouns consistent with their gender identity. Transgender individuals may undergo gender transition at any stage of their lives, and gender transition can happen swiftly or over a long period of time.

**Heteronormative** | The belief or theory that heterosexuality is the norm.

**Homophobia** | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

**Hormones** | When an individual undergoes hormone therapy to transition from female-to-male or male-to-female. This process allows individuals to develop certain secondary sexual characteristics like breasts or muscle distribution and change in voice.

**Intersex** | A term used for individuals born with variations in sex characteristics – reproductive or sexual anatomy or chromosome pattern- that do not fit the typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

**Lesbian** | A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women.

**LGBTQ** | An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer."

**Living openly** | A state in which LGBTQ people are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or gender identity – where and when it feels appropriate to them.**Non-binary** | an individual who does not identify with a specific gender.

**Outing** | Exposing someone's sexual orientation or gender identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situations.

**Queer** | A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations. Often used interchangeably with "LGBTQ."

**Questioning** | A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Same-gender loving** | A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

**Sexual Orientation** | A person's sexual orientation is the individual's enduring pattern of physical, romantic, emotional, aesthetic or other attraction to another person. Sexual orientation can be towards persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to both sexes and more than one gender. Sexual orientation is not the same as gender identity.

**Transgender** | Describes a person whose gender identity or gender expression is different from their assigned sex at birth. Transgender and gender nonconforming youth use a number of words to describe their lives and experiences. Some examples these students may use to refer to themselves include, but are not limited to, trans, transgender, male-to-female (MTF), female-to-male (FTM), genderqueer, non-binary, gender fluid, two-spirit, trans boy, and trans girl. The terminology and language used to describe transgender individuals may differ based on varied factors such as geographic location, race, ethnicity, age, country of origin, etc. and may change over time. The individual student is the best person to determine their own identity. School staff should be sensitive to, and use, the terminology that supports and respects the wishes of the individual child.

**Transitioning** | Refers to the process in which transgender individuals begin asserting the sex that corresponds to their gender identity instead of the sex they were assigned at birth. During gender transition, individuals may begin to live and identify as the sex consistent with their gender identity and may dress differently, adopt a new name, and use pronouns consistent with their gender identity. Transgender individuals may undergo gender transition at any stage of their lives, and gender transition can happen swiftly or over a long period of time.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Emergency Assistance**

- **Trevor Project Suicide 24/7 Hotline 1-866-488-7386**  
The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13-24. If you have students thinking about suicide, they deserve immediate help – the Trevor Lifeline can help.
- **Trans Lifeline at 877-565-8860**  
Trans Lifeline is dedicated to the well-being of transgender people. Trans Lifeline runs a hotline staffed by transgender people for transgender people. Trans Lifeline volunteers are ready to respond to whatever support needs members of our community might have.
- **The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255)**  
The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources, and best practices for professionals.

## LGBTQ Information and Services

- Hetrick-Martin Institute: Empowerment, Engagement & Advocacy for LGBTQ Youth  
Hetrick-Martin Institute believes all young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential. Through a comprehensive package of direct services and referrals, Hetrick-Martin seeks to foster healthy youth development. Hetrick-Martin's staff promotes excellence in the delivery of youth services and uses its expertise to create innovative programs that other organizations may use as models.
- GLAAD  
GLAAD rewrites the script for LGBTQ acceptance. As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change. GLAAD protects all that has been accomplished and creates a world where everyone can live the life they love.
- Humans Rights Campaign  
The Human Rights Campaign represents a force of more than 1.5 million members and supporters nationwide. As the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer civil rights organization, HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are ensured of their basic equal rights, and can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community.
- Amida Care: Trans Health Resources  
Amida Care's mission is to provide access to comprehensive care and coordinated services that facilitate positive health outcomes and the general well-being of our members.
- It Gets Better Project  
The It Gets Better Project's mission is to communicate to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth around the world that it gets better, and to create and inspire the changes needed to make it better for them.

## Resources for School Related Issues

- NYC Department of Education Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Guidelines  
The NYC Department of Education guidelines are intended to help schools promote the educational and social integration of transgender and gender nonconforming students and ensure a safe learning environment free from discrimination and harassment.
- Schools In Transition A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools  
*Schools In Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools* is a first-of-its-kind resource providing a blueprint for safe, supportive and inclusive school environments for transgender youth.
- Teaching Tolerance  
Founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation's children.