While LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning) activists have made great strides for equality, LGBTQ students still face risks. Almost 30% of LGBTQ youth attempt suicide, with transgender and non-binary students at greater risk. These students are in desperate need of adults who accept them and welcome them in as they are—no ifs, ands or buts. In fact, the presence of even one accepting adult, be it a teacher, parent or community member, in the life of an LGBTQ student reduces that student’s risk of suicide by 40%. These students need our help and our support, if only we can figure out how to provide it.

The most common barriers for teachers wanting to help LGBTQ students are lack of knowledge and lack of exposure. LGBTQ issues are complex and nuanced; the field of queer studies has grown massively in the last 50 years, leading to a deluge of information that can be hard to track. Furthermore, many teachers seeking to learn may find themselves reading contradictory advice and explanations on the regular. It can very quickly start to feel like a hopeless slog that will, inevitably, end with one feeling more confused than when one started.

But all is not lost! Remember: we’re doing this for our students. We can do this, and even better, we can do it together! “LGBTWho?” was created to help teachers, parents and anyone else who works with children learn more about LGBTQ identity. The goal is not to be comprehensive, but to build a foundation for further learning. The QR code on the poster links to a document that contains resources sorted by issue/identity as well as citations for the poster. That document can also be accessed at www.tinyurl.com/LGBTWho.

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Terminology

Gender

- **Sex assigned at birth**: Male, female, or intersex designation given to an infant at birth. Assigned based on external anatomy.
- **Intersex**: an adjective used to describe someone whose sex characteristics (internal and external anatomy, hormone levels/response, chromosomes, etc) do not place them neatly into a binary sex (male or female).
- **Trans or transgender**: adjectives used to describe someone whose gender is NOT the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Example: Jessica was assigned male, but she transitioned when she realized she is a woman. Jessica is a trans woman.
- **Cis or cisgender**: adjectives used to describe someone whose gender IS the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Example: Tina was assigned female and still identifies as a woman. Tina is a cis woman.
- **Non-binary**: an adjective used to describe people who identify with a gender other than male or female. Some may identify as in between genders, some identify as completely agender, and some may fluctuate between genders and identify as genderfluid.
- **Gender-nonconforming**: a person whose gender presentation (gendered aspects of appearance and behavior) is different from that which is socially expected for their gender. Many (but certainly not all) LGBTQ people are gender-nonconforming and dress or act in ways not usually associated with their gender. Example: Jonah is a gay man. He chooses to wear makeup, paint his nails, and dress in a more feminine manner as a form of self-expression. Jonah is gender-nonconforming.
- **Asexual**: adjective describing a person who does not experience sexual attraction. Asexuality is often seen as a spectrum - some asexuals may experience romantic attraction only under specific circumstances.
- **Lesbian**: adjective referring to a woman or a female-female love relationship.
- **Gay**: adjective referring to someone who is attracted to people of the same gender.
- **Lesbian, gay, and bisexual students are likely to attempt suicide as their straight peers.**

Sexuality

- **Queer**: an umbrella term used to describe anyone who is not heterosexual and cisgender. Also the term used to refer to LGBTQ people in academia, as in "queer studies" and "queer theory." Sometimes used as an identity in and of itself. Some LGBTQ people are gender-nonconforming and dress or act in ways not usually associated with their gender. Example: Jonah is a gay man. He chooses to wear makeup, paint his nails, and dress in a more feminine manner as a form of self-expression. Jonah is gender-nonconforming.

Activism and Inclusion

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Strategies for Active Inclusion

- **We love to teach, we love to learn - so do both! Educate yourself, then talk to your colleagues! Help build a culture of care.**
- **Be clear and consistent in your support.** This can be as simple as hanging a sign or including a line in your studio policies.
- **Implement gender-neutral concert attire.** Gendered clothing can be uncomfortable for trans and gender non-conforming students. One suggestion is to create a list of "concert black" clothing options that gives students room to choose. Another is to just use one uniform for the whole ensemble, like choir robes or marching band uniforms. Try to avoid saying "dresses for ladies, suits for gentlemen" - this reinforces an unnecessary binary and excludes gender-nonconforming students.
- **Try for gender-neutral language.** Remember that not all of your altos and sopranos may identify as women and not all of your tenors and basses may identify as men.
- **Normalize diversity.** Try asking each student for their name and pronouns - it makes it easier for trans students to assert their identity if everyone else is doing it.
- **Provide diverse role models.** Show examples of women who play "masculine" instruments and men who play "feminine" instruments. Include LGBTQ composers and performers in your curriculum. Break down gender stereotypes!
- **Sort vocalists by vocal range, not by gender.** Again, we’re emphasizing the role they play in the ensemble over their gender.
- **Stay informed.** Understand that politics affect minority students more than non-minority students. Most states, including Nebraska, have no laws in place to protect LGBTQ children.
- **Be patient.** Figuring out who you are is confusing! Don’t be surprised if a student goes through multiple labels and identities before finding one that fits. Give them time!