

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Advisory Committee

Charge: *To develop plans to assist teachers in making schools, colleges, and universities safe and welcoming places for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender nonconforming, intersex, queer, and questioning people, and their allies to initiate and sustain conversation about the relevance of gendered, sexual, and affectional identities to reading and writing lives, to teaching lives, and to the well-being of students; to promote inquiry into issues of sexuality and gender identity and expression in the teaching of literacy and literature; to encourage proposals for presentation of such inquiry through public meetings such as the NCTE Annual Convention; to support individuals in the production of publishable written reports of such inquiry; and to select excellent proposals for inclusion in Annual Convention.*

Major activities: What major actions, projects, initiatives, or studies in your charge have been completed by your group since July 1, 2016? In each activity describe the more important features of the work, and connect your work to the NCTE Vision Statement , if applicable.

1. What actions, projects, initiatives, or studies are “in progress” at this time?

The LGBTQ Advisory Committee has been involved in four primary initiatives over the past year:

- (1) working with NCTE to select and promote a range of conference sessions that address the committee’s charge;
- (2) partnering with the Diversity and Inclusivity Committee and GSEA to address the instances of social injustice in St. Louis and elsewhere;
- (3) researching the history of inclusion of LGBTQ-focused conference sessions over the past decade (2005-2015)
- (4) partnering with the Matthew Shepard Foundation to develop a curriculum guide for teaching **The Laramie Project**
- (5) creating a grant to include support for our LGBTQIA* community of scholars
- (6) and GSEA’s response to the Missouri Rep.’s horrendous statements regarding trans people; in it, the authors address safety matters and support for NCTE’s convention in Missouri.

2. What have you accomplished so far, and what is your timeline for future work?

Actions/Initiatives

- (1) working with NCTE to select and promote a range of conference sessions that address the committee’s charge
- (2) partnering with the NCTE’s Executive Board to host a Presidential Panel Featured Session: Queering English Studies: Navigating Politics, Policies, and Practices in ELA Learning in 2017
 - Committee members proposed, solicited proposals, and promoted sessions that address the committee’s charge at the 2015 conference. Proposals were down for the LGBTQ strand this year with 36 submitted in 2017. In 2016, approximately 80 session proposals were submitted for the conference (we believe that may have been a record number).
 - Members of the committee volunteered to serve as reviewers for the each NCTE section.
 - Matthew Kim and Tiffany Rehbein attended the selection session in Washington, DC, in March, 2017, to assist with the process of evaluating conference proposals. In 2016, Toby Emert and Matthew Kim attended the session. In 2015, Toby Emert and Tiffany Rehbein attended the session,

and in 2014 Craig Young and Toby Emert attended. The objective was to prepare several committee members for this work, as a way of ensuring that at least one committee member has experience with the process and can serve as a mentor for other committee members in future selection efforts.

- At the annual meeting, the Committee established a new Standing Committee on Diversity and Inclusivity (Toby Emert, Chair). Continuing to follow through on a goal, the Committee renewed its commitment to growing the number of conference proposals submitted each year, with the goal of seeing even more sessions included in the program that address LGBTQ issues in education. We worked with NCTE's incoming president, Jocelyn Chadwick, to create a special Presidential session that features stations focusing on queering English Studies with an emphasis on queering pedagogy, learning spaces, assignments, and administrative tasks. (Presenters: Seth Davis, Cody Miller, Paula Greathouse, Judith Hayn, sj Miller, Toby Emert, and Roxanne Henkin).
- (3) researching the history of inclusion of LGBTQ-focused conference sessions over the past decade (2005-2015)
- Craig Young and Toby Emert are developing a database of all LGBTQ-focused conference sessions from the years designated as a way of beginning to research this element of the organization's commitment to inclusion of queer issues in education. To date, the database is drafted and Toby and Craig will present about themes that have surfaced as a result of the preliminary analysis of the data at the 2016 conference (during a round table session titled "Action Plans for Advocacy: LGBTQ Voices of Empowerment").
 - The data can be analyzed using a variety of research questions; we expect that the analysis and this presentation will lead to publications about the findings.
- (4) partnering with the Matthew Shepard Foundation to develop a curriculum guide for teaching **The Laramie Project**.
- Toby Emert is leading an effort to create a teaching guide for the verbatim play that explores the events surrounding the death of gay college student Matthew Shepard in 1998. The committee agreed to support and "sponsor" the guide, which, when completed, will be available for download from the foundation's website. Both Judy Shepard and Susan Burke, who serve on the board of the foundation, are involved in this project. The guide is in draft form. Several middle and high school classroom teachers are involved in developing the activities and resources that comprise the units described in the guide.
- (5) creating a grant to include support for our LGBTQIA* community of scholars.
- The letter to the Executive Committee follows:

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Issues in Academic Studies Advisory Committee is seeking further commitment from the National Council of Teachers of English Executive Committee. Educators have always been at the forefront of change, thus we enter the profession with a moral purpose. Specifically, who can forget Rosa Parks' mother (and teacher), Leona Edwards, who gave Rosa the sense to believe "in freedom and equality for people." Who can forget Erin Grunwell who helped her students embrace their "dangerous neighborhoods and immigrant communities" as Freedom Writers; students were asked "to pick up a pen, instead of a gun." In addition, who can forget Julie Anne Peters' reminder to LGBTQ teen readers: "You're a normal person and a beautiful person and you should be proud of who you are. You deserve to live and live with dignity and show people your pride." *Keeping You a Secret* (2003)

Our committee is proud of the work NCTE has done with adding a National African-American Read-In, the El día de los niños/El día de los libros, and the Cultivating New Voices among Scholars of Color which "is

designed to provide two years of support, mentoring, and networking opportunities for early career scholars of color.”

After reflecting on this thoughtful work, our committee believes it is the perfect time for NCTE to also include support our LGBTQIA* community of scholars. In the classroom, educators who include the study of LGBTQIA* texts and/or topics are often considered brave, fighters for equality, and willing to put themselves on the right side of progress. With the evolving political culture, we believe it is the right time to salute these professionals and celebrate their endeavors in fostering communities of fairness, equality, and diversity.

Proposal: The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Issues in Academics Studies Advisory Committee proposes an NCTE funded award for an educator who has furthered our vision and purpose through major contributions such as the initiatives described below:

- ❖ Dedicated lifelong passion to LGBTQIA* causes in the classroom or school
- ❖ Modeled an effective educator for LGBTQIA* equality
- ❖ Transformed the curriculum from previous models
- ❖ Added LGBT themed curriculum, literature, and discourse into their own curriculum
- ❖ Taken political action in the name of LGBTQIA* fairness
- ❖ Created a “culture of change” in their school
- ❖ Advocated for LGBTQIA* equality in other creative ways

Thank you for your time and consideration of our proposal. We look forward to your response.

(6) and GSEA’s response to the Missouri Rep.’s horrendous statements regarding trans people; in it, the authors address safety matters and support for NCTE’s convention in Missouri.

The letter follows:

Words of Support and Solidarity from NCTE's GSEA and CEE-SJ's Leadership Teams

In July 2017, several watchdog groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and LGBTQ Nation, brought national attention to public statements made by Missouri Representative Vicky Hartzler during a radio interview in late June. During the interview, Rep. Hartzler made a number of derogatory comments about transgender people in general and specifically about those serving in the U.S. military. In her comments, Hartzler compared transgender military personnel to the terrorist group ISIS and suggested that transgender people were a threat to national security. NCTE GSEA member Dr. sj Miller brought this radio interview to the attention of the NCTE Executive Council (EC), Genders and Sexualities Equality Alliance (GSEA), and CEE Commission on Social Justice in Teacher Education (CEE-SJ) immediately after LGBTQ Nation discussed the event.

Given that the annual convention is presently scheduled to take place in St. Louis, MO, the EC, GSEA, and CEE-SJ were immediately concerned for the welfare and well-being of transgender individuals who might plan to attend the convention. First, the EC, GSEA, and CEE-SJ emphatically declare Rep. Hartzler’s statements to be abhorrent, unacceptable, and in direct conflict with the values that shape and drive NCTE. Second, the EC, GSEA, and CEE-SJ have taken numerous steps both to understand what holding a convention in St. Louis, MO might mean for any individuals who might face discrimination based on gender identity and/or gender expression, and to communicate what resources and protections exist for those individuals.

We neither wish to ignore the larger political tensions that currently affect MO, which are serious concerns regarding the NCTE Annual Convention, nor to overstate the levels of safety and reassurance that we might offer those who plan to attend the convention. However, we offer the following actions and events as indications of NCTE’s commitment to transgender members, and to all members who might be rightly concerned by Rep. Hartzler’s statements.

- Executive Director Emily Kirkpatrick contacted the St. Louis Convention and Visitors Bureau, which is the body overseeing the NCTE Annual Convention's meeting spaces. The Bureau's Director agreed that the representative's comments were unacceptable and emphasized that the Bureau has worked and will continue to work with NCTE to foster a welcoming and safe environment for all who plan to attend the convention.
- The Bureau is committed to, as has been the case at the NCTE Annual Convention for several years now, continuing to provide gender neutral restrooms throughout the convention center, to ensure that any who need access to these spaces will have them. The NCTE EC has assured GSEA leadership that several gender neutral restrooms will be prominently visible and accessible on each floor of the convention center this year in St. Louis, as was the case last year in Atlanta, in order to continue NCTE's established position of ensuring all NCTE members are supported, affirmed, and safe in NCTE convention spaces.
- While Rep. Hartzler's district does not include the convention's location of St. Louis, the GSEA and CEE-SJ understand that such rhetoric has had and may continue to have rippling effects both statewide and nationally. Therefore, the GSEA contacted Rep. Hartzler's office directly to condemn her statements as hate-filled and misinformed, and as reflecting negatively on her district, state, and political party.
- St. Louis, MO offers a range of resources and organizations that support transgender people, which those attending the convention may be interested in exploring and/or accessing:
 - Metro Trans Umbrella Group, <https://www.stlmetrotrans.com/about-us/>, is an advocacy and educational group that focuses specifically on transgender issues.
 - Trans Memorial Garden, <https://www.stlmetrotrans.com/trans-memorial-garden/>, is the first of its kind in the U.S. It is a garden that serves both to celebrate transgender lives and to memorialize transgender lives lost to violence.
 - PROMO, <https://promoonline.org/about/>, is an organization that advocates on behalf of LGBTQ+ individuals and issues, and has made numerous statements in support of and condemning discrimination of transgender people in the state and nation.
 - University of Missouri-St. Louis, <http://www.umsl.edu/lgbtq/community-resources.html>, offers a range of community resources for LGBTQ+ communities, including transgender people.

The EC remains in contact with the St. Louis Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Executive Director Kirkpatrick has indicated that NCTE plans to issue its own statement concerning Rep. Hartzler's comments. As the GSEA and CEE-SJ are able, the leadership teams will update members on relevant information concerning this topic and the convention site.

Additionally, the GSEA and CEE-SJ recognize that Rep. Hartzler's comments were not made in isolation, but rather represent a national trend that takes away fundamental rights of transgender people. Under Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, former President Obama's guidelines that let transgender students use bathrooms and locker rooms corresponding with their gender identity, were revoked. In June, DeVos put new guidelines in place that do not offer the same protections and instead allow for cases of discrimination to be dismissed entirely. The GSEA and CEE-SJ would also like to note that we are watching the recent statement released by President Donald Trump which indicates that a ban of transgender people in the military is forthcoming. While the Pentagon has released a statement saying that a Tweet does not constitute policy, and has therefore not enacted this ban, we again acknowledge this threat of a potential ban as another rhetorical affront to the safety and well-being of trans people in our country. In addition to recognizing the harm such abhorrent policies will have across many spheres (e.g., livelihoods, accessibility, public perceptions, visibility, education, safety, well-being), we also recognize that this would affect trans service members' access to resources such as the GI Bill and therefore educational resources. Further, this could feed into the range of school-based discriminatory policies against trans people, so as policy unfolds around this issue, we will continue to be diligent in our responses and support for our members.

The GSEA and CEE-SJ are also very aware of members' concerns related to the NAACP Travel Advisory for Missouri (<http://www.naACP.org/latest/travel-advisory-state-missouri/>). Like most NCTE members, GSEA and CEE-SJ members appreciate NCTE's most recent statement (<http://www.ncte.org/press/naacptraveladvisory>), but we are hopeful that the EC will continue to evaluate

the events and tensions that have necessitated this advisory and to examine the implications for numerous NCTE members of holding the convention in MO.

Related, the NCTE Presidential Team shared on Friday, August 11 that their “next step is to create a Local Engagement Committee to recommend actions we should take while we are in Missouri.” They are looking to “appoint 4-5 volunteer members to be part of a group to which representatives from the Executive Committee, the Standing Committee on Diversity and Inclusivity, the Standing Committee Against Racism and Bias, and partners in St. Louis and the state of Missouri will also be invited.”

If GSEA and CEE-SJ members are interested, the NCTE Presidential Team welcomes your self-nomination for this work. Please email membership@ncte.org to provide contact information and a sentence or two about your background and qualifications for this work; put “Local Engagement Committee” in the subject line.

It is the GSEA's and CEE-SJ's wish that all individuals attending the NCTE Annual Convention will feel valued and supported in a safe and welcoming convention environment. We look forward to continuing to support our members and to learning how the EC will work to serve its members as well.

1. The chair invited new members to join the Committee, in an effort to promote the work of the Committee among a broader range of constituencies within NCTE.
2. The Committee continues to encourage members and others within the NCTE community who represent LGBTQ identities and issues to run for elected office within the organization.
3. The Committee, in partnership with the GSEA, continues to work to ensure that conference sites include easily-identifiable (i.e., clear signage) gender-neutral restrooms. This has been a goal of the Committee for several years, and it has seen significant progress each year, though 2015's conference was less accessible than the conferences in 2013 and 2014.
4. There has been a continued effort of the NCTE Executive Committee to discuss the committee's work and to offer perspectives and advice. In 2016, this process began, and we continue to appreciate the invitation to be consulted in such a meaningful way.

Tiffany Rehbein on behalf of Matthew Kim, Chair