

## 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, 2017? 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 a five key 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 the GSEA to address instances of social injustice;
- (3) creating a grant to include support for our LGBTQIA\* community of scholars
- (4) proposing an LGBTQIA\*-themed issue for *English Journal*
- (5) promote continuity among the Committee through monthly Zoom meetings

### 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
  - Committee members proposed, solicited proposals, and promoted sessions that address the committee’s charge for the 2018 conference. Here is the information regarding the LGBTQ strand:
    - 102 proposals submitted (36 in 2017). This is a record-setting number of session proposals for the LGBTQ strand. It is more than a 70% growth in proposals submitted in 2017. In 2016, approximately 80 session proposals were submitted and that was believed to have been a record.
    - 7 roundtables or panels accepted, as submitted (meaning they were not combined with any other proposal)
    - 24 proposals accepted by other sections or strands:
      - Secondary: 10
      - Middle: 5
      - General: 4
      - Teacher Education: 2
      - Research: 2
      - Whole Language Umbrella: 1
    - 4 poster sessions submitted: 3 accepted, middle level accepted 1

- o No individual sessions accepted by any strand or section (all morphed into roundtables or panels). Five roundtables or panels were formed under the following headings: digital tools (8 roundtables), elementary (6 roundtables), rural (2 panel – 4 people), practical teaching strategies (10 roundtables), and high school literature (8 roundtables). This allowed us to accept 34 total proposals.
- o We filled our 12 spots and 66 total proposals with the LGBTQ tag were accepted throughout the sections.

Here is the breakdown by section of accepted LGBTQ proposals:

| Number Accepted | Section Represented | Tech tools | Elementary | Rural | Practical Strategies | High School Literature |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------|------------|-------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 2               | College             | II         |            |       |                      |                        |
| 18              | Secondary           | II         |            | I     | IIII IIII            | IIII I                 |
| 2               | Teacher Education   |            | I          |       |                      | I                      |
| 5               | Elementary          |            | IIII       |       |                      |                        |
| 3               | General             |            |            | I     | I                    | I                      |

**Panels:** Secondary Section: 3; Middle Section: 2; General: 1; Teacher Education: 1

- Members of the committee volunteered to serve as reviewers for each NCTE section. (Reviewers: Craig Young, Roxanne Henkin, Paula Greathouse, Cody Miller, Judith Hayn, Tiffany Rehbein).
- Tiffany Rehbein attended the selection session in Washington, D.C., in February, 2018, to assist with the process of evaluating conference proposals. In 2017, Matthew Kim and Tiffany Rehbein attended the session. In 2016, Toby Emert and Matthew Kim attended the session. In 2015, Toby Emert and Tiffany Rehbein attended the session. In 2014, Toby Emert and Craig Young attended. The objective as 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.

(2) partnering with the Diversity and Inclusivity Committee and the GSEA to address instances of social injustice which meet the goals of NCTE’s vision to “actively pursue justice and equity for all students and educators who them.”

At the 2016 annual meeting, the Committee established a new Standing Committee on Diversity and Inclusivity (Toby Emert Chair; Julia Torres, Co-Chair in 2017). 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.

(3) creating a grant to include support for our LGBTQIA\* community of scholars which aligns with NCTE’s vision to “align this expertise to advance access, power, agency, affiliation, and impact for all learners.”

- On August 31, 2018, Darryn Diuguid, Paula Greathouse, and Judith Hayn of the LGBTQ Advisory Committee submitted a plan to the committee for review before putting before the Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English the following grant proposal:

From: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Issues in Academic Studies Advisory Committee

To: National Council of Teachers of English Executive Committee

Date: August 31, 2018

Subject: Supporting NCTE's LGBTQIA\* Community through Awarding a Conference Stipend to Advocates Who Promote Equality

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 for 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 NCTE award an educator who has furthered our vision and purpose. The award would consist of a conference fee stipend to attend the national convention. Educators worthy of this award should have made major contributions such as the initiatives described below:

Dedicated lifelong passion to LGBTQIA\* causes in the classroom or school  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 and hopefully celebrate individuals who promote equality for our future generation.

Best wishes,

Darryn Diuguid, Paula Greathouse, and Judith Hayn

(4) proposing an LGBTQIA\*-themed issue for *English Journal*

- At the 2017 annual convention, it was suggested that the Committee propose an LGBTQIA\*-themed issue for *English Journal*. The editorial team of Paula Greathouse, Brooke Eisenbach, and Judith Hayn submitted the proposal to committee members for review. The editorial team was adjusted with Judith Hayn moving to a consulting role and Henry “Cody” Miller moving onto the editorial team. A Call for Proposals has been submitted to Toby Emert and R. Joseph Rodriguez, *English Journal* editors.
- The Call for Proposals (which is currently being revised) follows:

EJ Themed Proposal

Guest Editors: Paula Greathouse, Brooke Eisenbach, Judith Hayn

The March 2009 *English Journal* was a themed issue that focused on sexual orientation and gender variance. The call for this issue spotlighted the need for teachers to include the study of the LGBTQ culture and issues in their curriculum as a means for students to learn about themselves and others. The guest editors maintained that in most educational settings lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, genderqueer, those questioning their sexual orientation and gendered identity feel they must hide these aspects of themselves or face negative consequences. Furthermore, they posit that those trying to balance sexual orientation and gender identity and expression with race and other marginalized identities, the struggle for voice and acceptance can be even more complicated. While almost a decade has passed since this issue was released, not much has changed. The latest results from the GLSEN National Climate survey (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016) inform us that:

- 57.6% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 43.3% because of their gender expression.
- 56.2% of students reported hearing homophobic remarks from their teachers or other school staff.
- The vast majority of LGBTQ students (85.2%) experienced verbal harassment (e.g., called names or threatened), 27.0% were physically harassed, 48.6% experienced electronic harassment, and 13.0% were physically assaulted at school.
- 57.6% of LGBTQ students who were harassed or assaulted in school did not report the incident to school staff, most commonly because they doubted that effective intervention would occur or the situation could become worse if reported. 63.5% of the students who did report an incident said that school staff did nothing in response or told the student to ignore it.

These experiences have a direct effect on the educational outcomes and mental health of students who identify as LGBTQ, as the school day becomes more about survival than learning (Miller, 2016). As teachers, we took an oath of ethics to advocate for and educate all our students, yet our students who identify as LGBTQ are still encountering hostile school environments. In remedying this problem, we must ask ourselves what we can do as ELA teachers to combat such a stigmatic social issue whose repercussions can be life altering and damaging for any adolescent.

While the past decade has seen remarkable changes in the cultural visibility, legal status, and social acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people, there is still much room for increasing the power, presence, and visibility of LGBTQ voices and issues and embracing the many intersectionalities of our students' identity within our curriculum (Miller, 2016). This themed issue of *English Journal* will explore the ways in which ELA teachers are celebrating the intersectionality of identity within today's classrooms and bringing the voices of students representing all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions into the classroom conversation. We are seeking to share the ways ELA teachers are helping to dispel prejudices and strengthen positive identities of not only our students who identify as

LGBTQ, but of all students (Miller, 2015). We do so by drawing on questions for exploration similar to that which appeared in the 2009 issue call for manuscripts.

How do new and experienced English teachers address sexual orientation, gender variances, and intersecting identities within their curriculum and classroom? How have you helped students better understand people whose sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions differ from their own? How have you worked with YA texts featuring a diverse array of LGBT themes or characters without “othering” such texts or characters in the classroom? How have you worked with canonical authors whose identities or works can be read through a “queer” or intersectional lens? How do you create safe opportunities for students to research, write about, and discuss issues of gender or sexuality? What other actions do we take outside the English classroom to affect professional development, school safety policies, responses to censorship, and legislation regarding LGBTQ rights and allyship? How do you engage students in curriculum and texts that celebrate the many intersectionalities of identity within the LGBTQ community?

(5) promote continuity among the Committee through monthly Zoom meetings

- The Committee met once in 2018 to share ideas. Although this was not consistent, it is something the Committee would like to continue.

**3. How has the work of your group contributed to NCTE’s role in shaping the profession of teaching and/or the understanding of literacy in educational contexts?**

- In an ongoing effort, new members are encouraged to join the Committee, in an effort to promote the work of the Committee among a broader range of constituencies within NCTE.
- 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.
- The Committee, in partnership with the GSEA, continues to work to ensure that conference site includes 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. In 2017 and 2016, there was positive responses from the membership in regard to the signage, though 2015’s conference was less accessible than the conferences in 2013 and 2014.
- 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.

**Submitted by Tiffany L. Rehbein on behalf of Matthew Kim, Chair**