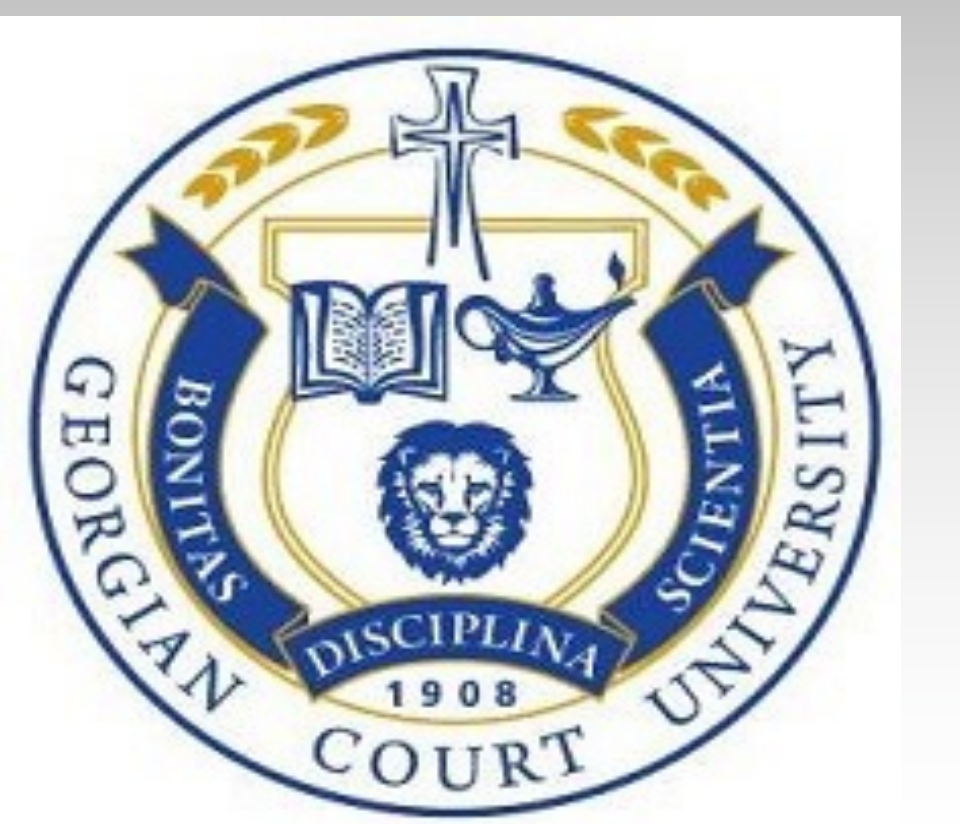




Inclusivity in Support of LGBTQ+ Students in Educational Systems

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Practice Model Domains

- **Domain 8:** Diversity in Development and Learning
- **Domain 10:** Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice

Introduction

Students develop into young adults during their K-12 experiences. Jackson (2017) suggests that by middle school, students acknowledge same-sex relationship desires and **by high school develop identities**. LGBTQ+ students suffer as their **identities are challenged which impacts their ability to make future choices** (Jackson, 2017). With limited training for **school faculty and staff, most are often left unprepared for properly addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ students**.

A study by Jackson (2017) involved LGBTQ students reporting their high school experiences and found they described their school setting as **“homophobic”**, contributing to **hiding their sexual identity**. **Microaggressions** perpetuate this, such as when students make negative statements using derogatory LGTBQ+ terminology (Jackson, 2017). Comments such as **“that’s gay” tend to deter LGBTQ+ students from portraying their true identities**. Participants in this study also reported a desire for their schools to have clubs, such as the **Gay Straight Alliance (GSA)**.

GSLEN is an American education organization aiming to implement safety in schools. GSLEN (2016) involved over 10,000 LGBTQ participants and found that **schools nationwide are perceived as negative and unsuitable for LGBTQ students**.

Robinson & Espelage (2011) found that LGBTQ students are more at risk for **suicidal thoughts and attempts compared to their peers**. Sixty percent of LGBTQ students nationwide felt uncomfortable at school (GSLEN, 2016). LGBTQ students’ academics and involvement in activities is adversely impacted resulting in **extreme absences, poorer grades, and lower self-esteem**.

Eisenberg et al., (2021) conducted a study in 30 public high schools in Massachusetts that provided **LGBTQ+ resources/support groups** and found that the **suicide rate lowered**.

P-FLAG (2019) discusses **LGBTQ+ terminology** as an important construct for school psychologists to comprehend prior to assisting a LGBTQ+ student.

Laws vary from state to state and professionals have the duty of becoming familiar with rights of LGBTQ students (Lewis & Kern, 2018).

Laws & Rights Aimed to Protect the LGBTQ+ Population & How to Effectively Implement them in Schools:

- **Title IX** is a federal education law that grants students the right to represent their preferred gender identity.
- NASP (2017) suggests that school psychologists should follow NASP guidelines and **not disclose** their students’ sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender status **including minors without their approval**.
 - NASP (2016) advocates that professionals **acknowledge students’ desired gender pronouns**. **The Department of Justice states that not allowing a student to utilize the restroom that matches their identity is illegal under Title IX**.
- Create a gender and sexuality alliance.
 - School Psychologists should include a Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA). Staff should be aware that students have the legal right to form a GSA under the Equal Access Act (www.gsanetwork.com)
- NASP (2016) suggests the best practice related to bathrooms, locker rooms, and dress codes is to **allow LGBTQ+ students to function parallel to their gender identity**.
- **The American Psychological Association indicates that professionals should be aware of LGBTQ+ terminology and published an article that defines important words and processes (APA, 2012)**.
 - **Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients**

Questions?

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LGBTQ+ STUDENTS DESERVE SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS.

K-12 schools **MUST** implement resources/training prior to students’ graduation to **eliminate unconscious biases** against the **LGBTQ+** population.

Inclusive Educational Systems are **CRUCIAL** for students to form healthy sexual/gender identities.

SCAN QR CODE BELOW FOR MORE INFO:



Laws & Rights Aimed to Protect the LGBTQ+ Population & How to Effectively Implement them in Schools (Continued):

- NASP & Persinger et al. (2016) list additional federal laws for protection such as **The Equal Access Act, The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act**, and the **First and Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution**. (scan QR code for further explanation)
- NASP (2017) suggests that professionals should allow transgender students to participate in activities, sports and clubs in a role that matches with their gender identity.
 - NASP (2014) *Safe Schools for Transgender and Gender Diverse Students*
 - *Gender Spectrum* www.genderspectrum.org
- **P-FLAG** suggests students should be **exposed to school-wide activities** such as films, books, programs etc.
 - **NASP (2017) provides LGBTQ+ picture books** for younger students that are age appropriate.
 - The Youth and Gender Media project **provides films that schools should display during assemblies such as *Becoming Johanna* which has students witness the battle LGTBQ students face daily in schools**.
- **Parental support influences LGBTQ students’** desire to “come out.”
 - NASP (2017) indicates that **school psychologists should work with parents to approve of their child’s sexual identity with support and resources**, such as discussions and local or virtual groups. **Guardians should be aware of the risk factors (mental health, suicide, poor academics) that arise if family support is not established**. Resources are easily accessible for professionals to utilize in practice such as the APA’s Committee on Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual concerns, Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG), Human Rights Campaign Welcoming Schools Project (HRCWSP), and more.
- Lesson plans for history should **include LGTBQ+ milestones** as well as the general curriculum adopting a high level of inclusivity to **lessen biases** and discrimination among students and staff. In addition, the library should have **inclusive materials** available to students (GSLEN, 2016).
- Schools should adopt **strict policies** regarding **bullying** towards LGBTQ+.
 - When overhearing a student refer to something as ‘gay’ professionals should immediately shut that comment down, inform the student to utilize a different word, and explain why that comment is unacceptable (HRCWSP, 2021).
- Hallways should have inclusive posters representing diversity (HRCWSP, 2021).
- Include **Professional Development meetings** for staff. Staff should participate in informational events to learn how to identify and take action towards harassment.
 - Staff training should be enhanced to ensure an adequate level of comfort assisting LGBTQ+.
 - **GSLEN has various activities** for school psychologists and staff to complete. www.gslen.org

Summary

Inclusive educational systems are crucial for students to form healthy sexual/gender identities. K-12 schools should implement resources/training prior to students’ graduation to eliminate unconscious biases against the LGBTQ+ population.

- This session will help school psychologists describe and recognize problems and prevent microaggressions that the LGBTQ+ student population faces in schools.
- This session will help school psychologists be more familiar with laws and rights aimed to protect the LGBTQ+ students.
- This session will help school psychologists analyze programs available and how to effectively implement them in their schools.

Key Terms: (SCAN QR code for more terms & further explanations)
LGBTQ+, LGBTQ+ TERMINOLOGY, ZE