

Teaching About LGBTQ+ Resources



August 2025

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Introduction

Resource Guide Overview

This resource guide recognizes the ongoing presence, contributions, and struggles of LGBTQ+ individuals and communities throughout history and into the present day. LGBTQ+ people have played critical roles in shaping our social, cultural, and political landscapes across generations — often in the face of systemic discrimination and erasure.

This guide is aligned with our commitment to inclusive education. It provides curated resources to support educators, administrators, and community members in creating learning spaces that affirm, respect, and uplift LGBTQ+ identities and histories. This guide is designed to help move beyond limited narratives and ensure that all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum. It provides everything from foundational background to lesson plans, information about organizations, and professional development opportunities.

Background

Throughout history, LGBTQ+ individuals have made significant contributions to civil rights, the arts, sciences, education, and social justice movements. Despite progress, many LGBTQ+ stories remain marginalized or untold in mainstream education. Representation in curriculum and school culture is essential to combat harmful stereotypes and to build safe, welcoming, and affirming environments for all students — regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Illinois has taken important steps to address this need, including enactment of the Inclusive Curriculum Law (House Bill 246), which requires the teaching of LGBTQ+ contributions to U.S. and Illinois history. This guide serves as an entry point for schools and educators to meet these requirements with thoughtful, age-appropriate, and affirming resources.

Goal

This guide was developed to provide, advocate for, and support an inclusive system of education that recognizes and affirms the diverse experiences, histories, and identities of LGBTQ+ people, while equipping educators with the tools and knowledge to foster safe, supportive learning environments for all.

Mission

The Illinois State Board of Education, in partnership with LGBTQ+ advocates, community organizations, and educators created this guide to empower schools to move beyond outdated or incomplete narratives. Centering the voices and lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals enables the development of inclusive curricula and practices that promote equity, respect, and belonging.

Principles for Teaching LGBTQ+ History and Topics

1. Center LGBTQ+ Voices and Perspectives

Use credible sources, literature, and media created by LGBTQ+ individuals to present a fuller, more accurate picture of LGBTQ+ histories and contributions.

2. Highlight Diversity Within LGBTQ+ Communities

Acknowledge the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability, and other aspects of identity within LGBTQ+ communities to avoid oversimplified or monolithic representations.

3. Foster Inclusive Learning Environments

Cultivate classrooms and schools that affirm all gender identities and sexual orientations. Adopt inclusive language, implement anti-bullying policies, and model respect for all students.

4. Commit to Present and Future Visibility

Ensure that LGBTQ+ people are not only represented in historical contexts but are also recognized as vibrant, thriving members of our communities today and in the future.

5. Engage Families and Communities

Build partnerships with families and community organizations to promote understanding and support for LGBTQ+ students, and to extend inclusive practices beyond the classroom.

	Publications	Background Info/ Curriculum	Organization & Speakers	ISBE Standards Addressed
General Resources & Resources for Teaching About LGBTQ+ in Public Schools	LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum Resource List Jill Austin and Jennifer Brier, editors, Out in Chicago: LGBT History at the Crossroads. First edition, Chicago History Museum, 2011 LGBTQIA+ History in Chicago (Chicago History Museum) Out in Chicago (DVD with lesson plans) Studs Terkel Radio Archive: LGBTQ Culture & Rights (Audio)	These resources are specifically designed to assist educators in integrating LGBTQ+ topics into the curriculum and creating inclusive learning environments. Strategies for Teachers: • Inclusive Language: Use and teach inclusive language that doesn't reinforce gender stereotypes, such as using "they" instead of "he" or "she" when gender is unknown or irrelevant. • Representation Matters: Incorporate diverse examples and role models in teaching materials that challenge traditional gender roles and highlight the contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals.	Learning for Justice: Offers a wide range of free resources for educators, including lesson plans, activities, and professional development on LGBTQ+ issues and inclusive practices. GLAAD: Provides media resources and educational materials that help teachers address LGBTQ+ representation and challenges in media and culture. Welcoming Schools: Focuses on elementary education with tools for preventing bias-based bullying, creating gender-inclusive schools, and supporting LGBTQ+ families. Illinois Safe Schools Alliance: Provides resources for addressing bullying, harassment, and violence against LGBTQ+ students, along with curricula that promote understanding and inclusivity.	SS.3–5.IS.1. Develop essential questions and explain the importance of the questions to self and others. SS.9–12.IS.3. Develop new supporting and essential questions by primary and secondary investigation, collaboration, and use of sources that reflect diverse perspectives (e.g. political, cultural, socioeconomic, race, religious, gender). SS.9–12.IS.2. Develop culturally informed, student-driven supporting questions that contribute to inquiry and evaluate the purpose of supporting questions in the research and inquiry process. SS.6–8.IS.2.MC. Gather relevant information from credible sources and determine whether they support each other.

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		• Classroom Environment: Create a classroom environment in which students feel safe to express their gender identity without fear of judgment and where all gender expressions are respected. • Critical Thinking: Encourage students to critically analyze how media, culture, and history shape our understanding of gender, and to question stereotypes they encounter. Illinois Civics Hub (Inclusive Curriculum Toolkit and information on House Bill 0246 amending state teaching standards) AFT Share My Lessons LGBTQIA+ (Over 120 resources for teachers)	Gender Spectrum: Offers resources specifically on gender identity and expression, including lesson plans, policy guides, and professional development focused on creating gender-inclusive classrooms. It Gets Better Project: Shares stories and resources aimed at inspiring LGBTQ+ youth. Their materials are useful for creating empathy and understanding in the classroom. These resources are designed to support educators in fostering a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.	SS.6–8.IS.1.MC. Determine sources representing multiple points of view and diversity of authorship that will assist in organizing a research plan.

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		Inclusive Curriculum Advisory Council of Illinois (Searchable curriculum materials) Ante Up! (Curriculum, classes, and certifications for k-12, with differentiated lesson plans)		
RESPECT AND DIVERSITY				
	Cory Silverman, Sex is a Funny Word, 2015	Key Principles in Promoting Respect and Diversity: • Inclusive Education: Ensuring that all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, see themselves represented and respected in the curriculum. • Anti-Bullying Policies: Implementing and enforcing clear policies that address bullying and harassment based on LGBTQ+ status.	Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) GLSEN works to ensure that LGBTQ+ students are able to learn and grow in a school environment free from bullying and harassment. It provides resources to help educators create a respectful and inclusive atmosphere. Key Resources: Inclusive curriculum guides, Safe Space Kits, professional development, and the annual Day of Silence campaign.	SS.K-2.IS.1. Create questions that are relevant to self as they relate to the content of the Social Science Standards. SS.6-8.IS.1.MdC. Ask essential and focused questions that consider multiple perspectives and will lead to independent research. SS.9-12.IS.1. Create actionable, student-driven (or student-informed) questions that lead to social studies investigations beyond one's immediate cultural environment or lens.

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		• Cultural Competence: Educators should be trained in understanding the diverse experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals to foster a respectful and supportive learning environment. • Family and Community Engagement: Involving families and communities in promoting respect and diversity, and providing resources that support LGBTQ+ students outside of the classroom. These resources are designed to help educators, families, and allies create respectful, inclusive environments that celebrate diversity and affirm the identities of all individuals, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.	<u>The Trevor Project</u> The Trevor Project, a leading organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ youth, emphasizes respect and understanding as key to mental health and well-being. Key Resources: Crisis intervention tools, educational workshops, and resources for supporting LGBTQ+ youth in schools.	

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		Welcoming Schools (Lesson plans to create a more inclusive classroom)	National Center on Safe and Supportive Schools Safe Learning Environments: The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments is funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary School's Office of Safe and Supportive Schools. The center offers information and technical assistance to states, districts, schools, institutions of higher education, and communities focused on improving school climate and conditions for learning.	

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FAMILY STRUCTURES				
		LGBTQ+ family structures challenge traditional notions of what a family “should” look like and underscore the idea that love, support, and commitment are the true foundations of family life. Recognizing and respecting the diversity of LGBTQ+ families is essential in promoting inclusivity and ensuring that all children and families feel valued and supported, regardless of their configuration. Welcoming Schools (Lesson plans to create a more inclusive classroom) Teaching LGBTQ History (Elementary level, aligned to California state standards, with adaptable lesson plans, trainings, and resources)	PFLAG PFLAG offers support, education, and advocacy to build respect for LGBTQ+ individuals within families, schools, and communities. Key Resources: Educational booklets, support group networks, ally resources, and advocacy tools to promote understanding and acceptance.	SS.6-8.IS.1.LC. Create essential questions that consider multiple perspectives to guide inquiry about a topic. SS.9-12.IS.3. Develop new supporting and essential questions by primary and secondary investigation, collaboration, and use of sources that reflect diverse perspectives (e.g., political, cultural, socioeconomic, race, religious, gender).

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GENDER STEREOTYPES				
	Cory Silverman, Sex is a Funny Word, 2015	Gender stereotypes are preconceived ideas and societal norms about how individuals of a specific gender are expected to behave, dress, and interact. These stereotypes can be harmful, as they limit individuals' expression and identity by enforcing rigid roles. LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly those who are transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming, often face significant challenges due to these stereotypes. Breaking down gender stereotypes is essential in creating inclusive environments where all individuals can express their gender identity freely and authentically.	Gender Spectrum Offers comprehensive tools and resources for educators to create gender-inclusive environments, including guidelines on understanding gender diversity and dismantling harmful stereotypes. Gender-inclusive lesson plans, training modules, and best practices for supporting all students also are available.	SS.6-8.CV1.MC. Evaluate the powers and responsibilities of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media; how these have changed over time; and the impacts of multiple communities. SS.9-12.CV.1 Distinguish between the rights, roles, powers, and responsibilities of individuals and institutions in the political system and analyze the marginalization of multiple groups and perspectives in that system.

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		Key Points: • Gender Binary: Traditional gender stereotypes are rooted in the idea of a gender binary, where people are classified strictly as male or female, with specific behaviors, roles, and expectations tied to each. • Impact on LGBTQ+ Individuals: LGBTQ+ people, especially those who do not conform to binary gender roles, often experience discrimination, bullying, and exclusion due to gender stereotypes.	The Gender Unicorn: A visual and educational tool that helps students and educators understand the complexity of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation beyond stereotypes. Includes worksheets and activities that promote a deeper understanding of gender diversity. It's Pronounced Metrosexual Provides accessible tools, articles, and educational resources aimed at breaking down gender stereotypes and understanding gender as a spectrum. The "Genderbread Person" infographic visually explains the different aspects of gender and challenges traditional gender roles.	

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		• Importance of Challenging Stereotypes: Challenging gender stereotypes allows individuals to explore and express their identities without fear of judgment or retribution, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. Welcoming Schools (Lesson plans to create a more inclusive classroom) Teaching LGBTQ History Stonewall UK (List of LGBTQ+ terms) It Gets Better (Glossary of terms)		

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LGBTQ+ CONTRIBUTIONS TO HISTORY			
LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum Resource List Chicago LGBTQ Hall of Fame Jill Austin and Jennifer Brier, editors, <i>Out in Chicago: LGBT History at the Crossroads</i>. First edition, Chicago History Museum, 2011 LGBTQIA+ History in Chicago (Chicago History Museum) Out in Chicago (DVD, with lesson plans) Out and Proud in Chicago (PBS) Tracy Baim, editor, <i>Out and Proud in Chicago: An Overview of the City's Gay Community</i>, 2009 John D'Emilo, <i>Queer Legacies: Stories from Chicago's LGBTQ Archives</i>, 2020	LGBTQ+ individuals have made significant and often overlooked contributions to history, shaping politics, art, science, culture, and social justice movements across the world. Despite facing discrimination and marginalization, many LGBTQ+ figures have played pivotal roles in advancing civil rights, promoting social change, and enriching the cultural fabric of society. Impact and Legacy: The contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals have not only enriched global culture but also challenged societal norms and expanded our understanding of identity, love, and equality. Despite historical erasure and ongoing discrimination, these contributions continue to inspire new generations to fight for justice, creativity, and freedom.	John D'Emilo, Faculty Emeritus, University of Illinois Chicago Jennifer Brier, Professor, UIC History Department Tracy Baim, Executive director, Chicago Community Trust	SS.6–8.CV.2.MCa. Analyze how the application of laws and the protection, granting, or denial of individual and collective rights have impacted participation and powers of various groups of people. SS.9–12.CV.9. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes and related consequences on different communities, including the marginalization of multiple groups. SS.9–12.G.14. Explain how a person's identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, spirituality/religion, ability status, socioeconomic group) shapes and is shaped by worldview.

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		Promoting Awareness in Education: Educators play a vital role in ensuring that LGBTQ+ history is recognized and taught. Incorporating these contributions into the curriculum helps to provide a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of history, while also fostering respect and understanding among students. Key Resources for Educators: • GLSEN’s LGBTQ+ History Resources: Lesson plans and activities that highlight the contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals throughout history. • Teaching Tolerance’s LGBTQ History Materials: Offers diverse resources to teach about the impact of LGBTQ+ figures in civil rights, arts, and culture.		

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		• Making Gay History Podcast: Features interviews and stories from key LGBTQ+ figures and events, providing rich context for classroom discussions. • ONE Archives Foundation: The largest repository of LGBTQ+ materials in the world, offering digital exhibits and educational resources on LGBTQ+ history. Out History Library of Congress LGBTQ+ Studies Web Archive Facing History & Ourselves: LGBTQIA+ History and White it Matters One Institute LGBTQ+ History Education American Social History Project, LGBTQ+ Histories (City University of New York)		

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		Learning For Justice Queer American Podcast Docs Teach- The Long Struggle for LGBTQ+ Civil Rights		