

Why Schooling Must Move into a Trans*/Post-Trans* Era

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How can teachers move beyond discussions relegated to only gender and sexuality and toward understanding the (a)gender complexities students embody? How can teachers undo restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life, unhinging one from the other, and treat them as separate and distinct categories? Even more critical, how can teacher education support emerging literacy professionals and inservice literacy teachers to develop the dispositions necessary to help *all* students learn while simultaneously supporting them to remain open to redefinition and renegotiation? Drawing on the Queer Literacy Framework, this excerpt is a blend of chapters from sj Miller's (forthcoming) *Teaching, Affirming, and Recognizing Trans and Gender Creative Youth: A Queer Literacy Framework*¹ and provides classroom models for those who work with trans* and gender creative youth as they address these questions with curriculum design, pedagogical knowledge and applications, and assessments across pre-K-12 literacy contexts.

“It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.”

-W.E.B. Du Bois (1903)

“I do not want to explain myself to others over and over again. I just want to be seen.”

-sj

At one year old, Blue is a curious and precocious pre-toddler, feeling her way through the world, putting everything in sight in her mouth, and grabbing spoons and using the family dog as a drum. Blue runs around *a lot*. In fact, Blue runs around so much, her family predicts Blue will become a phenomenal runner or some type of athlete. It is the early 70’s so Blue’s parents dress her in gaudy suede jumpers with bling, pink socks, and clogs. Sort of a mismatch to the identity Blue has begun to exhibit.

At two, Blue’s affinity for running has accelerated. Now, Blue runs after the dog, the neighbor, the birds, and right out of the door, into the yard, and even the street. Blue’s mom supports these adventurous pursuits, but Blue’s dad doesn’t think it’s appropriate for *his daughter* to behave this way, and even asserts, “I don’t want my daughter to be a tomboy.” Blue is just being Blue.

From ages three-five, Blue looks like a boy. Her hair fro’d, her now tube socks hiked up to her knees, her cut-offs pretty hideous even for the 70’s, and her appearance, masculine. Blue likes to watch her father pee standing up, and when alone, tries to emulate the behavior, but with limited success, and lots of splatter on the floor. Blue likes to watch her father shaving, and when alone, smears toothpaste on her face and traces it off with strokes of her toothbrush. She is far more successful with this task than the attempts at urinating. Blue likes to ride her Huffy BMX bike around the

¹ The title of the book uses the term Trans and not Trans* because the publisher noted it will not show up in search engines

neighborhood and bring food home to her mom and sister when her dad is late home from work. Blue steps into a caregiving role, quite naturally, because it is just what feels *right*.

Blue loves playing football topless in the streets like the other boys do, and seems to be living life in a way that just *seems* right and normal. Then one day Blue runs into the house screaming, “I want to be a boy!” Blue’s parents do not understand these words, but actually maybe they do. In response, Blue’s dad begins to gender Blue by reminding her of her gender in passive-aggressive ways. For special events, he wrestles Blue into dresses and heels, only for Blue to then throw her body into dog shit and roll around in it. Then Blue’s dad beats Blue and dresses her up again. Helpless, Blue’s mom, in tears passively watches as her only recourse. To different degrees, this family battle would play out for the next forty years.

At five years old, Blue enters school. Blue has mostly boys as friends and enacts behavior typical of other boys. Blue plays sports during recess, sits with the boys at lunch, *tries* to pee in the boy’s restroom, and only wants to be in classroom groups with other boys. The only gender marker to reveal that Blue is a girl is her clothing and the colors, those that typically demarcate girls’ identities. Blue doesn’t understand when the class is separated into groups based on gender and why she is put into the groups with other girls. After all, Blue feels like a boy, thinks she is a boy and is treated like a boy by other boys in school.

As Blue goes through her primary and secondary schooling years, gender is not on the radar in her teachers’ classrooms. Music, dating, film, and athletics are the only aspects of her life, outside of her family, which give Blue sources to understand her gender confusion. Blue is drawn to musicians for unconscious reasons. For Blue, the artists and bands she is most drawn to like Morrissey (the Smiths), Adam Ant, David Byrne, Tracy Chapman, Boy George, Depeche Mode, the Talking Heads, Kate Bush, Pet Shop Boys, Erasure, Trio, Oingo Boingo, New Order, and Yaz, seem to express challenges to the gender binary through both looks *and* lyrics. Blue’s favorite musician is Robert Smith, lead singer of The Cure. Smith dresses in black, has disheveled hair, wears lipstick, and occasionally even dresses. Smith’s lyrics are poetic, dark and forlorn but they bring meaning, order, and respite to Blue. Blue listens to everything produced by The Cure until it drowns out the negative thoughts about Blue’s internal gender struggle. The Cure is the cure.

Throughout high school, Blue dates males. Blue doesn’t understand her feelings but is drawn to boys, as if she herself is one. She has many close female friends and is attracted to some of them, but not from the identity of female; she is drawn to them as if she *is* male. So she continues to live her life, dates males, acquires friends along a continuum of genders and with queered identities—gay, lesbian, bisexual, and straight. All of this just feels *normal* to Blue. The unconscious urges to be with males, as a male remain unremitting but she does not know how to talk about them. None of her teachers address gender or sexual identity in her classes. She reads no texts, sees no examples of

herself or others that could possibly help her understand who she is. Even with friends and teachers she adores, she is lost at school.

Blue turns to film for reasons similar to music. Films assuage a curiosity that gives visual recognition to different identities in the world. Without the language to support the unconscious emotionality Blue feels, films such as *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *I've Heard the Mermaid Singing*, and all films by Ivory Merchant Productions, become running stills that shape and inform who Blue is becoming. Many of the characters in the films, and the actors who illuminate them, give a calm to the raging storm brewing inside Blue.

Soccer and swimming, two stabilizing factors for Blue's identity development throughout secondary school, provide critical spaces and opportunities to release pain and confusion. Again, without language to know what Blue feels inside, these sports calm the inner rage. Blue is a better than average swimmer and often places in the top five at meets in both freestyle and butterfly sprints. Blue's natural talent as a runner is channeled into soccer though, and Blue is a *star*. As a forward, Blue breaks district and state records, leads her team to compete at the state level, and becomes the first female All-American in her state. Six top academic and Division 1 schools offer her scholarships. She chooses Cal-Berkeley. With memories of her family, music, friends, teachers, school and film, Blue leaves for college—it is 1988. The future is unknown, and it would take Blue until age forty, twenty-two years later to come to terms with her gender confusion...

Recognition

The struggle for recognition is at the core of human identity. With social positioning as the presumed or “normative” condition, those whose gender identities fall outside of the binary tend to be misrecognized and misunderstood and suffer from what I call a *recognition gap*, much as I did in my childhood and adolescence, when I was *Blue*. Misrecognition subverts the possibility to be made credible, legible or to be read and/or truly understood. When one is misrecognized, it is altogether difficult to hold a positive self-image, knowing that others may hold a different or negative image (Harris-Perry, 2011). When the presumed normative condition is challenged though, a corollary emerges; this presupposition suggests that at the base of the human condition, people are in search of positive recognition, to be seen as “normal,” because it validates their humanity.

Looking back into *my* youth, there was no common language for society to help people understand gender confusion, or if there was it was not brought into my life. This leaves me little room to wonder why a core group of my peers in high school and even in college—many who felt similar to me—have only come to identify as trans^{*i} or gender creativeⁱⁱ later in their lives. As language and understanding around trans^{*} and gender creative identities have become part of the social fabric of society, youth have had more access to recent changes in health care and therapeutic services that have supported them in their processes of becoming and coming to terms with their true selves. These opportunities for visibility have galvanized a movement fortifying validation and

generating opportunities for both personal and social recognition. Now, we see more trans* and gender creative people portrayed positively in the media. With individuals such as Laverne Cox, Janet Mock, Chaz Bono, Aydian Dowling, Scott Turner Schofield, Ian Harvey, and Caitlyn Jenner, and TV shows such as *Transparent*, *Becoming Us*, *Orange is the New Black*, *The Fosters*, *I am Cait*, and *I am Jazz* just to name a few we see a growing media presence. With an estimated 700,000 trans* people now living in the United States, there is even the “Out Trans 100,” an annual award given to individuals who demonstrate courage through their efforts to promote visibility in their professions and communities. But, where teacher education still falls short is in how to support pre-K-12 teachers about how to integrate and normalize instruction that affirms and recognizes trans* and gender creative youth. These identities are nearly invisible in curriculum and in the Common Core Standards. That is why I wrote *Teaching, Affirming, and Recognizing Trans and Gender Creative Youth: A Queer Literacy Framework*, as an attempt to bring trans* and gender creative recognition and legibility into schools. In this collection, authors model exciting and innovative approaches for teaching, affirming and recognizing trans* and gender creative youth across pre-K-12th grades.

To understand the role of recognition in school, I draw inspiration from W.E.B. Du Bois who, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, wrote about the struggle for Black recognition and validation in The United States. In this book, Du Bois (1903) describes a double-consciousness, that sense of simultaneously holding up two images of the self, the internal and the external—while always trying to compose and reconcile one’s identity. He concerns himself with how the disintegration of the two generates internal strife and confusion about a positive sense of self-worth, just as I shared in my story.

Similar to what Du Bois names as a source for internal strife, for youth who live outside of the gender binary and challenge traditionally entrenched forms of gender expression such as trans* and gender creative youth, they too experience a double-consciousness. As they strive and yearn to be positively recognized by peers, teachers, and family members, they experience macroaggressions, because of their systemic reinforcement, and are forced to placate others by representing themselves in incomplete or false ways that they believe will be seen as socially acceptable in order to survive a school day. Such false fronts or defensive strategies are emotionally and cognitively exhausting and difficult (Miller, Burns, & Johnson, 2013); otherwise known as *emotional labor* (Hochschild, 1983; Nadal, River, & Corpus, 2010; Nordmarken, 2012), trans* and gender creative youth are thereby positioned by the school system to sustain a learned or detached tolerance to buffer the self against the countless microaggressions experienced throughout a typical school day. In fact while research from GLSEN (2008, 2010, 2014) reveals that at the secondary level trans* youth experience nearly the *highest* rates of bullying in schools and suicidal ideation (Ybarra, Mitchell, & Kosciw, 2014), even more startling, painful, and of grave concern is that trans* youth of color, when combined with a queer sexual orientation, experience *the* highest rates of school violence.

When school climates support and privilege the normalization of heterosexist,

cisgender, Eurocentric, uni-dimensional (i.e. non-intersectional) or gendernormative beliefs—even unconsciously—it forces students who fall outside of those dominant identifiers to focus on simple *survival* rather than on *success and fulfillment in school* (Miller, 2012; Miller & Gilligan, 2014). When school is neither safe nor affirming, or lacks a pedagogy of recognition, it leaves little to the imagination why trans* and gender creative youth are suffering. As potential remedy to disrupt this double-consciousness and an erasure of such youth, a trans* pedagogy emerges from these urgent realities and demands for immediate social, educational, and personal change and transformation. Such legitimacies of the human spirit, when affirmed by and through a trans* pedagogy, invite in trans* and gender creative youth to see their intra, inter, and social value mirrored, and to experience (a)genderⁱⁱⁱ self-determination and justice^{iv} (see Appendix A for extensive vocabulary for this work). My hope for the millennial generation of trans* and gender creative youth is that they can start living the lives they were meant to have from an early age, be affirmed and recognized for who they are, and not wait a lifetime to find themselves. Educating teachers and school personnel (and parents) across grade levels is an intervention and potential remedy.

Trans* Pedagogy

As detailed in *Teaching, Affirming, and Recognizing Trans and Gender Creative Youth: A Queer Literacy Framework*, there is a glaring and recognizable research gap about how to support teachers who work with or will work with trans* and gender creative youth. While previous work has been concerned with gender normativity and has focused on trans* issues as part of LGBTQ work, this book takes supporting trans* and gender creative students as its primary and concerted function. A production of invisibility of trans* and gender creative youth has generated a movement toward greater visibility, and such visibility is where this work asserts that a trans* pedagogy must be produced to sustain the personal and social legitimacy of trans* and gender creative youth as both recognizable and validated.

Such polemics usher in the urgent concern about what schools and teachers can do to not only recognize the presence of trans* and gender creative students in their classrooms but how to sustain safe, affirming, and inclusive classrooms across myriad sociocultural and linguistic contexts. Through a *queer literacy framework* (QLF) (Miller, forthcoming a, b, 2015 [see Appendix B]), a framework guided by ten principles and subsequent commitments about how to recognize, honor, and affirm trans* and gender creative youth, teachers can *trans** pedagogy and sustain curriculum in order to mediate safe, inclusive, and affirming classroom contexts. Drawing then from parts of the QLF, the book offers pre-K teachers a select sample of strategies that cut across social, economic, cultural and linguistic contexts to support their students about how to understand and read (a)gender through a queer lens; how to rework social and classroom norms where bodies with differential realities in classrooms are legitimated and made legible to self and other; how to shift classroom contexts for reading (a)gender; and how to support classroom students toward personal, educational, and social legitimacy through understanding the value of (a)gender self-determination and justice.^v

A trans* pedagogy first and foremost presumes axioms (see Figure 1) that can both validate trans* and gender creative youth and support their legibility and readability in schools and form the foundation for a trans* pedagogy. For instance:

- We live in a time we never made, gender norms predate our existence;
- Non-gender and sexual “differences” have been around forever but norms operate to pathologize and delegitimize them;
- Children’s self-determination is taken away early when gender is inscribed onto them. Their bodies/minds become unknowing participants in a roulette of gender norms;
- Children have rights to their own (a)gender legibility;
- Binary views on gender are potentially damaging;
- Gender must be dislodged/unhinged from sexuality;
- Humans have agency;
- We must move away from pathologizing beliefs that police humanity;
- Humans deserve positive recognition and acknowledgment for who they are;
- We are all entitled to the same basic human rights; and,
- Life should be livable for all.

Figure 1: Axioms for a trans* pedagogy

What does Trans* Mean?

The way I consider trans* within schooling contexts, infers to cut across or go between, to go over or beyond or away from, spaces and/or identities. Trans* is about integrating new ideas and concepts and new knowledges. Trans* is therefore comprised of multitudes, a moving away or a *refusal* to accept essentialized constructions of spaces, ideas, genders, or identities. It is within this confluence or mash-up that the self can be made and remade, always in perpetual construction and deconstruction, thereby having agency to create and draw the self into identity(ies) that the individual can recognize.

But self-recognition is not enough because, as Butler (2004) suggests, human value is context based, and one's happiness and success is dependent on social legibility (p. 32).

So how can a student become self-determined when it resides in the rhetorical quality of the "master's" discourse (Butler, 2004, p. 163)? This is problematic when the "master's" (i.e., in this case the teacher or the school) discourse lacks deep understanding about how to integrate new knowledges that affirm trans* and gender creative youth. As a pedagogical strategy to instantiate (a)gender self-determination, teachers can draw from these axioms and contest that bodies are not reducible to language alone because language continuously emerges from bodies as individuals come to know themselves. They (bodies) can thereby generate and invent new knowledges and "...give[s] rise to language...[that] carries bodily aims, and performs bodily deeds that are not always understood by those who use language to accomplish certain conscious aims" (Butler, 2004, p. 199). Foucault (1990) reminds us similarly that the self constitutes itself in discourse with the assistance of another's presence and speech. Therefore, when trans* and gender creative youth experience the simultaneity of both self and social recognition, they are less likely to experience the psychic split or double-consciousness DuBois (1903) called debilitating. To these ends, the possibility of becoming self-determined becomes a reality as students self-identify in a way that authenticates self-expression and self-acceptance while simultaneously, rejecting an imposition to be externally controlled, defined, or regulated. This unsettling of knowledge thereby generates new possibilities of legibility.

To not challenge current understandings of gender norms, we are left with a myopic and vulnerabilized understanding of the evolving lived realities of people. If we ascribe to a recurrence of sameness, it creates a flattening and uni-dimensional perspective of gender, while it continues to deligitimize those who do not ascribe to gender norms by relegating them to ongoing inferior status. In the literacy classroom (and eventually for schools writ-large), the absence of recognition reinscribes gender norms in schooling practices and enhances policies of exclusion at the same time it obscures voices from rising and having power to change and shift social spaces. Most critically, such an absence condones an anxiety that emerges from the unknown and which can produce and reproduce systemic forms of violence. Teachers who do not affirm differential bodied realities become co-conspirators in not only reproducing current understandings of gender but also in reproducing rationales that can lead to gender-based violence.

Moving Schooling into Trans*/Post-Trans* Era

Though change has been happening for decades, just less visibly, consider this—trans* and gender creative youth will continue to age, some may marry, some will become parents, some grandparents, and even great grandparents. Some may become laborers, professionals (e.g. teachers, professors, doctors, lawyers, dentists), CEO's and yes, even politicians. Their presence (across continents) will occur within myriad socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, religious/non-religious, spiritual, and linguistic spaces. They will comprise different national origins, (a)sexual orientations, (a)gender expressions, philosophies, genetic information, HIV status, veteran status, body sizes, heights, and mental and physical abilities. For those who support the psycho-social-emotional

development of trans* and gender creative youth, we know and believe deeply that they are *no* different than any other being and are thereby entitled to the same inalienable rights and to be treated with *dignity*.

Beyond what the authors in my book have shared, findings reveal large holes within curriculum that are trans* positive. To that end, future research *must*—not could or should—but *must* take up how to mediate schooling experiences for all trans* and gender creative youth across all identities and intersectionalities. Districts and schools *must* commit to such efforts in order for them to become both sustainable and a normalized part of the schooling experience for *all* trans* and gender creative youth; and, pre-K-12th grade curriculum *must* change in order to advance a future recognizability for these youth. To these aims, it is recommended that,

- ✓ Researchers *must* address ongoing gaps in teacher education and work closely to continue to deepen and develop the efficacy of a theory of trans*ness into trans* pedagogical strategies that affirm and recognize the intersectional realities facing trans* and gender creative youth;
- ✓ Pre-service teacher education *must* introduce (a)gender identity topics in early childhood education and throughout elementary, middle and secondary coursework, and across disciplinary programs. Programs should decide in which courses such uptake would fit best;
- ✓ Teacher educators *must* work closely with school districts to develop professional development models that can support curriculum specialists and teachers in their ongoing awareness about how to meet the needs of trans* and gender creative youth;
- ✓ Because no district faces identical issues nor has identical student bodies, district curriculum specialists *must* work alongside classroom teachers and educate each other about the classroom and schooling experiences of *their* trans* and gender creative youth. Collectively they can develop curriculum that develops internal and external safety, is inclusive, and affirming, and generates both recognizability and visibility to self and other;
- ✓ Districts and schools *must* work closely with community organizations that address (a)gender and gender violence (e.g., rape crisis centers, LGBT or gender identity non-profits, doctors, mental health and health care practitioners), to develop a deeper understanding of the issues facing trans* and gender creative youth;
- ✓ Districts and schools *must* work alongside families so as to learn from, and with, their experiences and to develop support groups;
- ✓ Districts and schools *must* work to change and update district and school policy, codes of conduct, to enumerate bullying policies, to create safe bathrooms and locker rooms, to consider issues about participation in sports and physical education classes--typical spaces for extreme harassment, and to reflect on how to create a schooling environment that can help to foster external safety; and,
- ✓ Teacher educators, districts, schools, community organizations and families *must* caucus with legislatures to change state policy about trans* rights to be more inclusive of health care needs, identification changes, and bullying policies.

Change is possible. The double-consciousness, or psychic split that many trans* and gender creative youth experience, can be alleviated as all of these constituents work to support one another in sustainable ways. For those who will be impacted by the collective lessons described throughout this book, and as compassion and mindsets are expanded and deepened, the development of even more resources to teach, affirm and recognize our trans* and gender creative youth, makes (a)gender self-determination no longer just a possibility, but, a *reality*.

So, what might a proleptic trans*/post trans schooling system look like, and how might that potentially change humanity? As trans* becomes part of the fabric of the schooling system and woven into the mainstream of society, we enter into a post trans* space. A post trans* space, though indeterminate, would demonstrate how contexts have become sustainable to hold and care for the commonplace normalization of the trans* and gender creative body. In these myriad spaces (e.g., school, jobs, families, etc.) trans* and gender creativity, would no longer incur macroaggressions nor marginalization, but for those who embody these glorious identities they would experience the same dignities entitled to any other human. In this post trans* space, the possibility for the unknown and for new knowledges to continue to emerge would become part of the social and interpersonal discourses. On a macro scale then, by accepting that the unknown is part and parcel to its larger normalization, a post trans* space becomes accepted without redress. In post trans* contexts therefore, while people will always *see* difference, the prior systemic misrecognition dysphoria of trans* and gender creativity, collapses.

If indeed this post trans* space were realized, a space where trans*ness blends but doesn't blend in, and as trans* and gender creative youth and all people for that matter experience these expanding contexts, humanity might not only see more trans*gentleness, they might see and experience more trans* and gender creative *justice*. In the wake of such justice then, for schools, curriculum would include trans* and gender creative narratives, books of all genres and story lines, histories, political victories, trailblazers, photos and pictures, and media icons. Students would have ample options for names, (a)pronoun, and (a)gender. There would be no fear of bullying or harassment related to bathrooms, locker rooms, and physical education classes and, most important, school would no longer be about *survival*, it would be about *success*, *thriving* and *fulfillment*. The noise and emotional labor once tolerated finally fades away into the distance.

Blue Today

It has taken nearly a lifetime of inner struggle to understand myself as Blue. Had teachers understood Blue's gender confusion and introduced dialogue, development of safe spaces, and any of the lessons modeled by these authors, it is likely Blue would have grown up with an affirmed and more stable sense of self. Blue still and will likely always struggle with a vulnerabilized self, with a frailty that cannot be reversed, and even fractured relationships. Had the world been more kind, compassionate, and prepared to meet the needs of trans* and gender creative youth while Blue was growing up, Blue would not still be playing catch up. This book hopes to inspire all literacy teacher

educators and teachers who will have a Blue in their classroom and can support Blue into becoming the person Blue always was. If this were to happen, the Blues of the world needn't remain Blue anymore, nor would they need a lifetime to discover their true selves-- *they would just be free to be themselves in a world better prepared to embrace, accept, love, and recognize them from birth.*

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Appendix A

Glossary of Terms: Defining a Common Queer Language

Agender- Rejecting gender as a biological or social construct altogether and refusing to identify with gender.

(A)gender and (a)sexual justice and queer autonomy- These interchangeable terms each ideologically reflect an actualized freedom of humans to be self-expressive without redress of social, institutional, or political violence. See also *queer autonomy*.

(A)gender self-determination- This is the inherent right to both occupy one's (a)gender and make choices to self-identify in a way that authenticates self-expression. It is also a type of self-granted or inherited permission that can help one refute or rise above social critique; it presumes choice and rejects an imposition to be defined or regulated; it presumes that humans are entitled to unsettle knowledge, which can generate new possibilities of legibility; and, it means that any representation of (a)gender deserves the same inalienable rights and the same dignities and protections as any other human. This de 'factoness' grants individuals ways of intervening in and disrupting social and political processes because one's discourse and self-determined ways of being demonstrate placement as a viable stakeholder in society, revealing that no one personhood is of any more or less of value than any other.

Ally- Any non-lesbian, non-gay man, non-bisexual, or cisgender person whose attitude and behavior are anti-heterosexist and who is proactive and works toward combating homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism on both a personal and institutional level.

Apronoun- Refusal of using pronouns when self-identifying.

Aromantic- One who lacks a romantic orientation or is incapable of feeling romantic attraction. Aromantics can still have a sexual orientation (e.g., "aromantic bisexual" or aromantic heterosexual"). A person who feels neither romantic nor sexual attraction is known as an aromantic asexual.

Asexual/Ace- A person who does not experience sexual attraction to another person. Individuals may still be emotionally, physically, romantically, and/or spiritually attracted to others, and their romantic orientation may also be LGBTQIA (A in this case meaning ally). The prefixes of homo-, hetero-, bi-, pan-, poly-, demi- and a- have been used to form terms such as heteroromantic, biromantic, homoromantic asexual, and so on. Unlike celibacy, which people choose, asexuality is intrinsic. Some asexual people do engage in sexual activity for a variety of reasons, such as a desire to please romantic partners or to have children.

Assigned gender- The gender one is presumed or expected to embody based on assigned sex at birth.

Assigned pronouns- The commonly accepted pronouns that others use to describe or refer to a person based on actual or perceived gender.

Assigned sex- The sex one is assigned at birth based on genitalia.

Bigender- Refers to those who have masculine and feminine sides to their personality. This is often a term used by cross dressers. It should not be confused with the term two-spirit, which is specifically a term used by Native Americans.

Bisexuality/BI- A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to both genders.

Butch- An identity or presentation that leans towards masculinity. Butch can be an adjective ("she's a butch woman"), a verb ("he went home to butch up"), or a noun ("they identify as a butch"). Although commonly associated with masculine queer/lesbian women, it's used by many to describe a distinct gender identity and/or expression, and does not necessarily imply that one identifies as a woman.

CAFAB and CAMAB- Acronyms meaning “Coercively Assigned Female/Male at Birth.” Sometimes AFAB and AMAB (without the word “coercively”) are used instead. No one, whether cis- or trans, has a choice in the sex or gender to which they are assigned when they are born, which is why it is said to be coercive. In the rare cases in which it is necessary to refer to the birth-assigned sex of a trans person, this is their way to do it.

Chosen gender- The gender one feels most comfortable embodying and how one sees the self.
Chosen pronouns or Preferred Gender Pronouns- The pronouns that one feels most comfortable being used when spoken or referred to. Examples might include: ‘ze’, ‘per,’ they, ‘or ‘hir’.

Cisgender or Cissexual- A person who by nature or by choice conforms to gender based expectations of society. (Also referred to as genderstraight or ‘Gender Normative’.) A prefix of Latin origin, meaning “on the same side (as).” Cisgender individuals have a gender identity that is aligned with their birth sex, and therefore have a self-perception and gender expression that matches behaviors and roles considered appropriate for their birth sex: for example, a person who is femininely-identified that was born female. In short, cisgender is the opposite of transgender. It is important to recognize that even if two people identify as men (one being cis and the other being trans*), they may lead very similar lives but deal with different struggles pertaining to their birth sex.

Cissexism- Synonymous with transphobia, this definition is associated with negative attitudes and feelings toward transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identity. Cissexism is also the belief that cisgender individuals are superior to transgender people and that a cisgender lifestyle is more desirable to lead.

“Coming out”- Also, “coming out of the closet” or “being out”, this term refers to the process in which a person acknowledges, accepts, and in many cases appreciates her or his lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender identity. This often involves sharing of this information with others. It is not a single event but instead a life-long process. Each new situation poses the decision of whether or not to come out.

Crip- Increasingly used to refer to a person who has a disability and embraces it, rather than feeling sorry for themselves. Historically used as a disparaging term for a person that is partially disabled or unable to use a limb or limbs. It is similar to the word queer in that it is sometimes used as a hateful slur, so although some have reclaimed it from their oppressors, be careful with its use.

Cross-Dressing (CD)- The act of dressing and presenting as the “opposite” binary gender. One who considers this an integral part of their identity may identify as a cross-dresser. Transvestite is an obsolete (and sometimes offensive) term with the same meaning. Cross-dressing and drag are forms of gender expression and are not necessarily tied to erotic activity, nor are they indicative of one’s sexual orientation. Do NOT use these terms to describe someone who has transitioned or intends to do so in the future.

Demisexual- A demisexual is a person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone. It’s more commonly seen in but by no means confined to romantic relationships. The term demisexual comes from the orientation being “halfway between” sexual and asexual. Nevertheless, this term does not mean that demisexuals have an incomplete or half-sexuality, nor does it mean that sexual attraction without emotional connection is required for a complete sexuality. In general, demisexuals are not sexually attracted to anyone of any gender; however, when a demisexual is emotionally connected to someone else (whether the feelings are romantic love or deep friendship), the demisexual experiences sexual attraction and desire, but only towards the specific partner or partners.

Drag- Stylized performance of gender, usually by female-bodied drag kings or male-bodied drag queens. Doing drag does not necessarily have anything to do with one’s sex, gender identity, or orientation.

Femme- An identity or presentation that leans towards femininity. Femme can be an adjective (he's a "femmeboy"), a verb (she feels better when she femmes up"), or a noun ("they're a femme"). Although commonly associated with feminine lesbian/queer women, it's used by many to describe a distinct gender identity and/or expression, and does not necessarily imply that one identifies as a woman.

Gay- A common and acceptable word for male homosexuals, but used for both genders.

Gender- Socially constructed roles, behaviors, and attributes considered by the general public to be "appropriate" for one's sex as assigned at birth. Gender roles vary among cultures and along time continuums.

Gender affirmation/ confirmation surgery- Having surgery as means to construct genitalia of choice. Surgery does not change one's sex or gender, only genitalia. Gender/genitalia reassignment/reconstruction surgeries affirm an essentialist perspective of being born in the wrong sex from birth and are less frequently used in a lexicon.

Gender binary- A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two categories (termed woman and man) which are biologically-based (female and male) and unchangeable, and in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. This system is oppressive to anyone who defines their birth assignment, but particularly those who are gender-variant people and do not fit neatly into one of the two categories.

Gender creative- Expressing gender in a way that demonstrates individual freedom of expression and that does not conform to any gender.

Gender expression/presentation- The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc., typically referred to as feminine or masculine. Many transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity rather than their birth-assigned sex.

Gender-fluid- Individuals who are between identifying with a gender or who do not identify with a gender. This term overlaps with genderqueer and bigender, implying movement between gender identities and/or presentations.

Gender identity- One's personal sense of his or her correct gender, which may be reflected as gender expression.

Gender non-conforming- A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

Gender role/expression- How one performs gender in the world as it relates to social expectations and norms

Genderqueer- Those rejecting binary roles and language for gender. A general term for non-binary gender identities. Those who identify as genderqueer may identify as neither woman nor man; may see themselves as outside of the binary gender boxes; may fall somewhere between the binary genders; or may reject the use of gender labels. Genderqueer identities fall under the "trans umbrella. Synonyms include androgynous.

Gray-A Sexual- Asexuality and sexuality are not black and white; some people identify in the **gray** (spelled "grey" in some countries) area between them. People who identify as **gray-A** can include, but are not limited to those who: do not normally experience sexual attraction, but do experience it sometimes, experience sexual attraction, but a low sex drive, experience sexual attraction and drive, but not strongly enough to want to act on them, **and** people who can enjoy and desire sex, but only under very limited and specific circumstances. A person can be gray-heterosexual, gray-homosexual, and/or gray-bisexual.

GSM- Gender and Sexual Minority is a term used to describe those who fall outside of dominant gender and sexuality identities.

Hate Crime- Any act of intimidation, harassment, physical force or threat of physical force directed against any person, or their property, motivated either in whole or in part by hostility toward their actual or perceived age, disability, gender identity, ethnic background, race,

religious/spiritual belief, sex, sexual orientation, etc.

Heteroflexible- Similar to bisexual, but with a stated heterosexual preference. Sometimes characterized as being “mostly straight.” Commonly used to indicate that one is interested in heterosexual romance but is “flexible” when it comes to sex and/or play. The same concepts apply to homoflexible.

Heteronormative/Heteronormativity- A culture or belief system that assumes that people fall into distinct and complementary sexes and genders and that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation. A heteronormative view is one that involves alignment of biological sex, sexuality, gender identity, and gender roles, sexuality, gender identity, and gender roles.

Heterosexism- The assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a subtle form of oppression which reinforces realities of silence and invisibility.

Heterosexuality- A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the opposite gender.

Homonormative/Homonormativity- The assimilation of heteronormative ideals and constructs into LGBTQIA culture and identity. Homonormativity upholds neoliberalism rather than critiquing monogamy, procreation, normative family social roles, and binary gender roles. It is criticized as undermining citizens’ rights and erasing the historic alliance between radical politics and gay politics, the core concern being sexual freedom. Some assert that homonormativity fragments LGBTQIA communities into hierarchies of worthiness: those that mimic heteronormative standards of gender identity are deemed most worthy of receiving rights. Individuals at the bottom of the hierarchy are seen as an impediment to this elite class of homonormative individuals receiving their rights. Because LGBTQIA activists and organizations embrace systems that endorse normative family social roles and serial monogamy, some believe that LGBTQIA people are surrendering and conforming to heteronormative behavior.

Homophobia- The fear, dislike, and/or hatred of same-sex relationships or those who love and are sexually attracted to those of the same sex. Homophobia includes prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence brought on by fear and hatred. It occurs on personal, institutional, and societal levels.

Homosexual- A person who is physically, romantically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to a person of the same gender. Many prefer “gay,” “lesbian,” etc. because of the term’s origins as a medical term at a time when homosexuality was considered a disorder.

Homosexuality- A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender.

Inclusive Language- The use of non-identity specific language to avoid imposing limitations or assumptions on others. For example, saying “you all” instead of “you guys” in order to not impose assumptions regarding a person’s gender identity.

In the closet- To be “in the closet” means to hide one’s homosexual identity in order to keep a job, a housing situation, friends, or in some other way to survive. Many glbt individuals are “out” in some situations and “closeted” in others.

Internalized homophobia- The fear and self-hate of one’s own homosexuality or bisexuality that occurs for many individuals who have learned negative ideas about homosexuality throughout childhood. One form of internalized oppression is the acceptance of the myths and stereotypes applied to the oppressed group. Internalized oppression is commonly seen among most, if not all, minority groups.

Intersex (IS)- Those born with atypical sex characteristics. A person whose natal physical sex is physically ambiguous. There are many genetic, hormonal or anatomical variations which can cause this (e.g. Klinefelter Syndrome, Adrenal Hyperplasia, or Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome). Parents and medical professionals usually assign intersex infants a sex and perform

surgical operations to conform the infant's body to that assignment, but this practice has become increasingly controversial as intersex adults are speaking out against having had to undergo medical procedures which they did not consent to (and in many cases caused them mental and physical difficulties later in life). The term intersex is preferred over "hermaphrodite," an outdated term which is stigmatizing and misleading.

Invisibility- The constant assumption of heterosexuality renders gay and lesbian people, youth in particular, invisible and seemingly nonexistent. Gay and lesbian people and youth are usually not seen or portrayed in society, and especially not in schools and classrooms.

Label free- Individuals who shirk all labels attached to gender and reject the gender binary.

Lesbian- A femininely-identified individual who is emotionally, physically, romantically, sexually and/or spiritually attracted to femininely-identified individuals.

Monosexual/Multisexual- Umbrella terms for orientations directed towards one's gender (monosexual) or many genders (multisexual).

Non-binary gender- Non-binary refers to (a)gender as broader, less defined, more fluid, and a more imaginative and expressive matrix of ideas. It challenges power differentials, by deconstructing and reconstructing ideas, reflecting on disjunctures, unpacking gender, gender identities and gender expressions, and providing opportunities for new knowledges to emerge.

Pansexual/Omnisexual- "Pan," meaning "all." Someone who is emotionally, physically, romantically, sexually and/or spiritually attracted to all gender identities/expressions, including those outside the gender-conforming binary. Similar to bisexual, but different in that the concept deliberately rejects the gender binary. Polysexual people are attracted to "many," but not necessarily all, genders.

Passing- A term used by transgender people to mean that they are seen as the gender with which they self-identify. For example, a transgender man (born female) who most people see as a man. Also a term used by non-heterosexual people to mean that they are seen as or assumed to be heterosexual.

Polyamory- Having more than one intimate relationship at a time with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved. It is distinct from both swinging (which emphasizes sex with others as merely recreational) and polysexuality (which is attraction towards multiple genders and/or sexes). People who identify as polyamorous typically reject the view that sexual and relational exclusivity are necessary for deep, committed, long-term loving relationships.

Preferred or chosen gender pronouns- Self selected pronouns for how an individual prefers to be referenced. While there is an emerging lexicon of pronouns, it is best to ask the individual how one self-references.

QPOC- "Queer People Of Color" or "Queer Person Of Color."

Queer- Despite the negative historical use of this term, it has been embraced in the last decade, particularly by younger members of the GLBT community. It is an umbrella term that many prefer, both because of convenience (easier than 'gay, lesbian, etc) and because it does not force the person who uses it to choose a more specific label for their gender identity or sexual orientation. Queer also refers to a suspension of rigid gendered and sexual orientation categories and is underscored by attempts to interrogate and interrupt heteronormativity, reinforced by acknowledging diverse people across gender, sex, and desires, as well as to foreground the sexual. It embraces the freedom to move beyond, between, or even away from, yet even to later return to, myriad identity categories. Queer is not relegated to LGBT*IAGCQ people, but is inclusive of any variety of experience that transcends what has been socially and politically accepted as normative categories for gender and sexual orientation.

Queer autonomy or (a)gender and (a)sexual justice- These interchangeable terms each ideologically reflect an actualized freedom of humans to be self-expressive without redress of social, institutional, or political violence. See also **(a)gender and (a)sexual justice**.

Romantic Orientation- A person's enduring emotional, physical, romantic and/or spiritual — but not necessarily sexual — attraction to others. Sometimes called affectional orientation.

“Romantic orientation” is often used by the asexual community in lieu of “sexual orientation.”

Safe Space- A place where people who identify within the LGBTQIA communities feel comfortable and secure in being who they are. In this place, they can talk about the people with whom they are involved without fear of being criticized, judged or ridiculed. Safe spaces promote the right to be comfortable in one's living space, work environments, etc. It is focused toward the right to use the pronoun of a significant other in conversation, and the right to be as outwardly open about one's life and activities as anyone else.

Same-Gender Loving- A term created by the African-American community that some prefer to use instead of “lesbian,” “bisexual” or “gay” to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender. SGL is an alternative to Eurocentric homosexual identities, which may not culturally affirm or engage the history and cultures of people of African descent.

Self-determined presumes the right to make choices to self-identify in a way that authenticates one's self-expression and self-acceptance, rejects an imposition to be externally controlled, defined, or regulated, and can unsettle knowledge to generate new possibilities of legibility.

Sex- Sex refers to the biological traits, which include internal and external reproductive anatomy, chromosomes, hormones, and other physiological characteristics. The assignment and classification of people at birth as male or female is often based solely on external reproductive anatomy. Related terms: intersex, female, male.

Sexual orientation- A person's emotional, physical, and sexual attraction and the expression of that attraction. Although a subject of debate, sexual orientation is probably one of the many characteristics that people are born with.

Sexual minority- A term used to refer to someone who identifies their sexuality as different from the dominant culture (i.e., heterosexual), for example, homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, or transvestite.

Sexual affirmation/alignment Surgery- Establishing one's affirmed sex via legal and medical steps.

Stealth- Going stealth means for a trans* person to live completely as their gender identity and to pass in the public sphere; when a trans* person chooses not to disclose their trans* status to others. This can be done for numerous reasons including safety, or simply because the person doesn't feel others have the right to know. For transexuals, going stealth is often the goal of transition.

Trans*- Prefix or adjective used as an abbreviation of transgender, derived from the Greek word meaning “across from” or “on the other side of.” Many consider trans* to be an inclusive and useful umbrella term. Trans (without the asterisk) is most often applied to trans men and trans women, and the asterisk is used more broadly to refer to all non-cisgender gender identities, such as agender, cross-dresser, bigender, genderfluid, gender**k, genderless, genderqueer, non-binary, non-gendered, third gender, trans man, trans woman, transgender, transsexual and two-spirit.

Transgender (TG)-The experience of having a gender identity that is different from one's biological sex. A transgender person may identify with the opposite biological gender and want to be a person of that gender. A transgender person may or may not be pre-or post-operative; if they are, they are likely to refer to him/herself as transsexual. This has become an umbrella term for nonconforming gender identity and expression.*

Transphobia- Irrational fear of trans* people through active prejudice and active discrimination by institutions, communities, and/or individuals that diminishes access to resources throughout mainstream society.

Transition- Adopting one's affirmed, non-biological gender permanently. The complex process of leaving behind one's coercively assigned birth sex. Transition can include: coming out to one's family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) some form of surgery. It's best not to assume that someone will "complete" this process at any particular time: an individual's transition is finished when they are finally comfortable with how their gender identity is aligned with their body, and may not include going through all of the aforementioned steps.

Trans* Woman or Trans* Man-Informal descriptors used relative to one's affirmed gender. Variants include T*, trans person, and trans folk.

Transsexual People (TS)- Typically those taking all available medical and legal steps to transition from their assigned sex to their affirmed sex. Transitioning across the sexual binary can go from female to male (FTM) or male to female (MTF). Some go stealth, hiding their transsexual history.

Two-Spirit- A contemporary term that references historical multiple gender traditions in many First Nations cultures. These individuals were sometimes viewed in certain tribes as having two spirits occupying one body; two-spirit indicates a person whose body simultaneously manifests both a masculine and a feminine spirit. Many Native/First Nations people who are LGBTQIA or gender non-conforming identify as Two-Spirit; in many Nations, being Two-Spirit carries both great respect and additional commitments and responsibilities to one's community.

When discussing or having conversations with people, it is best to avoid:

- She-male, tranny, transie, sex change, he-she, shim
- Sexual preference (suggests choice)
- Hermaphrodite (an outdated clinical term)

Appendix B

Principles	Commitments of Educators who Queer Literacy
1. Refrains from possible presumptions that students ascribe to a gender	Educators who use queer literacy never presume that students have a gender.
2. Understands gender as a construct which has and continues to be impacted by intersecting factors (e.g., social, historical, material, cultural, economic, religious)	Educators who employ queer literacy are committed to classroom activities that actively push back against gender constructs and provide opportunities to explore, engage and understand how gender is constructed.
3. Recognizes that masculinity and femininity constructs are assigned to gender norms and are situationally performed	Educators who engage with queer literacy challenge gender norms and gender-stereotypes and actively support students' various and multiple performances of gender.
4. Understands gender as flexible	Educators who engage with queer literacy are mindful about how specific discourse(s) can reinforce gender and norms, and they purposefully demonstrate how gender is fluid, or exist on a continuum, shifting over time and in different contexts.
5. Opens up spaces for students to self-define with chosen (a)genders, (a)pronouns, or names	Educators who engage with queer literacy invite students to self-define and/or reject a chosen or preferred gender, , name, and/or pronoun.
6. Engages in ongoing critique of how gender norms are reinforced in literature, media, technology, art, history, science, math, etc.,	Educators who use queer literacy provide ongoing and deep discussions about how society is gendered and, and thus invite students to actively engage in analysis of cultural texts and disciplinary discourses.
7. Understands how Neoliberal principles reinforce and sustain compulsory heterosexism, which secures homophobia; and how gendering secures bullying and transphobia.	Educators who employ queer literacy understand and investigate structural oppression and how heterosexism sustains (a)gendered violence, generate meaningful opportunities for students to become embodied change agents and to be proactive against, or to not engage in bullying behavior.
8. Understands that (a)gender intersect with other identities (e.g. sexual orientation, culture, language, age, religion, social class, body type, accent, height, ability, disability, and national origin) that inform students' beliefs and thereby, actions	Educators who engage with queer literacy do not essentialize students' identities, but recognize how intersections of sexual orientation, culture, language, age, religion, social class, body type, accent, height, ability, disability, and national origin, inform students' beliefs and thereby, actions.
9. Advocates for equity across all categories of (a)gender performances	Educators who employ queer literacy do not privilege one belief or stance, but advocate for equity across all categories of (a)gender performances
10. Believes that students who identify on a continuum of gender identities deserve to learn in environments free of bullying and harassment	Educators who use queer literacy make their positions known, when first hired, to students, teachers, administrators and school personnel and take a stance when any student is bullied or marginalized, whether explicitly or implicitly, for their (a)gender identities.

A queer literacy framework promoting (a)gender and self-determination and justice
 Modified but originally printed as Miller, s. (2015). A queer literacy framework promoting (a)gender and (a)sexuality self-determination and justice. *English Journal*, 104(5), 37-44.

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ⁱ I refer to trans* a prefix or adjective used as an abbreviation of transgender, derived from the Greek word meaning “across from” or “on the other side of.” Many consider trans* to be an inclusive and useful umbrella term. Trans (without the asterisk) is most often applied to trans men and trans women, and the asterisk is used more broadly to refer to all non-cisgender gender identities, such as agender, cross-dresser, bigender, genderfluid, gender**k, genderless, genderqueer, non-binary, non-gender, third gender, trans man, trans woman, transgender, transsexual and two-spirit.

ⁱⁱ Expressing gender in a way that demonstrates individual freedom of expression and that does not conform to any gender.

ⁱⁱⁱ I refer to (a)gender as a rejection of gender as a biological or social construct altogether and refusing to identify with gender. The lower case (a) in parenthesis does not nullify gender, it is a way of combining the terms so both gender refusal and gender are collapsed into one word.

^{iv}(A)gender self-determination- This is the inherent right to both occupy one’s (a)gender and make choices to self-identify in a way that authenticates self-expression. It is also a type of self-granted or inherited permission that can help one refute or rise above social critique; it presumes choice and rejects an imposition to be defined or regulated; it presumes that humans are entitled to unsettle knowledge, which can generate new possibilities of legibility; and, it means that any representation of (a)gender deserves the same inalienable rights and the same dignities and protections as any other human. This de ‘factoness’ grants individuals ways of intervening in and disrupting social and political processes because one’s discourse and self-determined ways of being demonstrate placement as a viable stakeholder in society, revealing that no one personhood is of any more or less of value than any other.

^v This work focuses only on (a)gender, for a discussion of *both* (a)gender and (a)sexuality self-determination and justice, see original printing, Miller, s. (2015). A queer literacy framework promoting (a)gender and (a)sexuality self-determination and justice. *English Journal*, 104(5). 37-44.