

## From Policy to Practice: Creating Inclusive Classrooms & Schools for LGBTQ Students - A Report



### Executive Summary

On Wednesday October 19, 2016 the Brown University Education Department kicked off its Diversity and Inclusion programming (DIAP), as the annual colloquium series commenced with its first workshop - "From Policy to Practice: Creating Inclusive Classrooms & Schools for LGBTQ Students." The colloquium series involves an array of dynamic and engaging professional development trainings for emerging classroom educators and policy professionals. The goal of the colloquium series is to bring together both UEP and MAT students in a space that fosters dialogue, learning and community around pertinent topics of diversity and inclusion in education. Using information from pre-workshop and post-workshop surveys that were completed by workshop attendees, this report pulls together quantitative and qualitative data to document the student-learning outcomes of those MAT and UEP students who attended "From Policy to Practice." The results of this report will be used to drive further DIAP programming and priorities. The timing of the workshop was befitting, given that during Brown Summer High School, MAT students taught LGBTQ students and faced some of the real world challenges that come with teaching diverse student populations. For the Urban Education Policy (UEP) cohort, the workshop brought up relevant policy issues, such as anti-bullying legislation on a federal and state/local level. The workshop bridged the gap between policy and practice when it comes to best serving the needs of LGBTQ students in K-12 schools across the United States. Additionally, the workshop aimed to provide UEP students a better understanding of the ground-game teachers face, while giving MAT candidates perspective on how policy impacts their classrooms.

**"I think that this [the workshop] helped me gain perspective about policies regarding bullying of LGBTQ students, helped me become more familiar with the vocabulary, and just offered more information on how to help students feel comfortable talking to me as their teacher."** -Brown Education Department Graduate Student

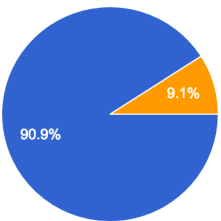
## Key Findings

“More than anything, the simple fact of having an actual formal professional development session makes me feel more confident and sure that I can be inclusive of LGBTQ students in class and that there's not any crucial piece of information around this subject that I have overlooked. It helps to have an official event dedicated specifically to this.”

-Brown Education Department

There are three primary findings that can be derived from the pre-workshop, and post-workshop surveys:

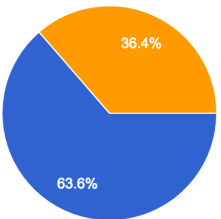
- 1. This was the first, formal professional development session on LGBTQ student inclusion and best practices for the majority of MAT and UEP candidates.** On their pre-workshop surveys students were asked “Have you ever had any professional development training specific to working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer youth (Students grade K-12)?” 87.9% of students responded “No” to this question.
- 2. The workshop exposed UEP/MAT students to new information, and new strategies for working with LGBTQ students, and on policy related to LGBTQ students.**
- 3. There is a strong interest amongst MAT/UEP candidates in having more resources made available to them regarding working with LGBTQ students.**



● Yes  
● No  
● No Opinion

**Did the workshop provide MAT/UEP candidates new tools or information to be better policy makers and/or educators?**

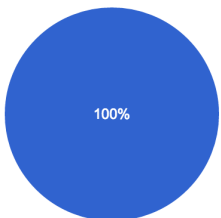
Yes, 90.9% of workshop attendees reported that this workshop gave them new tools to improve their classroom practice, or policy making abilities. One MAT candidate noted that as a result of the workshop they could be “more alert about potential bullying situations, and be a better resource for my students if they are seeking help.” Overall the workshop was effective in providing students tangible, evidence based solutions to challenges and questions they are sure to face in the classroom and policy making arena.



● Yes  
● No  
● No Opinion

**Is there student interest in having more resources/professional development trainings devoted to specifically working with LGBTQ youth?**

Yes, when asked “would you like to receive additional resources/trainings on working with LGBTQ students?” The majority of students (63.6%) answered yes, they would like further training or resources made available to them. Additionally, when the topic of having a training on LGBTQ student inclusion was brought up amongst undergraduate education concentrators, the overwhelming majority of students expressed interest in participating in such a training. There is clearly a critical mass of student interest that warrants the devotion of more resources to this topic.



● Yes  
● No  
● No Opinion

**Would it be beneficial to the Brown University Education Department to continue this specific PD training?**

Yes, it is critical that the Brown University Education Department continues professional development training for undergraduate education concentrators, MAT and UEP students around the specific needs of LGBTQ students. When asked, 100% of workshop attendees agreed - saying that future students would benefit from such training, or a more formalized curriculum built into the Brown Education Department.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

- **Create, and implement, a social justice education class that is required for MAT's to take in the summer semester.**



While the hour and half training was effective in conveying key points and ideas to MAT/UEP students (as demonstrated by the key findings), a one-time training is not enough to adequately cover all of the material. In order to give educators a comprehensive look at the issues and the solutions, the Brown Education Department must prioritize adding a Social Justice Education course to the MAT required course-load. Critical feedback on the post-workshop surveys bolstered this assertion, as several students noted that they would of liked more time to continue their learning. A social justice education course that covered issues related to gender identity and sexual orientation, differently abled students, race/ethnicity and class, and working with undocumented students (among other topics) would provide the time and space necessary to ensure that students

walk away with a more complete understanding of the many identities their students bring into the classroom. The call for a social justice education class in the Brown University Education Department is not new, as the 2015 *“Concerns and Recommendations for Brown University’s Education Department”* report cites the need for such a course as well. Former History/Social Studies MAT Program Director Eric Shed stated *“MATs need more than 4 class (ed psych, literacy, 2 methods) and if one more class was added say: Teachers, School and Equity race, class, gender among other things could be a key issue.”*<sup>1</sup>

- **Build a more intentional relationship between the Brown University Education Department and the Brown University LGBTQ center/campus LGBTQ focussed student organizations.**

Brown University as a strong reputation as being one of the most LGBTQ friendly campuses in the country. With a robust array of LGBTQ specific programming and student organizations on campus - TRANS@Brown, Safe Zone, The Queer Alliance - there is ample opportunity for more collaboration across the spectrum. Faculty, Staff and DIAP programming must strive to build relationships with student leaders in the LGBTQ community, and LGBTQ center staff at the university.

- **Encourage Brown Education Department students to attend further LGBTQ-student related professional developement trainings on their own time.**

There are several opportunities for Brown Education Department students to engage in LGBTQ related professional developement trainings off campus. The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has annual conferences all throughout the country, including in Massachusetts, specifically designed for educators looking to expand their teaching toolkit. Additionally, GLSEN has online

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<sup>1</sup> Kandy Galvez and Lucas Johnson, *“Concerns and Recommendations for Brown University’s Education Department.”*

webinars and professional development trainings that are available to educators. Outside of GLSEN there are several curriculum and training resources available on the topic through organizations/ programs like Teaching Tolerance, Edutopia, and Welcoming Schools. Brown Ed. Department faculty, particularly MAT program directors, need to be intentional in sharing these resources with their students, and should also work to incorporate these resources into their methods/analysis classes when applicable.

- **If an MAT candidate's student-teaching school has an LGBTQ affinity group or diversity & inclusion student organization (such as a Queer Straight Alliance/Gay Straight Alliance, Rainbow Club, Diversity Club, etc) encourage the MAT candidate to attend meetings, or even take a leadership role as a co-advisor!**

The MAT student teaching semester is a valuable opportunity for the MAT candidate to grow as an educator and classroom practitioner. The student teaching semester also provides a great opportunity for the MAT candidate to get involved in their broader school community by attending GSA/QSA meetings, or even working alongside the GSA/QSA advisor to help plan programming and support students! Research has shown that in schools with GSA's/QSA's students experience less bullying/ harassment victimization, all students feel safer and more supportive (even non LGBTQ identified students) and the overall school climate is improved.<sup>2</sup> When teachers are supportive, students thrive. MAT candidates should be encouraged to show their support for LGBTQ students in every way they possibly can.

- **Host a training on LGBTQ inclusion/best practices for undergraduate education concentrators.** As cited earlier in the "key findings" section of the report, there is an interest amongst undergraduate education concentrators on participating in future trainings related to LGBTQ inclusion/best practices. Including undergraduate education concentrators in future trainings would not just provide them with the skills necessary to better serve LGBTQ populations in educational settings, it would also create more cohesion, and a greater sense of community in the Brown Education Department between undergraduate students, MAT students and UEP students. There is a real opportunity that is currently being missed to bring undergraduate students into the fold of the Brown Education DIAP programming.
- **Have policy makers who are LGBTQ identified, and/or who work on LGBTQ education policy issues, discuss their work with UEP students.**

UEP candidates should be exposed to a wide array of policy makers, and policy issue areas throughout their academic program. LGBTQ policy issues have become a "hot button" topic right now in the policy arena, particularly those topics related to transgender students, bullying/harassment and the school-to-prison pipeline. This means there is ample opportunity for the UEP program to take on these real world policy issues, and expose their students to the policy makers who are making change in this arena.

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<sup>2</sup> Emily A. Greytak, PhD et al., "From Teasing to Torment: School Climate Revisited A Survey of U.S. Secondary School Students and Teachers."