

## **K–12 Methods: Arts and Music**

This module focuses on content areas related to arts content, including music, drama, and art classes. While this content may appear in area-specific classes like music courses, other areas may integrate across other areas depending on grade level or content. For example, poetry or plays may appear in English courses or in standalone drama classes or extracurricular activities; art, painting, or drawing may be in a standalone arts class or these may be practices that appear in other classes where creative expressions of learning are used.

### **What does it mean to queer teaching methods courses and arts-focused (music, art, drama) content areas?**

- *Queering Arts means identifying and critiquing heterosexist and cisgenderist power structures embodied in visual and written texts, as well as assumptions that are made about who produces the highest quality and most noteworthy art* (including paintings, musical compositions, poetry, plays). People who teach arts to K–12 students have a unique opportunity to challenge assumptions, expand students’ frame of reference, and encourage students to think critically about the world around them beyond the traditional canon of literature and art that is usually taught as part of official curriculum. It also means thinking about what alternate texts/works might be introduced and used in the classroom to meet the same learning objectives for the grade level and subject area, but that expand who is included and represented by those texts/works.
  - Instilling in pre-service teachers that the works of art they teach almost certainly exclude some people in the classroom and in the broader community. Pre-service teachers who are taught to develop a critical awareness of these shortcomings and a commitment to understanding and meeting the needs of every student will be better equipped to teach the arts.
- *Inclusion and critical reading means including 2SLGBTQ+ content in Arts courses and teaching students to read texts critically through a 2SLGBTQ+ lens.* For instance, in “Queering Art Teacher Education,” Cosier & Sanders (2007) encourage teachers to “think differently about naming and claiming those who may or may not have been historically constructed as queer,” which will create space so that 2SLGBTQ+ “students and colleagues may come to see themselves in the curriculum and within a continuum of creators” (Cosier & Sanders, 2007, p. 29).
  - This means examining *how 2SLGBTQ+ people are represented* as characters in literature, plays, musicals, and operas, or figures in works of fine art, and considering the real-world impacts of those representations: How are queer depictions present or absent? What is treated as the root cause of 2SLGBTQ+ characters’ troubles? Whose interests are served by the way stories are told? How could the story be told differently/anti-oppressively, to open up more space for 2SLGBTQ+ lives?

- *Who gets represented?* Thinking about Arts in terms of representation and the stereotypes and/or dramatic devices that are used to advance plots. For example, how often is a cisgender heterosexual white man the protagonist in works of art, pursuing and ultimately winning the affection of a white woman? How are 2SLGBTQ+ characters represented in stories? What might be the effects of representing them this way?
- *How are stories told?* If there are 2SLGBTQ+ characters in a work of art, does the heterosexual, cisgender protagonist act as savior or figure as the central character? Is the story about the protagonist learning to treat a 2SLGBTQ+ character with respect? Is the moral of the story that not all 2SLGBTQ+ people fit stereotypes? Is 2SLGBTQ+ identity addressed beyond naming it as a difference (reinforcing heterosexuality as the norm)? Are 2SLGBTQ+ characters one-dimensional and concerned only about their sexual orientation/gender and discrimination, or do they have the same depth as other characters?
- In the context of Arts, examples of an Indigiqueer approach would be expanding curriculum to include Indigenous music, art, and storytelling approaches and expanding artistic appreciation beyond works of art about white, heterosexual, cisgender characters to include stories by and about Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer people. As importantly, it also means identifying the colonial worldviews behind depictions of sex, gender, and sexuality in works of art, and imagining how the story (characters, relationships) might be told differently and play out differently from an Indigiqueer world view.

### Why do we need to do this?

- *Many 2SLGBTQ+ students (and teachers) are drawn to the arts, and classes in music, fine arts, and drama provide a great opportunity for teachers to encourage and recognize diverse forms of expression. Garrett and Spano suggest (2017) that “music learning environments seem to afford a safe space for adolescent students to develop a sense of who they are as individuals” (p. 40). They explain that 2SLGBTQ+ students may gravitate to these spaces in the school because they find them to be safer.*
- *Teaching 2SLGBTQ+ content can counter injustices experienced by students, disrupt homo/bi/transphobia, and help create safer, more equitable and inclusive spaces. Arts classes offer a prime opportunity to reflect diverse experiences that already exist in the classroom but are often erased. Teaching 2SLGBTQ+ narratives and works by 2SLGBTQ+ creators help students to develop empathy and deeper understanding because they make 2SLGBTQ+ subject matter real (Dodge & Crutcher, 2015, p. 95). Students can imagine that not everyone is heterosexual and cisgender when they encounter 2SLGBTQ+ peoples’ stories in works of art. They can also consider who decides what constitutes fine art, what works of art are taught, and the biases inscribed and re-inscribed in those processes.*

- The common assumption that students are white, heterosexual, and cisgender, and that theirs are the only experiences that matter, is perpetuated by works of art that are populated only by white, heterosexual, cisgender characters. This centers these experiences as “normal” and “natural” and by default all other identities as “abnormal” and “unnatural”. *Representation matters—and exposure to 2SLGBTQ+ content can provide useful opportunities to talk about individual/lived experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ people.* Such representations exist, but they are generally excluded from K–12 education, or the sexual orientation/gender expression of the artist is not discussed at all. This denies 2SLGBTQ+ students access to important history and role models.
- *Both 2SLGBTQ+ and non-2SLGBTQ+ students need to see reflections of themselves and possibilities beyond their own experiences in works of art* in order to understand and accept themselves and each other. This humanization is central to the processes and goals of education.
- While there is now some representation of racial and religious minorities in works of art, *there are fewer instances of representation of Two-Spirit people*, so students identifying as Two-Spirit or Indigiqueer are unlikely to see themselves reflected in music, art and drama that they encounter at school (Bittner, 2014, p. 14).
- Studying works of art by Two-Spirit creators allows teachers to include the stories of Indigenous peoples as they overlap with those of 2SLGBTQ+ people in pointing out and challenging colonial narratives (Driskill, 2010).
- *Language structures reality*, and exposure to 2SLGBTQ+ positive, non-heteronormative language helps students perceive the world in 2SLGBTQ+ positive, non-heteronormative ways. Visual/musical arts can offer students learning opportunities that may be limited by language barriers.
- Arts educators, whether or not they are aware, “participate in the creation of students’ social understandings of race, class, gender and sexuality” (Cosier & Sanders, 2007, p. 23) and the B.Ed. classroom is *a place where they can come to understand the impact of words and images they use (or do not use) and the power of their actions.*
- Teachers may be reluctant to teach 2SLGBTQ+-themed works or to teach about 2SLGBTQ+ artists because they worry that questions about sexuality may arise and that they will not know how to answer them. *The challenge in B.Ed. classes is to have discussions that address these questions, their concerns, and the unconscious biases about gender and sexual orientation that may inform them* (Schieble, 2012, p. 14).
- B.Ed. students are likely looking for “exact instructions on how to deal with gender and sexualities” (Cosier & Sanders, 2007, p. 23) in their practicum placements that supervising teachers cannot provide. Helping pre-service teachers to work through their concerns in a B.Ed. classroom—including looking at their own biases and assumptions about what material is suitable to teach—will help them to build skills and confidence. *These conversations can also tie into the importance of school districts having comprehensive sexual orientation and gender identity policies, which support teachers*

*engaging in these discussions and important forms of 2SLGBTQ2+ inclusion and representation in the classroom.*

### How do we do it?

- *Representation.* Include works of music, art, and drama that feature 2SLGBTQ+ perspectives and are composed/written/produced by 2SLGBTQ+ creators/artists, as well as their biographies. Include the sexual orientation/gender identity/expression of the artist/musician/creator in discussions, focusing on how being 2SLGBTQ+ influenced their career and informed their work. Look at how their work is changing their field (e.g., Kent Monkman is an Indigenous queer visual artist whose commentary on colonialism, anti-Indigenous government policy, state violence and gender is internationally celebrated; Teiya Kasahara is a non-binary opera singer based in Toronto who is challenging gender roles in opera; trans artist Vivek Shraya’s writing, music, theatre, and films explore themes including race and gender expression; 2Fik is a gay visual artist based in Montreal whose work challenges assumptions about race, gender, and class; and k.d. lang is an internationally-acclaimed queer singer/songwriter from Alberta whose work has pushed the limits of gender for 30+ years. Other queer artists to follow are Tanya Tagak, Jeremy Dutcher, Tenille Campbell, and Tegan & Sara).
- *Naming and accountability.* In a B.Ed. course on how to teach Arts, have a unit about the power of inclusive language and representation. Words are not just words—they carry tremendous meaning and shape/reinforce students’ understanding.
- *Challenging resistance.* Teacher candidates may be reluctant or overtly resistant to teach 2SLGBTQ+ content, and the B.Ed. classroom is a great place to work through their concerns, resistance, and biases and misconceptions (Thein, 2013, p. 177).
- *Inclusive language.* Use of *they* as a singular pronoun and as a gender-neutral pronoun, which is recommended by [APA](#) and is included in the [Oxford dictionary](#) (see also the [OED’s “A brief history of the singular ‘they’”](#)) and [Merriam-Webster dictionary](#) (see also [“A note on the nonbinary ‘they’”](#)).
- *Gender pronouns:* Introduce your own gender pronouns to students (e.g., “My name is Dr. Anna Cho and my pronouns are she/her”) to introduce the concept of pronoun diversity; but be cautious about putting students on the spot by requiring them to publicly share their pronouns. This can have the unintended consequence of forcing students to reveal information they are not prepared to share or, alternately, to hide who they are for fear of anticipated negative consequences. Teachers can make it clear to students that they want to use the students’ pronouns by explain it at the beginning of the term and as needed after that.

One way to learn students’ gender pronouns without putting them on the spot publicly is to distribute confidential questionnaires at the beginning of term asking if students use a pronoun or a name different from the one on the class list, and if it is okay for the teacher to use their pronoun/name in front of others. In the spirit of expansive education and accessibility, this is also a good opportunity to ask students if there is anything else

they would like the teacher to know about them. Teachers can let students know that they are aware that a student's name or pronoun may change over the course of the term, and that it is okay to discuss this with the teacher at any time.

- *Assignments* can include content that addresses 2SLGBTQ+ topics. Often, however, we fall into the trap of creating apologist-style assignments that seek to put forward arguments about why being 2SLGBTQ+ is okay, which can reinforce the social narrative that it is not okay and that 2SLGBTQ+ identities are in need of defending. Rather, developing assignments that highlight the rich and diverse histories/contributions of 2SLGBTQ+ people (as seen, for instance, through works of art) can be very effective.
- *Providing an opportunity* for students to study works of art by 2SLGBTQ+ people supports the core principles of inclusive education and teaching for social justice through representation. 2SLGBTQ+ content can include examples from popular culture, including contemporary music, film, and theatre that help to provide accurate information and greater understandings of 2SLGBTQ+ people.
- *Critical reading practices.* Practice critical/close readings of works of art, identifying and challenging the use of stereotypes and negative representations of 2SLGBTQ+ characters (if there are any 2SLGBTQ+ characters).
- *Self-reflection.* Discuss ways that teachers can help students to imagine themselves reflected in works of music, art, and drama.
- *Practice activities.* Show examples of inclusive and non-inclusive works of art and encourage students to critically analyze them, considering which ones they would teach and why.

**While there are many approaches to leading discussions with B.Ed. students about including 2SLGBTQ+ content in Arts classes, here are our suggestions for a general framework:**

- When comparing works of art for consideration for students in K–4, 5–8, and 9–12 classrooms, think about who is and is not represented, and the message(s) behind the representation. Does the piece challenge or reinforce stereotypes? Who benefits, and who is harmed, from the way the characters are represented? Was the piece created by a 2SLGBTQ+ artist? What emotions, thoughts, and feelings does the work elicit?
- Have students practice leading discussions about 2SLGBTQ+ focused works of art and reflect on any discomfort they might experience.
- Discuss possible objections that may be raised in school and/or by parents/guardians or community to including 2SLGBTQ+ content, and strategize responses (i.e., 2SLGBTQ+ and questioning students are already in the classroom and deserve to have their experiences represented; reducing bullying by increasing empathy and understanding; responsibility as teachers to teach all students, serve the needs of all students in the classroom; identify supportive policies at the school division and provincial levels.)

## Teaching Activities

1. *Teaching 2SLGBTQ+ content in context.* Engage teacher candidates in developing a lesson plan about a work by a 2SLGBTQ+ artist that directly or indirectly addresses 2SLGBTQ+ themes. Possible topics:
  - For visual artists, the work of painter Kent Monkman is a contemporary possibility; historically, students could study the life and work of Da Vinci or Michelangelo—both of whom had their homosexuality concealed long after their deaths, although it was probably not a secret while they were alive.
  - In popular music, students could study the life and work of artists such as Freddy Mercury, Janis Joplin, Boy George, George Michael, or Lil Nas X (among many others); this could introduce students to queer artists and enable discussions about how, even in recent years, some artists' kept their sexuality secret for most (or all) of their careers. There are opportunities as well to discuss what happened when their sexuality was disclosed or discovered, or to have conversations about those who have been open about their sexuality.
  - A unit on *Lilies (Les Feluettes)* by Quebec playwright Michel Marc Bouchard would be a good candidate for this activity in theatre classes. The play, a layered drama about a love triangle among about Catholic schoolboys in turn-of-the-century Quebec, was adapted into a feature film and most recently into an opera staged in Montreal, Edmonton, and Victoria.
  
2. *A critical analysis of typical Arts-course content.* Teacher candidates examine content from Arts education textbooks and consider the representation and erasure of 2SLGBTQ+ artists (their work and their personal lives). By becoming aware of what is missing, and critically analysing what 2SLGBTQ+ representation exists, students will be able to carry this awareness with them when choosing texts/works and designing assignments for their own classes.
  
3. *A reflective group exercise about the above assignments,* aiming to engage in critical self-reflection regarding teacher candidates' discomfort about teaching 2SLGBTQ+-themed art works, compositions, and texts and identify concerns they may have about resistance they could face in the classroom. By exploring their reactions, fears, and misconceptions, students can develop strategies individually and based on feedback from and discussion with other teacher candidates.

## Resources

### **2SLGBTQ+ art and artists, museum engagements, and archives**

*Queering the Museum Audio Guides, a project of the Museum Queeries research program (based at the University of Winnipeg)*

<http://museumqueeries.org/tools-and-resources/queering-the-museum-audio-guides/>

These student-created audio guides offer alternative tours of exhibits at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The audio guides provide research-based information about 2SLGBTQ+-themed exhibits, offering context and critically analysing the material. An alternative audio guide assignment would be well-suited to secondary level arts students.

*Desire, love, identity: LGBTQ histories trail at the British Museum*

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/visit/object-trails/desire-love-identity-lgbtq-histories>

The British Museum leads tours of its 2SLGBTQ+ content, and while not entirely virtual, the content below serves as examples of 2SLGBTQ+ alternative tours that students can develop as part of art history courses. They can visit local galleries and museums or visit virtual collections at museums nationally and internationally.

Eight LGBTQ objects to celebrate Pride: <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/eight-lgbtq-objects-to-celebrate-pride-2020/>

Desire, love, identity: Exploring LGBTQ histories: <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/desire-love-identity-exploring-lgbtq-histories/>

*Virtual tours and guides to the extensive collection of homoerotic art in the Vatican's collection*

<http://gay-sculpture.blogspot.com/2016/03/male-art-in-vatican-1-guided-tour.html>

The in-person 2SLGBTQ+ themed tour of the Vatican's collection has a thorough online description and short promotional video, which serve as further examples of the kind of alternative tours and guides that students can produce.

*Vatican Museums Untold History Tour: Vatican Museums in a Gay Light*

<https://untoldhistorytour.com/tour/rome-vatican-museums-in-a-gay-light/>

*Two-Spirit Archives (based at University of Winnipeg). Includes online collection of posters, photos, art and textiles.*

<https://cdm15931.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/two-spirit/search/>

*Arquives - Canadian 2SLGBTQ+ archives (based in Toronto). Includes online exhibits and collections of videos, posters, photos, and art.*

<https://digitalexhibitions.arquives.ca/>

*Quebec Gay Archives (based in Montreal). Includes online collections of videos, posters, photos, and art.*

<http://agq.qc.ca/en/>

Study paintings by Kent Monkman, interdisciplinary Cree visual artist whose paintings interrogate colonialism and patriarchy, often featuring the gender-fluid figure Miss Chief Eagle Testickle.

<https://www.kentmonkman.com/>

The Winnipeg Art Gallery’s website for the 2019–20 exhibit of Kent Monkman’s *Shame and Prejudice: A Story of Resilience* has plenty of online content for students of the arts including images of many paintings, as well as videos and articles discussing the works.  
<https://wag.ca/event/kent-monkman/>

Explore the work of Teiya Kasahara, a queer, gender non-binary multidisciplinary performer/creator and first-generation Nikkei-Canadian of Japanese and German roots, who is challenging the bounds of the opera world with their voice and activism.  
<https://www.teiyakasahara.com/>

Study the works of performance artists Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, who for decades have been engaging in 2SLGBTQ+ themed social and political commentary and activism through their art.  
<http://www.shawnadempseyandlorrimillan.net/>

Explore the Queer|Art Community Portrait Project, a New York-based annual photo project and exhibit that seeks to reflect the range of 2SLGBTQ+ people who are artists through portraits.  
<https://www.queer-art.org/community-portrait-project-2018>

Visit a gallery of photos from the book *Loving: A Photographic History of Men in Love, 1850s-1950s*, and a short film with the authors explaining the story and the historical significance of the photos. This serves to highlight for students that art often serves as 2SLGBTQ+ activism as well as archive and memory.

“Rolling Stone Recommends: ‘Loving: A Photographic History of Men in Love, 1850s-1950s’: The Nini-Treadwell Collection of vintage photos deserves to be exhibited as proof that same-sex love has existed for centuries”

<https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/loving-book-photograph-history-gay-men-in-love-1850s-1950s-1080812/>

Introduce students to the art and event videos on the website of Vancouver’s Queertopia, a queer arts festival that seeks to create and celebrate queer art and activism. Ask students to consider why people would start a queer-specific arts festival, and what these events might mean to artists who participate/attend.  
<https://queerartsfestival.com/page/9/?m=0>

## Lesson Plans

SOGI 123 – 5/6/7 Arts & PHE – Gender Stereotypes and Bullying  
<https://bc.sogieducation.org/stereotypes-and-bullying>

SOGI 123 – 5/6/7 English Language Arts & Arts Education – Gender and Diversity  
<https://bc.sogieducation.org/call-me-tree>



## References

- Bittner, R. (2014). Hey, I still can't see myself!: The difficult positioning of Two-Spirit identities in YA literature. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, 52(1), 11–22.
- Cosier, K., & Sanders III, J. H. (2007). Queering art teacher education. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 26(1), 21–30.
- Dodge, A. M., & Crutcher, P. A. (2015). Inclusive classrooms for LGBTQ students: Using linked text sets to challenge the hegemonic “single story.” *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 59(1), 95–105.
- Driskill, Q. L. (2010). Doubleweaving Two-Spirit critiques: Building alliances between native and queer studies. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16(1–2), 69–92.
- Garrett, M. L. (2012). The LGBTQ component of 21st-century music teacher training: Strategies for inclusion from the research literature. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 31(1), 55–62.
- Garrett, M. L., & Spano, F. P. (2017). An examination of LGBTQ-inclusive strategies used by practicing music educators. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 39(1), 39–56.
- Goldstein, T. (2004). Performed ethnography for anti-homophobia teacher education: Linking research to teaching. *The Canadian On-Line Journal of Queer Studies in Education*, 1(1), n.pag.
- Goldstein, T. (2013). *Zero tolerance and other plays: Disrupting xenophobia, racism and homophobia in school*. Sense.
- Gude, O. (2003). There's something queer about this class. In L. Lampela & E. Check (Eds.), *From our voices: Art educators and artists speak out about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered issues* (pp. 73–86). Kendall/Hunt Publishing. Retrieved from [www.academia.edu/848189/Theres\\_something\\_queer\\_about\\_this\\_class](http://www.academia.edu/848189/Theres_something_queer_about_this_class)
- Hermann-Wilmarth, J. M., & Ryan, C. L. (2015). Doing what you can: Considering ways to address LGBT topics in language arts curricula. *Language Arts*, 92(6), 436–443.
- Ressler, P. (2002). *Dramatic changes: Talking about sexual orientation and gender identity with high school students through drama*. Heinemann Drama.
- Schieble, M. (2012). A critical discourse analysis of teachers' views on LGBT literature. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 33(2), 207–222.

Thein, A. H. (2013). Language arts teachers' resistance to teaching LGBT literature and issues. *Language Arts*, 90(3), 169–180.