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## INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION'S EQUITY IN EDUCATION PROGRAM FOSTERS INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR LGBTQ YOUTH

Newark, Del. (June 27, 2018) — More than reading and writing, literacy encompasses the skills students need to understand, express, explore, question and communicate—powerful tools for personal and social transformation. Literacy educators are uniquely positioned to disrupt anti-LGBTQ narratives and shape more inclusive classroom practices. Yet, despite increased attention around educational equity issues, [recent research](#) suggests that many educators don't know how.

This is the impetus for the International Literacy Association's (ILA) Equity in Education Program at the ILA 2018 Conference in Austin, TX.

[Literacy and Our LGBTQ Students: Starting and Sustaining Schoolwide Transformation](#), a panel featuring a cross-sector of literacy leaders, inclusive educators and activists, will take place on Saturday, July 21, from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Austin Convention Center.

Eliza Byard, executive director of GLSEN, will deliver a keynote at the event before facilitating a conversation about literacy's role in fostering an equitable education for LGBTQ youth. Panelists will discuss how educators can build critical consciousness, confront their hidden biases and create more inclusive learning experiences.

GLSEN is among a handful of organizations advocating for the repeal of so-called "no promo homo" laws that ban educators from talking about LGBTQ people, issues or history in a positive light. In January, the organization published a [research brief](#) that found that LGBTQ youth attending schools in states with "no promo homo" laws face a more hostile school climate than other LGBTQ students, are less likely to feel supported by the educators in their schools and receive fewer LGBTQ-supportive resources.

Texas is one of seven states where these laws remain in effect.

"Those are the places that need it the most. Those are the places where the conversations are happening," said event panelist Dana Stachowiak, an assistant professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. "If you remove yourself from the place where the controversy is, it doesn't seem as urgent."

Stachowiak, whose research centers on social justice education and equity literacy, among other topics, said the panel will deliver actionable strategies for educators to shatter institutional silence about LGBTQ issues and affect change. ILA's Code of Conduct for meetings and events, which establishes zero tolerance for harassment and implements a new system for reporting violations, will ensure a safe and supportive environment.

Other panelists are Kris De Pedro, assistant professor at the College of Educational Studies at Chapman University; Amy Fabrikant, staff developer at the Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility; Courtney Farrell, founder of the Journey Project; Jessica Lifshitz, Heinemann Scholar

and fifth-grade teacher; Kate Roberts, author and literacy consultant; and Tim'm West, managing director of the LGBTQ Community Initiative at Teach for America.

A second event, [Beyond the Bookshelf: The Transformative Power of LGBTQ Children's Literature](#), will be held the following day, also from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Ninth-grade ELA instructor Henry "Cody" Miller will lead the conversation with speakers including Lesléa Newman, author of the groundbreaking picture book *Heather Has Two Mommies*, and Jen Petro-Roy, whose debut novel *P.S. I Miss You*, about a seventh grader questioning her sexuality, met heavy resistance from teachers and librarians who deemed the content too mature for young readers.

The Equity in Education Program builds on last year's social justice program, which included "[Disrupting a Destructive Cycle: How Literacy Drives Social Change](#)." Moderated by Nikole Hannah-Jones, an investigative reporter covering racial injustice for *The New York Times Magazine*, the panel was aimed at helping educators facilitate productive conversations about implicit bias and racial anxiety. You can access the archived recording of the event [here](#).

To join us in Austin, register at [ilaconference.org](http://ilaconference.org).

### ***About the International Literacy Association***

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and membership organization dedicated to advancing literacy for all through its network of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers and experts across 78 countries. With over 60 years of experience, ILA has set the standard for how literacy is defined, taught and evaluated. ILA's Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017 provides an evidence-based benchmark for the development and evaluation of literacy professional preparation programs. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather and disseminate high-quality resources, best practices and cutting-edge research to empower educators, inspire students and inform policymakers. ILA publishes *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* and *Reading Research Quarterly*, which are peer reviewed and edited by leaders in the field. For more information, visit [literacyworldwide.org](http://literacyworldwide.org).

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