Presentation to Diana Saez's choral music ed. class – 3/9/21, 12:30-1:45 (75 minutes)
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1. Introduction
    a. Self – position description, background
    b. GenOUT – mission, SATB ensemble, performance history
    c. Show video of GenOUTers on GenOUT (on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nM-BOFiWYK8)
    d. Show video of "You Are the New Day" (on https://www.gmcw.org/outreach/genout/)
2. Some Terminology – reference https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms
    a. **Ally** – someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people
        i. Show how easy it is to add pronouns to Zoom profile
        ii. Encourage nametags that show pronouns (<mark>wear GMCW nametag</mark>)
        iii. Obtain a Safe Space sticker (GLSEN) or rainbow flag sticker
    b. **Sex vs. Gender** – "sex" refers to biological characteristics and "gender" refers to the individual's and society's perceptions of sexuality and the malleable concepts of masculinity and femininity
    c. **Cisgender** – someone whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth (e.g., born male and identify as male)
    d. **LGBTQ+** – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, with the plus sign being a crude attempt to be inclusive of smaller populations like intersex and asexual
    e. **Nonbinary** – neither male nor female; NB (pronounced "enby") is a frequent abbreviation
    f. **Transgender (trans)** – an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth
    g. **Names and Pronouns**
        i. In your rehearsal hall, students should feel comfortable using their affirmed name. This name might change, so stay tuned and stay flexible. The student is not trying to give you a hard time; they are trying to figure out which name fits who they are. Consider it a gift of trust that they are sharing that with you, and go with it!
        ii. When going through the roster the very first time, consider calling out students by last name, such as:
            • YOU: Last name "Smith."
            • STUDENT: Here.
            • YOU: What name shall I call you in my class?
            • STUDENT: [answers]
        iii. Not only does the above avoid awkwardness for nonbinary and trans students, it will be a huge relief to those with hard-to-pronounce names or those who go

by a nickname or by their middle names. (Check your assumptions at the door!)

    iv. In addition to he/him/his and she/her/hers, you'll find it's more and more common for young people to identify as nonbinary and to use "they/them" pronouns and multiple pronouns (e.g., he/they). You should use all of the sets that a person gives. Practice on your own time if this feels uncomfortable.

    v. Some people also use other variants (see here: https://apnews.com/article/563869434ceb4457b511e0caedddefb9)

    vi. You can set the tone of a safe space by indicating your pronouns and asking everyone to indicate theirs at the start of the semester. Invite your students to check their assumptions at the door (and you do the same).

    vii. If possible, have students wear nametags with pronouns identified. This helps after the first day and your memory is faulty.

    viii. If you forget someone's pronouns, ask "Can you remind me which pronouns you use?" (not "prefer").

    ix. If you make a mistake, correct yourself and move on. Dwelling on it embarrasses everyone.

    x. Indicate pronouns in your attendance roster, to help you remember.

    xi. Privately (perhaps via an intake form), ask students what name and pronouns you should use when referencing them to their parents or when printing programs or announcing names at school events.

    xii. Of interest to Diana: article from WaPo (12/16/19) about teen-led efforts in Argentina to create gender-neutral language options: https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2019/12/05/teens-argentina-are-leading-charge-gender-neutral-language/?arc404=true

3. LGBTQ+ singers in your choirs
    a. They are there. A recent article in the Washington Post (2/21/21) (https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/02/24/gen-z-lgbt/) indicated that one in six GenZ students (born 1997-2015) identifies as LGBT.

    b. Gendered language and binary attire has no place in choirs; get rid of it.
        i. Call students by part names, not boys/girls, ladies/gentlemen, etc.
            • Anecdote: one GenOUTer told me about a student who organized people by "boys and those who identify as boys." (ACK!)

        ii. Rename the Boys' Choir, Women's Chorus, etc. into musically-oriented names such as T/B Choir, Treble Voices, etc.

        iii. Tuxes and dresses, or shirts/ties and skirts, etc. – all of these attire choices highlight a binary which has nothing to do with making music. As soon as you can, switch to a gender-neutral outfit like all-black or even choir robes. As an interim step (i.e., for those stepping in to an established program), offer everyone the right to choose from the two attire choices.

        iv. Changing text willy-nilly in songs is not respectful to the composer or the lyricist, even if your intentions are good. Look for songs that aren't focused on

binary, heterosexual love. For a song like "Reflection" (from *Mulan*), in which the singer sings about themselves personally, change the pronoun to a gender-neutral one (e.g., "who is that girl I see" to "who is that one I see").

c. Every student has the right to sing the part that corresponds to their range – Part 1.
    i. Example: Assuming that a female-presenting student is either a Soprano or Alto limits your choir's potential to have an awesome female tenor.
    ii. Example: Assuming that a male-presenting student is either a Tenor or Bass means that you take the singing path away from a young counter-tenor or a boy whose voice hasn't changed yet.

d. Every student has the right to sing the part that corresponds to their range – Part 2.
    i. It is the rare student who starts ninth grade with a fully formed adult voice.
    ii. As a conscientious educator, you will conduct individual periodic voice checks to confirm or change assigned parts. Also make yourself available to any student who needs/wants a voice check between the regularly scheduled voice checks.
    iii. Transmasculine youth who start testosterone treatment will experience a voice drop just like typical adolescent boys. Be ready to work with that student to *sing through* the change. You may need to cobble together a part just for that singer, and that part may change before the concert. Meet the needs of the student. Be flexible and creative. (Example: T2-B1 part for Lucas)
    iv. Try finding repertoire in which everyone gets a chance to be the high, the middle, and the low voice. Within reason, switch it up! This allows a breadth of musical experience, a broader knowledge of musical structure, and an opportunity for different people to shine, to have the hard part, etc.

e. What do the above have in common: they ask you to be a musician, **not** to be the gender police.
    i. Ask yourself – what is the *musical* reason to have some people sing in tuxes and some people sing in dresses?
    ii. Ask yourself – what is the *musical* reason to divide up ensembles based on sex or gender and not by voice part?

f. Binders impact singing
    i. Transmasculine students often wear binders, which compress the breasts and allow them to appear more traditionally masculine. This is a valuable tool to combat gender dysphoria, but this tool has a negative impact on singing.
    ii. How can you tell? Shallow breathing is a common symptom.
    iii. Don't ask students to not wear binders. Instead, ask all students to be mindful of the impact that devices such as binders, back braces, and compression shirts can have on breathing. When preparing for a performance, make sure what you are wearing in rehearsal is what you are going to wear in the performance.

g. LGBTQ+ students experience bullying in school, in the community, and at home. They are more likely to experience depression and contemplate suicide than their straight and cisgender peers. Substance abuse and eating disorders are also

common among LGBTQ+ youth. You can't be every student's therapist, but you can be caring, empathetic, and a resource for them. (https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/LGBTQ_MentalHealth_OnePager.pdf) Note that during the pandemic, I have been teaching 20 lessons a week via Zoom and FaceTime. More and more, these lesson times are spent at least in part on check-ins of a student's well-being.

4. Resources for you (as educators) to know about for your students
    a. GALA Choruses (https://galachoruses.org/), notably GALA Youth Choirs – LGBTQ choruses in North America
    b. GLSEN (https://www.glsen.org/) – school-based anti-bullying resources
    c. HRC (https://www.hrc.org/) – organization that fights for LGBTQ+ equality
    d. PFLAG (https://pflag.org/) – provides support, info, resources to parents, families, and allies of LGBTQ+ people
    e. Trevor Project (https://www.thetrevorproject.org/) – suicide prevention resources, especially for LGBTQ+ youth
    f. Tyler Clementi Foundation (https://tylerclementi.org/) – online and offline anti-bullying resources; teachers make note of the Day One Pledge
    g. Your school's LGBTQ+ liaison
    h. Your district's LGBTQ+ staff member
    i. Note: don't assume "none of my students would be interested in X, such as an LGBTQ youth choir." Pin up that flyer; someone out there could be positively impacted *just by seeing it among all the other flyers, normalized*. It might not even be one of your students.

5. Advice from a few of my GenOUTers:
    a. Students experiencing gender dysphoria often dislike the sound of their own voice. Encourage your students to embrace how and where their voice sounds good, and to enjoy it objectively. You might ask them to imagine themselves outside of their own voice.
    b. Don't shame a student for having a vocal range that is different from what you expected or what is common around that student.

6. Other/miscellaneous
    a. Religion
        i. A lot of LGBTQ+ youth have experienced messages of exclusion from religion.
        ii. If you are about to program a song with a sacred text, ask what the programmatic and pedagogical benefits are. If they are compelling (which they could very well be), consider how you will teach the song to students and how you will set up the song for audiences.
    b. Travelling with LGBTQ+ students
        i. Make sure your students (and their parents) know that your standards of behavior (including no PDA) apply throughout the tour, including behind hotel room doors.

      ii. Invite students to select roommates; you can override.

      iii. In my experience, trans youth tend to want to room together.

      iv. Be mindful of restroom access along the way. Look for/plan to stop at places where there is a single-stall option for those who want it. Allow students to use the restrooms of their affirmed gender.

  c. Child safety

      i. Same guidelines as for all child-centered organizations/activities, such as:

- Two-deep adult leadership
- No inappropriate touching
- Respect student privacy when changing, in hotel rooms, etc.
- No friending or following a student on social media
- Stay connected to parents
- Always be above reproach

      ii. Youth Protection Policies in place

- GMCW and MVP
- If interested, contact me, and I'll send you a copy of ours.
- I can also send a copy of our participation form, which includes expectations + media release

  d. GenOUT rehearses Saturdays, 11:00-1:00. If you would like to observe a rehearsal, let me know. You might even like to be a sectional leader some Saturday.

      i. Usual rehearsal structure

      ii. Usual integration within GMCW concerts

      iii. 2020-21 repertoire

      iv. Regular Zoom rehearsal structure

      v. Opportunities for collaboration

      vi. Challenges and how to meet them

- Attention
- Skill development
- Focus on the individual rather than the ensemble is anxiety-provoking

7. Take-aways

  a. **Know your limitations**, not just in understanding LGBTQ+ people, but in pedagogy, repertoire, community connections, school traditions, etc. A little humility goes a long way. Avoid being defensive when someone calls you on an error. Model lifelong learning by listening for understanding, apologizing if a mistake has been made, and incorporate the new information going forward.

  b. **Know your privilege**. If you are a straight and cisgender, you are coming from a place of privilege which can make you myopic to the needs of marginalized people. Challenge your own assumptions.

  c. **Know your students**. Take the time to know your students by their affirmed names and pronouns, by their ranges, and by their strengths and challenges.

d. **<u>Make sure your students know YOU</u>**. They should know from Day One that you are affirming, that you are there for them, that bullying/homophobia/transphobia have no place in your rehearsal hall. To the extent that you feel comfortable revealing aspects of your personal life, if you are LGBTQ+, the more you can normalize your identity, the greater the opportunity to make a positive impact on a young singer's development of self.

8. Questions?