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INCLUSION OF LGBTQ+ STUDENTS IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this inquiry project is to examine the inclusion of LGBTQ+ students in American schools, as well as offer practical tools for teachers to include LGBTQ+ students in their classrooms. I will first define some key terms related to LGBTQ+ identities, and will then move on to a literature review to provide an overview of research on the topic. After that, I will present my methods of inquiry and my findings collected through visiting schools and cultural centres, auditing courses at Indiana University, and participating in conferences and youth summits in the USA. The final part will be a practical toolbox on LGBTQ+ inclusion for teachers. This final product of my project consists of an LGBTQ+ inclusive, phenomenon-based course outline, practical tips for LGBTQ+ inclusion in different subjects, and useful book, film and app lists.

The topic of my project is relevant and important in several ways. First, LGBTQ+ students are often a forgotten and invisible minority in schools, even in countries like Finland where, in general, belonging to a sexual minority or being gender nonconforming is considered acceptable. This invisibility can lead to secrecy, hiding, and feelings of exclusion, which in turn can cause self-esteem issues, depression and lower academic success. Through exposing this invisibility and talking about LGBTQ+ topics openly at school, it is possible to empower LGBTQ+ students, make them feel safe, and support them in becoming confident adults who are proud of their sexual and/or gender identity. Furthermore, discussing LGBTQ+ topics at school with *all* students regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity is important because it promotes an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding as opposed to homophobia and transphobia. Addressing LGBTQ+ issues directly will hopefully open many students' eyes to how hurtful their words and actions can be to members, friends and family

of the LGBTQ+ community. Finally, it is extremely important to make teachers and administrators aware of the fact that LGBTQ+ students exist everywhere and that they come with multiple identities and backgrounds. Teachers and administrators need to be the ones to set the example of embracing diversity and welcoming students from all cultural groups including the LGBTQ+ community.

Researching this topic in the USA in particular is beneficial because LGBTQ+ inclusion is in many ways more evident in the USA than in Finland. Students at many schools are allowed to form gay-straight alliances (GSAs); classroom doors often have “safe space for LGBTQ+ students” stickers, and some school libraries have quite extensive LGBTQ+ collections. Many schools also have LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and curricula. In Finland, on the other hand, resources do not exist to the same extent. Even if the Finnish National Core Curriculum from 2014 forbids discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender (though gender identity is not mentioned!), the reality in schools is different: from my experience, there are often no specific policies or consequences for hate speech or bullying based on the aforementioned factors. Also, while the main non-governmental organisation promoting LGBTQ+ rights in Finland, Seta, does offer group meetings for young people in some cities, as well as training sessions for students and teachers, they are not present at schools on a daily basis, unlike GSAs or ally teachers in the USA. The schools themselves in Finland do not offer support groups for LGBTQ+ youth. Moreover, in Finland, while quite a few school subjects can have some LGBTQ+ content, the topic is often discussed on a general level, without naming any names or providing LGBTQ+ students with actual role models. Overall, then, LGBTQ+ students are left to deal with their identity questions quite alone in Finland. There are no rainbow flags on the walls, no visible ally teachers and no clubs. There are often no specific guidelines on how to interfere when the word “gay” is used in a negative way, and teachers

often seem to choose to ignore these comments altogether. Thus, LGBTQ+ students seem to have more visibility and allies in the USA than in Finland. It needs to be mentioned, though, that the USA still has a long way to go as well based on the results of the National School Climate Survey conducted by GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) every two years. Regardless of the country and its current level of inclusion and support, making schools better and safer places for LGBTQ+ youth is an ongoing journey everywhere.

This project is an informal narrative based on my own personal interests and needs to make a difference for the many invisible or discriminated LGBTQ+ students' experience of school. My project will examine the following questions:

1. In what ways are LGBTQ+ students invisible and excluded in classrooms?
2. How can we as teachers and administrators include LGBTQ+ students better?

In the following part, I will define some key terms related to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Doing this is important because knowing these terms will help teachers understand the multiple identities our students can have.

2. LGBTQ-Related Terminology

In order to ensure that the vocabulary used in this project is fully understood, it is important to define some key terms. I will do this with the help of The Gender Unicorn created by Trans Student Education Resources, and GLSEN's Safe Space Kit (GLSEN, 2016, pp. 40-42). Furthermore, because of the practical nature of this inquiry project, this glossary will provide definitions for LGBTQ-related identity terms that are not actively used in this inquiry project but that are still equally important for teachers and administrators to be aware of. However, it also needs to be understood that some people prefer to not label themselves, so instead of assuming that your student wants to use these terms, let them tell you what they want themselves.

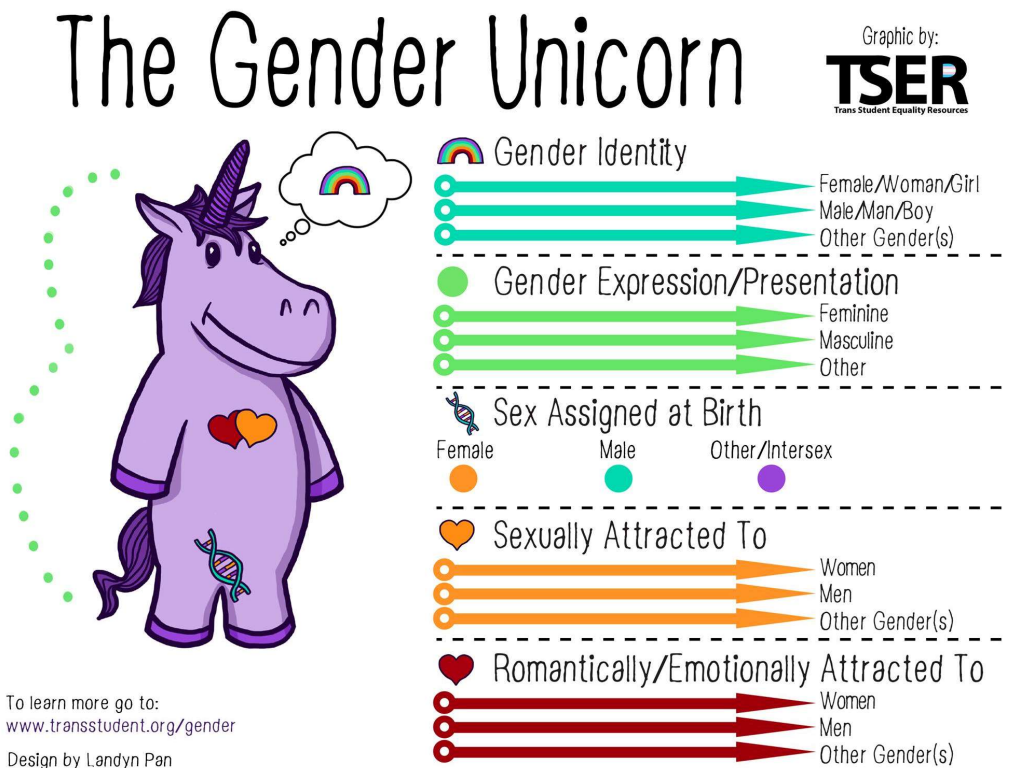


Image source: www.transstudent.org/gender

The Gender Unicorn portrays the diversity of gender identities, gender expressions, sex, and sexual and emotional attractions. It pictures different aspects of gender and sexuality on a spectrum instead of a binary system where only two categories are believed to exist for everything. Therefore, instead of choosing between only two options, a person can place themselves anywhere on the spectrum, and where they place themselves may also vary over time. The character in the graphic is a unicorn to avoid depicting just one gender.

GLOSSARY

Asexual: A person who is not attracted to other people sexually, but might experience other kinds of attraction (emotional/romantic, intellectual).

Aromantic: A person who is not attracted to other people sexually or romantically.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to two genders physically and/or emotionally.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity and gender expression correspond with their gender assigned at birth. More specific terms are for example **cisboy** and **cisgirl**.

Demisexual: A sexual orientation somewhere in between “sexual” and “asexual”. A demisexual person can usually only experience sexual attraction after forming a strong emotional connection with someone.

Gay: A person who is attracted to members of the same gender physically and/or emotionally. Usually refers specifically to male-identified people.

Gender Expression: The ways in which a person communicates gender. Clothes, accessories, hairstyles, facial hair, make-up, voice, behaviour, facial expressions and gestures are all examples of gender expression. The words **feminine** and **masculine** are some, though not the only, ways of describing gender expression.

Gender Fluid: A person whose gender identity is not fixed but instead varies over time.

Gender Identity: How a person identifies in terms of gender, or their internal sense of gender. **Male**, **female**, **transgender**, **androgynous** and **genderqueer** are examples of gender identities.

Gender Nonconforming: A person whose behaviour and/or appearance does not conform to society’s expectations and stereotypes for their gender assigned at birth.

Intersex: Describes the conditions in which the reproductive and/or sexual anatomy a person is born with does not fit the medical definitions of male or female.

Lesbian: A female-identified person who is physically and/or emotionally attracted to other females.

LGBTQ+: Refers to people who identify as **lesbian, gay, bisexual** and/or **transgender**. “Q” stands for **queer** and/or **questioning** while the “+” refers to all the other gender and sexual identities that do not conform to heteronormative norms. Sometimes other initials like “I” for **intersexual** or A for **asexual** are also included.

Pansexual: A person who is physically and/or emotionally attracted to people regardless of their gender identity.

Queer: A term used to describe any sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to heteronormative norms. Often also used as a neutral term.

Questioning: A person who is in the process of exploring and understanding what their sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression could be.

Sex Assigned at Birth: The medical assignment of people at birth as male, female, intersex or another sex.

Sexual Orientation: A person’s feelings of who they are attracted to physically and/or emotionally in relation to their own gender identity.

Straight: A person who is physically and/or emotionally attracted to members of a gender different from their own. Specifically, male-identified people who are attracted to female-identified people and female-identified people who are attracted to male-identified people.

Transgender: A person whose gender identity and/or expression do not correspond with their gender assigned at birth.

3. Literature Review

In this section, I will examine what has already been written about LGBTQ+ students in schools. I will begin with a description of schools as heteronormative and heterosexist places and will then discuss the problems this can cause for students who do not identify as straight or whose gender identity does not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth. I will also examine the importance of inclusive multicultural education as well as the concept of intersectionality regarding LGBTQ+ students. Finally, I will discuss what can be done to include LGBTQ+ students better in schools.

3.1 From Heteronormativity to Inclusive Classrooms

As Blackburn and Smith (2010, p. 626) point out, almost every single school is heteronormative. This basically means that schools “are based upon the concept that heterosexuality is normal and homosexuality is not” (Blackburn & Smith, 2010, p. 626). As a result, then, homosexuality and bisexuality are positioned as abnormal and inferior to heterosexuality (Blackburn & Smith, 2010, p. 625). Similarly, Dinkins and Englert (2015, p. 393) explain that heteronormativity within the context of schools is “closely aligned with gender binaries in curriculum, pedagogy and school culture”. In a heteronormative school environment where all students are treated as straight, “binary gender performances and heterosexual identities are empowered while LGBTQ students and non-heterosexual gender behaviours are marginalised” (Dinkins & Englert, 2015, p. 394). Some practical examples of this would be the gender segregation of bathrooms (Blackburn & Smith, 2010, p. 627) and locker rooms (Biegel, 2010, pp. 192-193), comments such as “boys will be boys” to justify certain kind of mischievous behaviour from gender-conforming male students (Blackburn &

Smith, 2010, p. 629), gender-conforming school uniforms that do not leave room for gender expression (Biegel, 2010, p. 193), as well as the American tradition of choosing a homecoming king and queen (Blackburn & Smith, 2010, p. 628).

In addition, schools are often heterosexist. This refers to the “ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behavior” as well as “the assumption that everyone is heterosexual, or if not, should be” (Cooper-Nicols & Bowleg, 2010, p. 16). In schools, heterosexism could show as gay jokes from adults and teenagers alike; distancing oneself from someone suspected of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community; negative attitudes or stereotypes such as sporty girls are lesbians, and boys who are not sporty are gay; and lack of services such as safe spaces, counselling or anti-discrimination policies (Cooper-Nicols & Bowleg, 2010, p. 16). Furthermore, “systematic exclusion of positive information about LGBTQ people in schools is likely related to discriminatory practices” (Snapp, Burdge, Licona, Moody & Russell, 2015, p. 251).

Heteronormativity and heterosexism can furthermore lead to homophobia and transphobia – “the irrational fear or hatred of people who are perceived to be” LGBTQ, and the “irrational fear or hatred of people who do not adhere to gender rules and regulations”, respectively (Blackburn & Smith, 2010, pp. 625-626). Flores (2012, p. 189) points out that “a homophobic society” often fears that talking about LGBTQ+ topics or having teachers or parents who belong to the LGBTQ+ community will influence students to turn gay. Furthermore, some people might confuse sexual orientation with sex, which might lead to homophobia. The view of “gay” as the equivalent of “sex”, however, is a misconception (Biegel, 2010, p. 141). Macgillivray (2007, p. 3) points out that straight people’s association with other straight people “does not revolve around sex”, and it is important to understand that this is the case with LGBTQ+ people as well.

Poirier (2015, p. 350) explains that sexual orientation and gender identity/expression need to be taken into account when discussing educational equity because of “historical bias, discrimination, and other challenges”. What is needed, then, is a more “inclusive and culturally relevant approach to teaching” that reduces discrimination against *all* marginalised groups (Snapp et al, 2015, p. 250). Flores (2012, p. 187) points out that one of the goals of the National Association for Multicultural Education for schools is to “directly address issues of racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, ablism, ageism, *heterosexism*, religious intolerance, and xenophobia”. Flores (2012, p. 188), furthermore, argues that a more inclusive multicultural education will help young people to “base their knowledge and beliefs” of the LGBTQ+ community “on accurate information” instead of theorising about sexuality in general, sexual orientation, sexual identity, and gender roles based on what family, media and religions tell them about the topic. Inclusive multicultural education focuses on understanding and appreciating all issues of difference and diversity, “including difference in sexual orientation, relationship, and family structures, and the concepts of love and respect” (Flores, 2012, p. 188).

In addition, Yoon, Simpson and Haag (2010, p. 111) discuss the importance of cultural pluralism in “educating both mainstream and nonmainstream students” about diversity. The main goal of cultural pluralism is to change existing school practices for everyone, not just for minority students, to create a school culture where all students are aware and accepting of human diversity (Yoon et al., 2010, p. 111). Thus, instead of the assimilation approach, which forces minority cultures to blend into the mainstream one “by losing their identities” and being silent about their culture, the pluralistic view allows several cultures to coexist and be visible at the same time (Yoon et al., 2010, p. 110). Flores (2012, p. 189) adds that children and teens can “profit from experiences that advocate positive feelings toward themselves,

others, and life within a diverse society”. Children and teens are psychologically and cognitively in an appropriate developmental stage to understand “injustices, unfair treatment, family diversity, and pluralism” (Flores, 2012, p. 189). If diversity is not openly discussed and acknowledged in classrooms and cultural pluralism is not accepted, teachers end up denying their students of various identities, including those on the LGBTQ+ spectrum.

Inclusive education used to refer to a system where students with disabilities were taken into account in a better way. Nowadays, there has been a shift towards embracing, supporting and understanding *all* diversities (Kluth & Colleary, 2002, p. 106). A crucial part of this with regard to LGBTQ+ students is breaking the silence (Bedford, 2002, pp. 134-136). Therefore, in LGBTQ+-inclusive education, students are taught about LGBTQ+ people, culture, civil rights movements, family development, and LGBTQ+ people’s contributions to society (Flores, 2012, p. 190). Stereotypes and attitudes stemming from families, religious communities and media need to be addressed and challenged in order to eliminate “the stigma and negative attitudes associated with the LGBTQ population” (Flores, 2012, p. 190).

It is also important to mention the concept of intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to diversity *within* groups, such as “the intersections of sexuality, gender, race and class” (Blackburn & Smith, 2010, p. 631). Blackburn and Smith (2010, p. 633) point out that “sexual identities cannot be effectively separated from the race, class, gender, and other identities embodied by people since no one is solely sexual”. Also, some teens do not consider “gay” as their primary identity marker “because they place more importance on other aspects of themselves, for instance, their race or ethnicity, religion, or athletic or musical ability” (Macgillivray, 2007, p. 3). Depending on their backgrounds, different teens can have very different experiences of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. For example, religion, the role of family and primary language “can make coming out different for LGBT youth of color”

(Macgillivray, 2007, p. 31). Likewise, many LGBTQ+ students of colour have experienced racism in gay-straight alliances when the majority of the club consists of white students (Macgillivray, 2007, p. 31). Also, according to Biegel (2010, p. 194), “trans persons of color often face the most difficult challenges of all”, and transgender people in general are often mistreated due to a combination of a low socioeconomic status, their ethnicity and their gender non-conformity. Therefore, from a teacher’s point of view, it is important to understand that LGBTQ+ students come with more than one story, which is why assuming that everyone has the same experience would be a mistake.

3.2 Issues LGBTQ+ Students Face at School

I will now focus on some of the issues LGBTQ+ students might face at school. These include invisibility in the curriculum and the physical school building, hostile school climate, lack of trusted allies, negative stereotypes, and the possible resulting psychological problems.

Every two years, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) conducts a National School Climate Survey in the USA to research the school experiences of LGBTQ+ youth. The results of this survey are important and useful in exposing and understanding the issues LGBTQ+ students might face. At the time of writing this paper, the most recent National School Climate Survey was conducted in 2015 and published at the beginning of 2017. I will use the Executive Summary of this survey quite extensively in this part of this paper.

In many schools, LGBTQ+ students are invisible in both the curriculum and the physical school building. As I mentioned earlier, Snapp et al. (2015, p. 251) point out that systematically leaving out positive information regarding LGBTQ populations in schools can be related to discrimination. In addition, students sometimes feel that teachers miss good

opportunities to teach LGBTQ+-inclusive lessons. If teachers are afraid of the possible consequences of including LGBTQ topics in the curriculum, students might think that these issues and people are problematic and should not be discussed (Snapp et al., 2015, p. 255). According to the Executive Summary of the 2015 National School Climate Survey (GLSEN, p. 8), “only 22.4% of LGBTQ+ students were taught positive representations about LGBT people, history or events in their schools”, while 17.9% were taught outright negative content. In addition, 42.4% could find information about LGBTQ+ issues in the school library and 49.1% could access information online on the school computers. As for visibility in the school building, only 29.1% of the students had seen a Safe Space poster or sticker somewhere at their school. Therefore, the invisibility of LGBTQ+ students in the curriculum and the school buildings is quite evident.

In addition, Dinkins and Englert (2015, p. 403) point out that teachers often have “limited preparation for incorporating LGBTQ texts into the classroom” as they themselves lack models on how to teach these topics. As a result, teachers might end up demonstrating “a lack of awareness”, providing “inaccurate historical context”, denying “the realities of LGBTQ students” and positioning “students and characters in ways that minimise their experiences” (Dinkins & Englert, 2015, p. 403). Teachers might furthermore move through content deemed difficult quickly, as the teacher in Dinkins and Englert’s research did (2015, p. 403), or skip it altogether.

Another problem is hostile school climate. This can manifest in many different aspects of school life. First of all, as I pointed out earlier, Bedford (2002, p. 136) discusses the need to break the silence and bring LGBTQ+ issues out to the forefront. According to Bedford (2002, p. 136), “silence may seem a state of harmony”, but at the same time it keeps sexual diversity hidden away from sight and out of discussions in classrooms. Similarly, Sadowski (2010, p. 12)

explains that schools often have unwritten “don’t ask, don’t tell” policies regarding LGBTQ+ issues that he concludes might “do more harm than good”. Another sign of hostile school climate is the use of anti-LGBTQ+ remarks. Cooper-Nicols and Bowleg (2010, p. 15) point out that comments like “That’s so gay!” and “That’s so queer!” are very common in school hallways. The GLSEN Executive Summary from 2015 reveals that 98.1% of LGBTQ+ students had heard the word “gay” used in a negative way, and 93.4% of them said that hearing remarks like this made them feel distressed. Furthermore, 95.8% heard other homophobic comments such as “dyke” or “faggot”, and 58.8% heard these comments frequently or often. The same kind of statistics go for gender expression and transgender people – 95.7% heard comments about not acting masculine or feminine enough, and 85.7% heard comments such as “tranny”. 56.2% heard homophobic comments from teachers and other school staff. (GLSEN, p. 5) It goes without saying that these statistics are shocking. Snapp et al. (2015, p. 256) have also identified cases where teachers fail to intervene when homophobic comments occur in classrooms and instead leave students to be the ones to do it. This may leave students with the impression that homophobic and transphobic comments are acceptable. Dewitt (2012, p. 5) mentions that LGBTQ+ students know that they are different, and homophobic comments remind them of that every day.

In addition, coming out in a hostile environment is difficult. Dewitt (2012, p. 3) points out that teenage years can be hard as such, and “needing to hide who you are because others will not like or love you anymore” can make things significantly worse. Students who have come out often have to listen to verbal insults, which can lead to other LGBTQ+ students not coming out at all for fear of facing the same kind of treatment (Dewitt, 2012, p. 8).

As for bullying, in a hostile school climate there are no clear policies regarding the bullying of LGBTQ+ students. Dewitt (2012, p. 14) claims that “bullying is a climate issue”. He

then goes on to refer to Whitaker with “When the principal sneezes, the whole school catches a cold”, referring to the fact that the administrator of a school sets the tone for school climate issues. If teachers and administration do not address “negative behaviour, they are allowing it to happen”. (Dewitt, 2012, pp. 16-17).

Bullying often happens during so called unstructured times such as lunch breaks, recess and trips to and from school (Dewitt, 2012, p. 15). The Executive Summary of the 2015 National School Climate Survey reveals that 85.2% of LGBTQ+ students experienced verbal harassment, 27% were physically harassed (pushed around), 13% were physically assaulted (hit, kicked, hurt with a weapon), and 48.6% had been cyberbullied through text messages or on social media. 59.6% were sexually harassed through unwanted touching and sexual remarks, and 57.6% did not report the harassment to school staff. Out of those who did, 63.5% “said that school staff did nothing in response or told the student to ignore it”. (GLSEN, p. 4). This is in accordance with Dewitt’s (2012, p. 17) remark about LGBTQ+ students being less likely to reach out to an adult if they are being bullied because they do not trust the adults around them.

Furthermore, the 2015 GLSEN Executive Summary reveals that some LGBTQ+ students were punished for public displays of affection, forbidden from discussing LGBTQ+ topics in school assignments, prevented from attending a school dance with a same-sex partner, or prevented from wearing gender nonconforming clothing or clothing and other items supporting LGBTQ+ causes. More than 50% of transgender students were “prevented from using their preferred name or pronoun” and 60% of transgender students were forced to use the “bathroom or locker room of their legal sex”. (GLSEN, p. 5) These are all signs of a hostile school climate and discrimination against LGBTQ+ students.

According to Snapp et al. (2015, p. 260) and Gard (2002, p. 48), P.E. is an especially unsafe environment for LGBTQ+ students, possibly because physical education takes place in a more informal setting than regular classroom teaching. Gard (2002, p. 48) points out that many cisboys connect dancing as well as avoiding rough contact sports with being gay. Likewise, many cisgirls think that “showing too much interest in sport or exercise” can lead to being labelled lesbian. These stereotypes and assumptions can then lead to bullying before, during or after P.E. lessons.

It is also important to mention that while many schools have an anti-bullying policy, a significantly smaller percentage have a so called comprehensive policy that specifically enumerates “both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression”. In the 2015 Executive Summary of the National School Climate Survey, only 10.2% of all LGBTQ+ students reported their school having a comprehensive anti-bullying policy. (GLSEN, p. 9) Thus, it is alarmingly common for LGBTQ+ students to be left without protection in school policies.

LGBTQ+ students’ sense of safety and the lack of trusted adults and peers at school go hand in hand. As stated above, LGBTQ+ students hesitate to seek help if they are not sure that they can trust the adults at their school. Poirier (2015, p. 353) explains that “students who miss class because they do not feel safe, in turn, miss access to instruction that is a building block of their success”. According to the Executive Summary of the 2015 National School Climate Survey, “57.6% of LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation, and 43.3% because of their gender expression” (GLSEN, p. 4). 31.8% missed at least one day of school per month and 10% missed at least four days per month because they did not feel safe. As for avoiding gender-segregated spaces like bathrooms and locker rooms for safety reasons, the percentages were 39.4% and 37.9%, respectively, and around 70% avoided school functions and extra-curricular clubs. The numbers speak for themselves –

LGBTQ+ students do not consider schools safe spaces if there is no visible support from school staff available.

In addition, LGBTQ+ students often lack role models, and they are “typically in the minority with their peers” as well (Dewitt, 2012, p. 7). It is also often the case that LGBTQ+ adults and teachers are closeted themselves, “depriving gay and lesbian youth of positive role models” (Marinoble quoted in Dewitt, 2012, p. 7). LGBTQ+ students are therefore in a disadvantageous position compared to their straight peers who have the chance to identify with the straight adults around them. Closeted LGBTQ+ students might even have to hear negative comments about LGBTQ+ people from their loved ones at home, leaving them with an even bigger need to find adult role models from outside their home (Dewitt, 2012, p. 6).

Negative stereotypes about the LGBTQ+ community still persist as well. Straut and Sapon-Shevin (2002, p. 35) point out that homophobia is often connected to discussions about AIDS, which has falsely been considered a gay disease. Dewitt (2012, p. 9) also discusses the negative stereotypes around HIV and AIDS, promiscuity, and suicide, concluding that “although the suicide rate of gay and lesbian teens is high, it is one more perceived negative consequence of being gay to those sexually diverse students who want to come out”. Therefore, LGBTQ+ students need to be taught that they can go on to live happy lives as who they are instead of taking their own life because of identity issues, and all these negative stereotypes need to be challenged through education.

Finally, often as a result of the aforementioned issues of invisibility and discrimination, there are psychological problems many LGBTQ+ students suffer from. Sadowski (2010, p. 13) points out that “sexual minority youth are significantly more likely than other adolescents to experience depression and to abuse alcohol and illegal drugs, and that as many as one-third have attempted suicide”. According to Cooper-Nicols and Bowleg (2010, p. 15), LGBTQ+ teens

are “two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual young people, and they account for up to 30% of youth suicides annually”. In addition, there is a connection between parental rejection and some of these risk factors (Sadowski, 2010, p. 13). Being rejected by family, peers and religious communities can cause depression, anxiety and stress (Sadowski 2016, p. 35). However, to avoid negative stereotyping, it is important to mention that most LGBTQ+ teens “are happy, well-adjusted, and do not attempt suicide or engage in risk-taking behaviors” (Macgillivray, 2007, p. 6).

Furthermore, many LGBTQ+ teens battle with the decision of whether to come out to their family and friends or not. The options are trying to fit in with heterosexual peers by hiding, or coming out and being openly LGBTQ+. Dewitt (2012, p. 5) discusses the difficulty of this process for many LGBTQ+ teens – “fearing the loss of being disowned by those you love because you have feelings for someone of the same sex is a terrifying experience”. On the other hand, closeted students often “feel guilty for not being honest to their families, friends, and themselves”, and they might even be ashamed of their feelings (Dewitt, 2012, p. 5). As a result, loneliness is a common feeling for LGBTQ+ teens, and one that can lead to unsafe decisions (Dewitt, 2012, p. 6).

It also goes without saying that struggling with psychological problems has an impact on academic success. Macgillivray (2007, p. 6) points out that the lack of support or safe spaces might lead to low academic achievement for some LGBTQ+ students. Accordingly, the Executive Summary of the 2015 GLSEN National School Climate Survey reveals that those LGBTQ+ students who experienced higher victimization because of their sexual orientation or gender expression had lower grade point averages than those students who were harassed less often (2.9 vs. 3.3 in both cases) (GLSEN, p. 6).

The next part of this literature review will examine ways of helping LGBTQ+ students in schools, both in terms of creating safe spaces and making these students feel more connected to their school community.

3.3 How to Include LGBTQ+ Students in Schools

I will now focus on some of the ways of including LGBTQ+ students in schools and classrooms. These include inclusion in the curriculum and in the language staff and students use, supportive school policies and school climate, visibility in the school building, available resources, and the importance of the whole community.

Biegel (2010, p. 142) states that including LGBT content in the curriculum is “consistent with the basic principle of curriculum policy that a public school education in a pluralistic society should address and reflect what is taking place in our society rather than ignore it or try to wish it away”. Including LGBTQ+ topics in the curriculum is in fact beneficial for all students. Snapp et al. (2015, p. 251) conclude that “previously held prejudices toward the LGBTQ community were reduced when heterosexual students learned neutral or positive information about LGBTQ people”. Similarly, the results in GLSEN’s 2015 Executive Summary show that LGBTQ students who were taught LGBT-inclusive curriculum heard “gay” used in a negative way less often (49.7% vs. 72.6%), heard homophobic remarks like “dyke” or “fag” less often (40.6% vs. 64.1%), heard negative comments about gender expression and transgender people less often (50.7% vs. 66.6% and 26.8% vs. 44.5%), felt safer at schools, missed school less, felt more connected to their own school community, were less likely to think they might not finish high school, and reported

that “their classmates were somewhat or very accepting of LGBTQ people” (75.8% vs. 41.6%) (GLSEN, p. 8).

Literature is a good way of including LGBTQ+ content. Dinkins and Englert (2015, p. 394) point out that texts can be “considered as windows and mirrors for exploring the worlds of others and self” to create more possibilities for students to gain experiences beyond their personal ones. Flores (2012, p. 192) encourages teachers to choose literature that does not stereotype LGBT people and that is helpful in promoting discussions about LGBT issues. For these discussions, it is also important to “establish an open and trusting classroom atmosphere” (Flores, 2012, p. 192). Dewitt (2012, p. 56) also explains that both books written by gay authors and books with gay characters will allow classroom discussion around the lives of LGBTQ+ people. It is even possible to teach a whole course on LGBTQ literature, which would give LGBTQ students in particular the chance to “not only survive but also thrive as LGBTQ students” (Sadowski, 2016, p. 34).

In addition to language arts, LGBTQ-inclusive content is the most common in social science, as well as health classes where some students learn about sexual orientation, gender expression, and related terminology (Snapp et al., 2015, p. 254). Dewitt (2012, p. 52) remarks that “LGBT topics can easily be embedded into the curriculum” through political debates, historical views, and discussions about artists and musicians. In addition, Biegel (2010, pp. 146-147) mentions relevant current events, gay and transgender rights movements, and the achievements of notable LGBTQ people in culture, society and history as good topics for classes in schools. As for math and science, one option is to include story problems that avoid promoting just one sexuality or family structure (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002, p. 37). With problem solving, authentic data that includes gender and sexual orientation can be used, for example hate crime statistics (Straut & Sapon-Shevin, 2002, p. 37). Furthermore, students’

attention can be drawn to the heteronormativity around them as well as the representation of LGBTQ+ people in media (Dewitt, 2012, p. 57; p. 61).

All in all, inclusive curriculum helps students address topics that are typically avoided, and “non-LGBTQ youth have the opportunity to learn more about LGBTQ people”, including those who are their peers (Snapp et al., 2015, p. 257). As GLSEN’S results show, inclusive curriculum makes LGBTQ+ youth’s school experience better, safer and more meaningful.

It is also important to focus on the language used in schools. In an inclusive school, words like “acceptance” and “respect” are used as opposed to “tolerance”. As Dewitt (2012, p. 18) points out, “people want to be accepted, not tolerated”. Furthermore, Straut and Sapon-Shevin (2002, p. 34) explain that it is important for teachers to know the correct terminology, which is also why this project begins with an overview of LGBTQ+-related vocabulary. Teaching the terminology openly to students is important as well because it gives them necessary tools to interact with each other with respect (Sadowski, 2016, p. 43). Teachers will need to intervene when they hear the word “gay” used in a negative way because it is offensive to both LGBTQ students as well as those students who have an LGBTQ friend or family member, and “to anyone who respects and supports diversity” (Kilmnick, 2010, pp. xi-xii). Finally, in an inclusive school, transgender students are addressed with the pronouns of their choice, and their preferred names are used (Sadowski, 2016, p. 86).

One of the most crucial ways of including LGBTQ+ students is through supportive school policies and a safe school climate. After all, there is a link between “social and emotional well-being and academic performance” (Sadowski, 2016, p. 35). Poirier (2015, p. 351) also recognises the link between physical safety, emotional safety and student-adult connection. To guarantee all students’ safety and protection, schools need to have an anti-bullying policy that specifically names sexual minorities and gender identities (Flores, 2012,

p. 191; Dewitt, 2012, p. 77). LGBTQ+ students in schools with a comprehensive anti-bullying policy are also more likely to report bullying to teachers and to consider staff's response effective (GLSEN 2015 Executive Summary, p. 9).

Furthermore, schools need to educate their teachers on topics related to diversity and multicultural education (Flores, 2012, p. 192). Dinkins and Englert (2015, pp. 403-404) state that simply including LGBTQ texts in the curriculum is not enough to "systematically address the pervading heteronormative environment in the classroom" but in addition, teachers need to be trained to be able to facilitate critical dialogues on sexual and gender identity in their classrooms. Cooper-Nicols and Bowleg (2002, pp. 16-17) point out that teachers often display homophobic and thus biased feelings and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people, which calls for education on LGBTQ+ topics for school personnel. The teacher's role is crucial in developing a supportive environment where teachers serve as allies and address negative comments, bullying and hate speech (Dinkins & Englert, 2015, p. 402).

In inclusive schools, LGBTQ+ topics are also visible in the school building and classrooms. Before students can focus on their academic work, they need to feel safe in the environment they are expected to study in (Sadowski, 2016, p. 33). This can be achieved to an extent through LGBTQ safe zones and safe spaces, which means that educators mark their classrooms as LGBTQ+ safe spaces by attaching stickers or posters, usually in the colours of the rainbow flag with some language, on their classroom doors (Biegel, 2010, p. 126). In addition, there can be posters of gay authors and historical figures on classroom walls, or posters made by students depicting diverse families (Flores, 2012, p. 191; Sadowski, 2016, p. 40). Teachers and peers identifying as allies can be very important for LGBTQ+ students' experience of school.

LGBTQ+ students can further be included by making relevant resources available for them. For example, school libraries can have LGBTQ+ collections to allow LGBTQ+ youth to easily find literature about people they can identify with (Dewitt, 2012, pp. 50-51). It is a good idea to create a list of possible LGBTQ+ books to be ordered for the library (Flores, 2012, p. 192). In addition, schools can order free material from organisations such as GLSEN (www.glsen.org), the GSA Network (www.gsanetwork.org) and Welcoming Schools (www.welcomingschools.org) (Flores, 2012, p. 191). These organisations also offer material for organising LGBTQ+ events such as National Coming Out Day and the Day of Silence (Biegel, 2010, p. 127). Finally, school counsellors can be of help for LGBTQ+ students. In addition to relevant brochures and links, they can even facilitate counselling groups aimed specifically for LGBTQ students. (Sadowski, 2016, p. 35)

One of the best resources for LGBTQ+ students is a gay-straight alliance, or a GSA. GSAs are extra-curricular student clubs that provide “a safe place for students to discuss issues that are important to them, to meet others with similar interests, and to get support from one another and from caring adults” (Macgillivray, 2007, p. 1). GSAs are open to everyone, but are especially important for LGBTQ+ students, as well as straight student allies and children of LGBTQ+ parents. These clubs are started by students, and they usually meet after school or during lunch (Macgillivray, 2007, p. 1). They are a great place for LGBTQ+ students to feel that they belong to a team and “are a part of something larger than themselves”, and for straight and questioning students to find more information (Macgillivray, 2007, pp. 67-68). While teachers who are openly out themselves are always a great resource and role model for LGBTQ+ students, the advisor of a GSA club can also be a straight ally teacher (Dewitt, 2012, p. 68).

Finally, the meaning of the whole surrounding community needs to be mentioned in relation to the inclusion of LGBTQ+ students. The primary goal of K-12 schools is obviously to educate students, not parents, but there is no denying that these two are closely linked (Sadowski, 2010, p. 15). Parents could have a positive role in helping LGBTQ+ students feel connected to their school. For example, schools can have parent booster clubs for raising funds and community support for GSAs. (Sadowski, 2010, p. 15) Schools can also network with local LGBTQ+ community centres, invite LGBTQ+ people to lead classroom discussions, and help LGBTQ+ students and their families find these community resources (Flores, 2012, pp. 191-192). It is important to send the message that “parents and others in the community are behind the values of respect and fairness” (Sadowski, 2010, p. 16).

In the following part of this inquiry project, I will present the methods of my inquiry.

4. Methods of Inquiry

The evidence for this inquiry project was collected in multiple ways. I visited altogether eight different schools, went to two conferences, examined available online material aimed for including LGBTQ+ students, audited two relevant courses at Indiana University, took part in a weekly Friday Seminar with the Fulbright teacher cohort, reviewed teacher training, school policy, and school counselling documents on LGBTQ+ students obtained from other Fulbright teachers, and examined some community resources available in Bloomington, Indiana. This part of the project will describe these methods in further detail.

Most of my school visits (5) took place at Bloomington High School North (BHSN) – a public high school of approximately 1600 students. At BHSN, I observed various English Language Arts classes (Core 40 English 9, 10 and 12, AP English, Honors English, Novels, and TV Production) as well as some German and social studies lessons (Ethic Studies). Furthermore, I examined the school library and observed a gay-straight alliance club meeting. In addition to all this, I examined the posters, stickers and bulletin boards in classrooms and school corridors. I also examined the websites of all the schools I visited. Finally, I had informal conversations on LGBTQ+ related topics with my host teacher, other teachers at BHSN, and some of the students in the classrooms.

In addition to BHSN, I visited two Columbus Signature Academy schools: Fodrea Elementary and New Tech High School. Both schools are magnet schools in Columbus, Indiana with a special focus on Project Based Learning (PBL). I also spent a day at the International School of Indiana in Indianapolis and had the chance to visit both the Lower School for children age 3 through Grade 5 and the Upper School for Grades 6 through 12. Furthermore, I visited Signature School, which is a public charter school in Evansville, Indiana, and the

Project School, which is a public K-8 charter school in Bloomington, Indiana. Outside Indiana, I visited The Atrium School in Watertown, Massachusetts near Boston, as well as The Mission Hill School in Boston. The former is an independent school for Pre-K through Grade 8 while the latter is a Boston Public Pilot School for Grades K0 through 8 with a project-based, collaborative curriculum and an inclusive approach.

I attended two conferences: the GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) Greater Cincinnati Chapter Youth Summit at Northern Kentucky University, as well as the PEN 2017 (Progressive Education Network) Conference in Boston, MA. The GLSEN Youth Summit was a one-day workshop-based conference with special LGBTQ+ themed tracks for students, parents, educators and social workers. I took part in three workshops: Being a Culturally Proficient Educator, Safe Space Training, and The Art of Self-Care and Coping. My partner took part in workshops called Creating Inclusive Classrooms for K-5 and Under the Radar: Strategies for Supporting LGBTQ Students in Homophobic Schools, and she shared what she learned in her workshops as well as the material she received with me. In addition to this, I observed a student panel where K-12 students shared their experiences on LGBTQ+ inclusion and exclusion at their schools with educators, and listened to a Keynote Address by Harrison Browne, the first transgender athlete in North American professional sports.

The PEN 2017 Conference was also workshop-based. I took part in workshops called A Classroom for All, What You Can Do Right Now: Affirming Students Across the Gender and Sexual Diversity Spectrum, Stay Woke: Teaching Intersectionality for Feminist Movement Building, and finally Exploring Gender Identity in Early Childhood through Reggio Emilia. In addition, my partner took part in workshops called 13 Good Ideas to Live by: How to Head Off “Binary Thinking” in Lower School, and Teaching Kids to Recognize and Respond to Sexism and Racism, both of which were also helpful for my project.

Furthermore, I examined the websites of four different organizations that offer material on LGBTQ+ inclusion for educators. These were the websites for GLSEN (<https://www.glsen.org>), Welcoming Schools (<http://www.welcomingschools.org>), GSA Network (<https://gsanetwork.org>), and Trans Student Educational Resources (<http://www.transstudent.org>).

In Bloomington, I explored the community resources on offer on LGBTQ+ topics and for LGBTQ+ people and their allies. These include the LGBTQ+ Culture Center on Indiana University Campus, the Pride Fest organised in August, the inclusive social group PRISM Youth Community for LGBTQ+ youth and allies, and the Kinsey Institute that provides research material and education on human sexuality and relationships.

In addition, I audited two relevant courses at Indiana University: Diversity and the Communities of All Learners, and Multicultural and International Children's and Young Adult Literature. Both courses provided me with practical ideas for my project in terms of the inclusion and visibility of LGBTQ+ students. The Fulbright teacher cohort also had a seminar once a week, and some of the practical information on LGBTQ+ students gained there served as data for this project.

Finally, I received teacher training and school policy documents on LGBTQ+ students from an American Fulbright teacher in Maryland. Since my schools visits mainly took place in the state of Indiana, these documents provided important insight into how LGBTQ+ students are taken into account in a different part of the USA. Since I was unable to arrange a meeting with the BHSN school counsellor, I also examined counselling related documents obtained through another Fulbright teacher.

5. Findings

In this section, I will discuss my findings on LGBTQ+ inclusion and visibility in American schools. I will present my findings based on the place, context or other origin of the observation in question. Since my project focuses on visibility, it is also important that I share pictures of what I have seen and experienced. This will be helpful for anyone who wants concrete examples of what can be done in schools.

5.1 School Visits

Most of my observations come from Bloomington High School North (BHSN) where I spent altogether five days observing classes, meetings, tutorials, and clubs. The rest of my school visits were one-day introductions to different elementary, middle and high school campuses in Indiana and around Boston, Massachusetts. These visits typically consisted of a tour around the school, a meeting with the principal, a Q & A session with a teacher panel, and in some cases another Q & A session with a student panel. I also had a chance to visit the school library in most of the schools I visited.

LGBTQ+ students are welcomed with Safe Space stickers in many classrooms at Bloomington High School North. I saw many variations of the sticker, but most of them included some version of the rainbow flag and the text “I want to create a safe space for LGBTQI+ youth” or “I want to create a safe space for LGBTQI+ and allied youth”. At BHSN, these stickers were mostly provided by Prism Youth Community. Also, some



teachers had a printed, black and white A4 sheet on their wall, saying “All are welcome here”, or a poster welcoming many different minority groups, including LGBTQ+ students.



In addition, there is a huge rainbow flag in the school library among the flags of all the countries the school has or has had students from. I found out that the school has had problems with some students wanting to destroy the rainbow flag, but the main thing is that it remains in a very visible place despite the protests.

As opposed to BHSN, Columbus Signature Academy New Tech did not have Safe Space stickers or posters anywhere. The walls were quite empty in general and there were no visible signs of the inclusion of any minority group. Similarly, the Upper School of the International School of Indiana did not have visible Safe Space symbolism. The Mission Hill School in Boston,



on the other hand, had quite a lot of posters welcoming ethnic and racial minorities, but for LGBTQ+ inclusion in particular, I spotted just one sticker on a classroom door with the text “Safe Zone –

Acceptance is spoken here” and the words male, gay, straight, F2M [female to male], questioning, female, lesbian, bi and M2F [male to female] organised around a rainbow-coloured triangle standing on its tip. In addition, I saw a huge Boston Teachers Union poster saying “Everyone is welcome here!”.

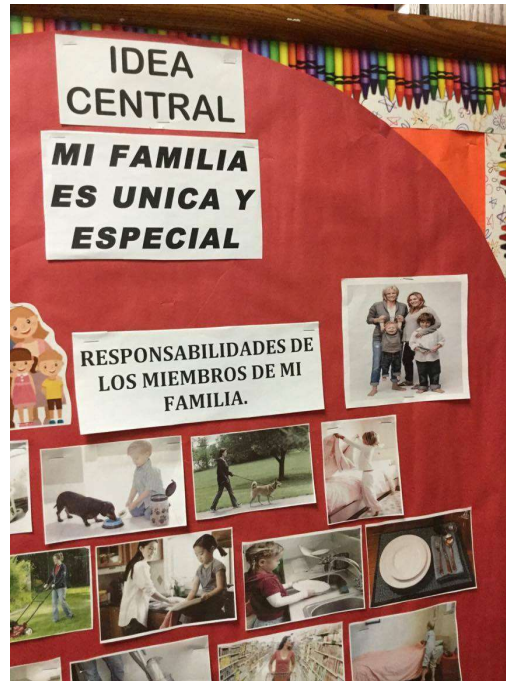
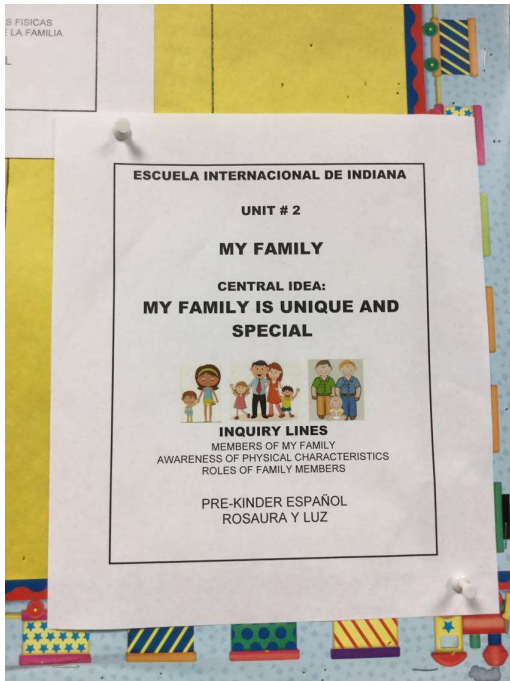


Columbus Signature Academy Fodrea Elementary in Columbus, Indiana and The Atrium School in Watertown, Massachusetts both had many colourful posters, drawings and other pieces of art on the corridor and classroom walls, but not many addressing LGBTQ+ children and youth. At Fodrea Elementary, I saw one LGBTQ+ coloured poster with the text

“Acceptance – willingness to treat others as a member of a group”. The picture portrayed several raised hands with a rainbow flag coloured hand in the middle. However, the poster did not elaborate on the meaning behind the rainbow-coloured hand, so someone would need to explain the image to the students.



The Atrium School had one student project in the rainbow flag colours on the wall, and this project was the only LGBTQ+ resembling piece I managed to spot at that school. A Spanish language immersion classroom at the Lower School of the International School of Indiana had a project on family diversity on the wall, and this project included several images of two dads and two mums.



As for posters depicting famous people, the most common images on display at all the schools I visited were of straight men (Albert Camus, T.S. Eliot, JFK, Elvis, George Washington, Justin Bieber, Johnny Depp, Alfred Hitchcock, Muhammad Ali, Martin Luther King Jr., Albert Einstein). The only posters that could possibly be considered representative of LGBTQ+ people were a poster of Virginia Woolf at BHSN and a poster of Langston Hughes at The Atrium School. Therefore, it seems to be quite rare for students to get to see images of LGBTQ+ people on the walls of their schools.

Out of the schools I visited, three had a gay-straight alliance club. The club at BHSN is called United Students, and it has weekly meetings in a classroom at the school. I found out that GSAs need to be formed by students themselves, and they also need to find their sponsor and supervisor. The supervisor's only role is to provide a classroom and to supervise the meetings. Therefore, instead of the sponsor or the supervisor, the students themselves need to create the content for their club meetings. United Students has both an openly gay sponsor and an openly gay supervisor, and this also seemed to be important information for the group members as they specifically discussed the club sponsor's sexual orientation and helpfulness. By the year 2017, the BHSN gay-straight alliance has been sponsored by the same person for 18 years.

Another school with a GSA was the Upper School of the International School of Indiana. I found out that the club meets every Friday during lunch time and that it has 15-20 members. The club had recently had a Suicide Awareness Week where students had worn colour-coded necklaces depending on who they had lost through suicide (pink for a sibling, green for another relative, blue for a friend etc.). They had also recently had a My Name Is Not campaign to raise awareness towards the importance of using students' preferred names

and pronouns. During this campaign, students had worn name tags saying “My Name Is Not...” and a list of the names they did not want to be called.

The third school with a GSA was Signature School in Evansville, Indiana. The club is called Pride Club and it meets once a week. The three gay and lesbian students I talked to told me that their school is open-minded and a safe space for everyone – from their perspective, this is mainly because of the existence of the GSA.

I had the chance to observe one 1,5-hour GSA club meeting at BHSN. The group was quite big – 21 students altogether. Out of the 21 students, one was the club president and one was the vice president. The meeting I observed was the second meeting of the school year, so there were still a couple of new students there, joining the group for the first time.

The meeting started with the president writing the club rules on the board and going through them with the whole group. The main rules had to do with confidentiality, noise level, physical integrity, and paying attention to everyone’s preferred pronouns. In addition, the new members got information on how to sign up for the club mailing list. After this, there was a round of introductions where everybody said their name, grade and pronouns. Based on observing this introduction round, I found out that the group’s structure was as follows:

- 1 straight cisgirl
- 1 straight cisboy
- 5 cisgirls who could not identify their sexual orientation
- 1 bisexual cisboy
- 1 bisexual cisgirl
- 1 pansexual cisgirl
- 2 gay cisboys
- 3 lesbian cisgirls
- 2 straight transboys
- 2 bisexual transboys
- 1 gay transboy
- 1 demisexual transboy

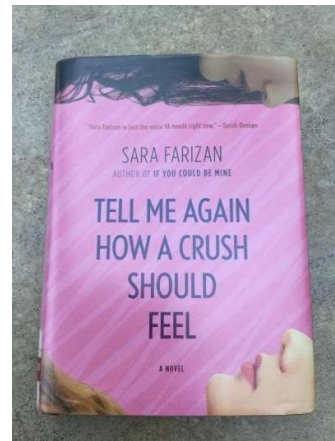
The list above shows the diversity of identities within the LGBTQ+ and allied community.

Furthermore, some of the students considered school their safe space and were only open about their gender and/or sexual identity at school. Many of the transboys also used a male name at school but their given female name at home. This is an example of the importance of schools in including LGBTQ+ students; many students have to hide their identities and relationships at home, which gives schools a special role in guaranteeing these students' well-being through supportive adults and peer clubs. Some students, however, said that their parents are supportive of them and that home, as well as school, was their safe space. In addition, what was also important for the club members was the recent news that this school year, the club would be allowed to have meetings during Tutorials in the middle of a school day.

At the meeting, I found out more about what kind of activities and discussions the club meetings can consist of. The first meeting of the year had mainly been a presentation of vocabulary related to sexual orientation. The third meeting would be a similar presentation of vocabulary related to gender identity. In addition, since October is LGBTQ History Month in the USA, the whole month would be dedicated to presentations on LGBTQ history. The group members would be making these presentations, and the four topics would be Ancient History, Early America, 1960s and Stonewall, and Modern Era (Marriage Equality). Thus, the students in the club create material to teach each other about history concerning the LGBTQ+ community, and, in doing so, they fill in some of the gaps in the curriculum.

In addition, the meeting consisted of a couple of games – “This or That”, “The Privilege Game” and “Paranoia”. Some of these games were designed for bonding and some for raising awareness. The atmosphere was very friendly and welcoming, people were open about their secrets, and everyone seemed to be laughing and having a good time.

The school libraries at most of the schools I visited were excellent in terms of LGBTQ+ literature. The BHSN school library has a collection of more than 75 LGBTQ+ books, both fiction and non-fiction. In addition, the library has created two LGBTQ+ specific reading lists on their website so that anyone who wants to read about this theme can find these books easily. The LGBTQ+ Fiction, Memoirs, and More! list includes 75 items while the Trans 101 list includes 16 items. The non-fiction books are placed in the Non-Fiction section of the library while everything else can be found based on the name of the writer. In addition, many of these books are often on display in the library on special days, heritage months and theme months. The novels in the collection are quite new and relevant, and the librarian told me that she does her best to stay up to date with new releases, and that she orders anything that sounds promising and has good reviews.



The Atrium School’s middle school library, on the other hand, is run by students, who also get to decide which books they want to order for their collection. The library was quite small, but at the same time extremely diverse with many minority groups represented, accordingly with the school’s progressive values. It was easy to spot LGBTQ+ Young Adult books on the shelves, and many of them were also intersectional novels where the main character is for example a Muslim lesbian (e.g. novels by Sara Farizan) or Hispanic and gay (e.g. a novel by Benjamin Alire Sáenz).

As for the elementary school of the Atrium School, the librarian told me she does her best to create a library that is as diverse as possible, including children’s books with diverse characters and by diverse authors and illustrators. For example, I spotted books about



LGBTQ+ families by writers like Sara O’Leary and Emma Donoghue. The Mission Hill School had very similar, or even the exact same, picture books as those I saw at The Atrium School while the picture books at Fordea Elementary were not specifically focused on diversity as much as the books in the other two elementary schools.

The New Tech library was being renovated at the time of my visit, so what I could see was a small shelf with not very many books. Therefore, I am not able to comment properly on the diversity of the library. However, the books on the shelf that I did see did not cover LGBTQ+ topics.

Gender-neutral bathrooms seem to be rare in American schools. Out of the seven schools I visited, only The Atrium School had a gender-neutral bathroom – just one. This bathroom was labelled “unisex”



and was in the kindergarten section of the school. The teacher furthermore explained to me that the only reason why that particular bathroom was gender-neutral was because it was easier with small children who often have bathroom-related “accidents”. Therefore, it seems that this is an issue that could and should be further developed in American schools.

I saw locker rooms only at BHSN, where they were gendered and thus labelled “girls’ locker room” and “boys’ locker room”. Unfortunately, I did not find out if students could choose their locker room based on the gender they identify with or not.

When it comes to language used at these schools, I did not hear any negative use of the word “gay”, nor did I hear anyone being called “a dyke” or “a faggot”. This was the case in the classrooms and in the corridors, whether a teacher was present or not. While I know that it is not possible to see and hear everything in just a few school visits, I was nevertheless positively surprised by this discovery.

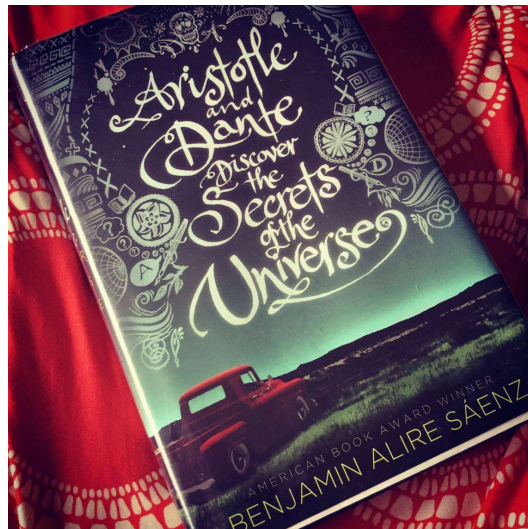
However, what was interesting was the way teachers addressed their students. I noticed that teachers often prioritised straight male students when talking to their groups. For example, I observed an English lesson on demographics where the task was to advertise something to a specific group of people. While LGBTQ+ people were mentioned as part of a general list of groups to target, in the more specific example the teacher repeatedly used “white males aged 14-20” as an example of who an advertisement could be aimed at,

mentioning things such as Mission Impossible, The Fast and the Furious, and Jackass as things that might appeal to this group. Similarly, many male teachers addressed presumably straight male students as “my man” and “my dude”, while girls received the more diminishing “Atta girl!”. All of these expressions are highly gendered.

As for the curriculum and the material used in different subjects, all of my observations come from Bloomington High School North. As I mentioned before, I mostly observed various English lessons (Core 40, AP, Honors, Novels and TV Production). In addition, I had the chance to observe a German class and a social studies elective called Ethnic Studies.

The novels read in class for English were mostly heteronormative. English 9 was reading *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah, English 10 was reading *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls about a straight, dysfunctional family; and AP English 12 was reading Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, in particular *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*, a story about a woman who loved men and, as a result, had a lot of them. In the Novels course, however, students got to choose what they wanted to read. The course was divided into four units with a specific literary theme for each. Each unit consisted of 12 books, out of which each student had to pick one they wanted to read and work on. Thus, altogether, there were

48 books to choose from. The “Love, family, and relationships” unit included one LGBTQ+ themed YA novel, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Sáenz. While it is good that an LGBTQ+ novel was included in the reading list, 1 out of 48 books is not much.

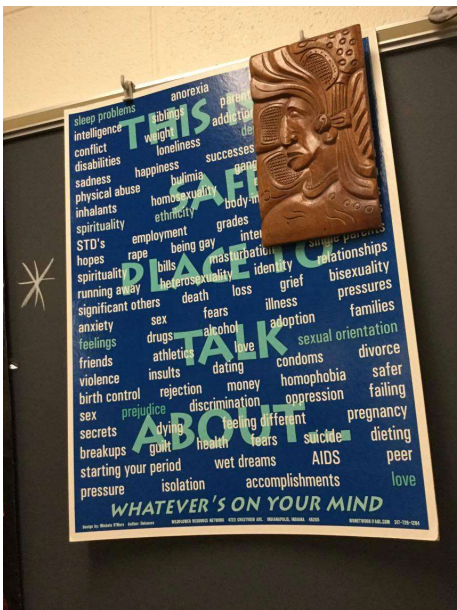


Similarly, the films watched in class were heteronormative and male-centred. Watching TV shows, documentaries and films seems to be very common in the American classroom, which is why showing material with LGBTQ+ characters or people in general would be a good way to include LGBTQ+ students. However, there were no LGBTQ+ characters in any of the films and clips shown in the classes I observed. Some clips were related to the feminist movement (*Torches of Freedom* about women's smoking and gender equality), showcasing how advertisers target specific groups of people. However, all the films and TV shows included only straight characters and families and male main characters, and also portrayed these characters in heteronormative situations (*Big Fish*, *Mad Men*, *Master of None*). Therefore, LGBTQ+ representation was left out in these lessons.

Textbooks are not used much anymore at BHSN. I only saw two textbooks – *Elements of Literature: Literature of Britain*, which was used on the side in AP English 12, and *Mosaik 1: German Language and Culture*, which was used in German I. The English textbook focused on the very heteronormative literary canon and only contained a paragraph on Virginia Woolf as a possible LGBTQ+ writer, while the German textbook was heteronormative both in its illustrations and texts. The textbook was full of images of straight families and couples, such as a straight wedding where all the guests were straight as well; a man feeding a woman; and men and women kissing each other. In the chapter about families, LGBTQ+ people were not mentioned in the vocabulary list.

Instead of using textbooks, the teachers at BHSN mostly create their teaching material themselves. This makes it possible for them to deal with the curriculum in a way that discusses diversity as well as takes it into account more than older textbooks often do. This was particularly visible in the English 12 Ad Analysis unit. One part of the unit dealt with demographics in terms of targeting advertisements for specific groups of people. First, the

students needed to think about their own identity and how they defined themselves. They got a handout defining the term “demographics” as the characteristics that make up a human population, with both gender and sexuality mentioned as specific categories. Then they got a second handout with the title “Demographics: Who are you?” to fill in about their own identity groups. After thinking about their own identity, the students needed to pick a demographic group and complete a similar handout for this group. The purpose of these exercises was to prepare the students to advertise a specific product to a specific demographic group, but at the same time, they had the chance to reflect on many different identities and cultural groups, including their own ones.



As for social studies, I found out that the LGBTQ+ community is not specifically targeted or represented in the curriculum for social studies. However, at BHSN, there are elective courses called Ethnic Studies and Minority Studies, which deal with other minority groups in the USA. I observed an Ethnic Studies class where I discovered the importance of these courses. In a group of just 13 students, there were 3 black students, 1 disabled, 1 Canadian, 1 half-Brazilian, 1

Argentinian and 1 student from Ghana. This only goes to show that minority issues are important for minority students, and it is likely that LGBTQ+ students and allies would choose a minority course on LGBTQ+ people.

I also wanted to have a conversation with a school counsellor at BHSN, but unfortunately a meeting could not be arranged due to our busy and clashing schedules.

However, I managed to obtain some school counselling documents through another Fulbright teacher. I will discuss these documents in a separate section.

As for policies, the Monroe County anti-bullying policy specifically enumerates sexual orientation and gender identity. This is also the case with Indianapolis Public Schools anti-bullying policy as well as The Atrium School. The Boston Public Schools policy enumerates sexual orientation but not gender identity.

5.2 Conferences

As I mentioned before, I attended two conferences: one on LGBTQ+ topics in education in particular, and another on progressive education in general. Both conferences offered concrete, hands-on tips for better inclusion of LGBTQ+ students.



The GLSEN Greater Cincinnati Youth Summit took place at Northern Kentucky University in September 2017. The summit was a free event aimed at LGBTQ+ and allied youth with specific workshop tracks for educators, social workers and parents. In addition, there was a resource fair where many different LGBTQ+ related organisations of the area gave more information about themselves and what they can offer. I took part in two workshops that were useful for my project: Being a Culturally Proficient Educator, and Safe Space Training. In the meanwhile, my partner attended workshops called Creating Inclusive Classrooms for K-5 and Under the Radar: Strategies for Supporting LGBTQ Students in Homophobic Schools, and

then shared the material with me as well. In addition, I had the chance to listen to a student panel consisting of LGBTQ+ students from different schools in the area talk about their good and bad experiences at school. The panel discussion was specifically aimed at educators to learn from the often invisible and ignored LGBTQ+ students and to make their school experience better.

The Being a Culturally Proficient Educator workshop was based on books called *Culturally Proficient Instruction* and *Courageous Conversational Guidelines*. The main point of the workshop was to make educators aware of the six-point Cultural Proficiency Continuum that can be used to assess the atmosphere or the developmental situation of a school regarding different cultures. These six points were cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural precompetence, cultural competence and cultural proficiency. The goal was to become culturally proficient and to create places where people know how to interact effectively in a variety of cultural groups, including LGBTQ+ youth. Cultural proficiency also means commitment to continuous learning. In this workshop, most American teachers placed their own school in the cultural blindness category where people usually act as if there were no differences among or between cultures. This kind of blindness obviously makes certain groups invisible and even denies their right to exist.

In the Safe Space Training workshop, I learned about the Gender Unicorn (p. 6 of this paper) as well as basic terminology having to do with the LGBTQ+ community. I also learned about the most effective solutions when it comes to creating safe schools. According to the trainer from GLSEN, these would be gay-straight-trans alliances (GSTAs), inclusive curriculum where LGBTQ+ students can see themselves represented, supportive school staff, and comprehensive bullying/harassment policies.

What I also found out was that for some gender nonconforming people, the difference between cis and trans is not that simple. Similarly, a person can identify as a trans man and never have any surgery or hormonal treatment. Also, sometimes it can be difficult for adults to navigate gender nonconforming students – for example, a male to female trans student can dress up in feminine clothes but at the same time have a beard. It is important for educators to allow all kinds of gender expressions without questioning the student. It is not necessary, either, to expect a trans student to suddenly only be a man or a woman, or to put them under the microscope to observe if they are doing the right thing or not. A good piece of advice was that instead of wondering if you should treat a student as a boy or a girl, treat them as a human being.

Furthermore, it is important to use the pronouns that a child or a teenager wants to be used of themselves. If you are in doubt of which pronouns to pick, use the student’s name instead – just make sure that the name is the one the student wants to use as well. Also, when discussing pronouns, avoid using the terms “male pronouns” or “female pronouns”, but instead, list the specific pronouns (“he, his, him”, “she, her, hers”, “they, them, theirs” etc.). Some people might use both the “he” and the “she” pronouns as well.



I also learned more about what to say if a student comes out to you. The most important things are listening to the student, giving them supportive comments, asking if you can be of support somehow, and asking the student to tell you more about terms you might not be familiar with. You should not declare that everyone already knew anyway, or tell the student to not tell anyone else. You should also not ask if the student has told their parents. Thus, the main thing is to respect the fact that the student confided in you and to let them know that you are available for them for support.

The Creating Inclusive Classrooms for K-5 workshop was about the personal stories of gender nonconforming children in kindergarten and elementary school. In addition, there were comments from these children's parents, teachers and principals. The trainer explained that the reason why children sometimes do not accept differences is because the adults around them show them that certain kind of behaviour is not "normal". It is important to realise that an inclusive classroom is not only about children on the LGBTQ+ spectrum. For example, if a teacher only talks about parents with the words "mum and dad", not only are the children of rainbow families left out, but also children who for example have a single parent or foster parents. In this case, the teacher's word choices end up defining for the children what is "normal" and what is not. This is what creates exclusion. If teachers treat diversity as natural, it is more likely that children will become accepting and open-minded members of the community.

In the case of gender nonconforming children in particular, a boy who likes wearing dresses could be the target of discussions about normalcy in kindergarten or elementary school. If the children in the group want to know why the boy is wearing a dress, instead of defining terms like transgender, the teacher can explain that maybe they like the colour of the dress, and then ask the other children about their favourite colours. In other words,

instead of making a big deal out of the boy and the dress, the teacher should treat it as something natural.

According to this workshop, many people question why LGBTQ+ issues need to be raised in elementary school. After all, the children are still very small. If we think about it, though, it is common for children to have crushes as early as at the age of 5 or 6. LGBTQ+ education does not have to be about teaching children definitions such as “lesbian” or “gay”. Instead, it can be as simple as letting them express their feelings. If there is a girl who has a crush on a girl, you should not single this person out, but instead treat the situation naturally and let everyone know that it is okay to have a crush on anyone. All in all, what you can do for LGBTQ+ students in elementary school is consciously using inclusive language, making sure that no one is left out, and treating gender nonconforming behaviour as natural.

The workshop called Under the Radar: Strategies for Supporting LGBTQ Students in Homophobic Schools was about tips for LGBTQ+ inclusion for teachers working in homophobic schools. The most common signs of an LGBTQ+ inclusive school are GSAs, LGBTQ self-identified teachers and administration (LGBTQ+ teachers and allies) and Safe Space symbolism, LGBTQ+ inclusive policies, inclusive curriculum and content, and availability to LGBTQ+ resources. This workshop provided ideas for including LGBTQ+ students even at schools where these openly inclusive elements are not allowed.

At a homophobic school, a GSA can go by a different name, such as Social Justice Club or Diversity Club, and if there are no clubs, it is important to make sure that the LGBTQ+ students of the school find each other some other way, for example through sitting together in the cafeteria.

As for LGBTQ+ self-identified teachers and administration, it is important to have straight allies as well as LGBTQ+ teachers and administration. If you cannot come out to the

students, use the “do not tell, but do not lie” tactic. In other words, if a student asks you if you are gay, answer by saying something along the lines of “Would it make a difference?”. Do not shame the student by saying the question is inappropriate because that suggests it is not okay to talk about the topic.

In school policies and advocacy, it is possible to work with human rights organisations that cover other groups’ rights as well, such as Equality Federation or Human Rights Campaign in the USA. This way, the LGBTQ+ community will not be singled out as the only group whose rights need to be supported. Also, appeal to equity instead of identity. For example, instead of saying that *gay* people should have the right to get married, say that *everyone* should have the right to get married.

When it comes to curriculum and content, you can integrate important writers, politicians, musicians and other iconic LGBTQ+ biographies into your teaching, and use any opportunity to mention intersectionality such as Black History Month or Hispanic Heritage Month. Finally, you can use any resources you can find outside your school – LGBTQ youth organisations, parents, and Public Health allies, to name but a few. Also, make sure you have posters of LGBTQ+ icons or their quotes on the walls of your classroom. This way, LGBTQ+ topics can be mentioned in passing (“her wife was an artist”, “look up Oscar Wilde”, “by the way, he was gay”) instead of making them the main focus of a lesson.

The student panel was a good chance to hear from LGBTQ+ students in an informal setting. Most of the students, though not all, were openly LGBTQ+ at their school. One student was the only trans student at his school, and he said that he did not want to ask his teachers to pay attention to the pronouns used because then everyone would know it was because of him. A lesbian girl said that her class had been watching an LGBTQ+ related video when suddenly the teacher had stopped the video, turned to her, and said: “Do you have

something to say about this?”. The girl said that at the time, she did not even identify as a lesbian yet, and she said that the experience made her feel ashamed and humiliated. A trans boy said that he came out in his freshman year and did not have a good experience at his religious school. However, there were good experiences, too. A lesbian girl had written a coming out letter to all the teachers of her school that was received well, and she had an especially good memory of her chemistry teacher reading the letter and then saying to her: “So what?”. For this girl, it was important that the teacher did not see her any differently after reading about her being a lesbian. Another girl described a teacher who had a poster of insult words on his wall. Whenever he heard a student use the sentence “You’re gay!” as an insult, he told the student in question to get up, walk to the poster, and pick a different insult word because “gay” is an identity, not an insult.

The other conference I went to was the PEN 2017 conference in Boston in October 2017. As I mentioned before, I took part in four different workshops over two days, and in addition, my partner shared with me the material she obtained through two more relevant workshops.

The workshop called A Classroom for All focused on diverse children’s picture books and using them in class to make children aware of not only differences but similarities as well. I got to see pictures from the facilitator’s classroom, showcasing some of the ways diversity is made visible there. The Gender Unicorn was also discussed here, and I learned how to make traditional fairy tales more diverse by changing certain aspects of the story, such as the gender of crucial characters.

The second workshop I attended was called What You Can Do Right Now: Affirming Students Across the Gender and Sexual Diversity Spectrum, facilitated by two teachers from The Park School in Baltimore with a lot of experience of LGBTQ+ inclusion in their school.

There, I did an inventory for assessing my school's gender and sexual diversity climate, received a list of 12 things that can be done right now to increase safety and affirm all students in classrooms (the list resembles the tips from the Homophobic School workshop), and saw pictures from the corridors and classrooms of The Park School, including Safe Space stickers, the GSA bulletin board, signs for gender neutral bathrooms made by students, LGBTQ+ specific sections at the school library, available material in classrooms such as LGBTQ+ related articles in English and Spanish, student projects on LGBTQ+ themes, as well as a questionnaire form for students to find out what kind of Affinity Groups might be needed at the school. What was interesting, and also quite shocking, was the discovery that, based on the gender and sexual diversity climate inventory, most Finnish schools can be labelled homophobic. This is mostly because of the invisibility of LGBTQ+ symbols in school buildings and classrooms, the one-off nature of lessons taught on LGBTQ+ themes, and the lack of training for staff on LGBTQ+ topics.

The Stay Woke: Teaching Intersectionality for Feminist Movement Building was taught by three intersectional feminist teachers from various high schools. The material they presented was quite academic, perhaps mostly suitable for high school English and social studies lessons. I learned how to teach intersectional theory and racial and gender justice activism, and how to engage students in finding their voice through various platforms such as public speaking and social media.

My final workshop was called Exploring Gender Identity in Early Childhood through Reggio Emilia. This workshop focused on how educators can build more inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community. Some of the most crucial points had to do with gender stereotypes constructed by adults, media, peers and gendered language used by adults. Children's toys are often advertised in heteronormative ways, and there are children's clothes with

heteronormative texts on them, such as “Sorry boys, can’t date till I’m 30” or “Sorry girls, I only date super models”. Also, pink is often associated with girls and blue with boys long before a baby is even born through theme-coloured baby showers and baby clothing.

Instead of sending gendered messages, educators should be exposing all children to all kinds of toys, diverse family styles and compositions, and positive and empowering stories and images of diverse characters. Also, rather than eliminating all books with stereotypes, teachers should guide children to identify stereotypes and support their critical thinking about gender. Teachers should also pay attention to how they address children – if the pet names they use are gendered, and if they use terms like “boys” and “girls”, or “tomboy”, referring to a so called boyish girl who is expected to grow out of “boyish” behaviour eventually. One teacher noticed that once she started referring to her group as “children” instead of “boys” and “girls”, the children started playing with more versatile toys and doing different activities in the playground. Also, if children for example think pink is only for girls, teachers need to make sure to address this stereotype and find a boy who also likes pink – it can also be the teacher themselves or someone the teacher knows. The same can be done with for example gendered toys (“Only boys like cars!” or “Dolls are for girls.”)

My partner participated in workshops called 13 Good Ideas to Live By: How to Head Off “Binary Thinking” in Lower School, and Teaching Kids to Recognize and Respond to Sexism and Racism. The former was very similar to the workshop I wrote about on the previous page. In addition, the facilitator had created a poster, listing things to make children both aware of diversity and respect it. Some of the things



listed were “there are more genders than two”, “boys and girls are not opposites”, “difference is a good thing”, and “there are no ‘boy things’ and ‘girl things’”.

The Sexism and Racism workshop, on the other hand, dealt with what the facilitator had done on the topic with her 5th grade class. The workshop concentrated on ads – both very old and contemporary ones. The brands advertised were Barbie, Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben’s. This is a good way to approach the topic because sexism and racism are very evident in old ads so it was easier for the children to spot the issue at hand. After analysing the ads, the kids recreated them, challenging the stereotypes in the original ones. In other words, you can do exercises like this with younger students, too. It might be a good idea, though, to choose ads that advertise products that the students are already familiar with.

[5.3 Audit Courses and the Friday Seminar at Indiana University Bloomington](#)

During my Fulbright exchange, I audited two courses at the School of Education of Indiana University Bloomington. In addition to this, the Fulbright teacher cohort had a weekly Friday seminar where various education-related topics were discussed.

My Diversity and the Communities of All Learners course was taught by Dr. Ben Edmonds, who had several inspirational ideas regarding diversity and teaching. He explained that there is an opportunity gap between students from different groups, and went on to state that the key to solving this problem lies in spotting and eliminating teachers’ bad attitudes regarding diversity. According to him, diversity is the rule, not the exception in the classroom. Inequality in teaching material needs to be compared to the actual situation of schools, and racism, homophobia and other issues need to be recognised aloud and then battled. It is teachers’ responsibility to address issues like these, air them out, listen to the

students, and give them the opportunity to have a meaningful discussion. Dr. Edmonds encourages teachers to never underestimate the power of small steps and small acts.

In my Multicultural and International Children's and Young Adult Literature course taught by Dr. Donna Adomat, I learned to analyse picture books and realised the importance of the messages the text and illustrations of these books carry. Surprisingly many picture books still convey very traditional values regarding gender, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation, even when the characters in a book are inanimate objects. Therefore, it is crucial to teach children and teenagers to spot these inequalities as well as give them books with more diverse characters and topics. I also got good tips for LGBTQ+ themed children's and YA books in my course.

Finally, in my Friday Seminar, I found out that religious private schools in the USA are allowed to discriminate against LGBTQ+ students by denying them the right to attend a religious school. This was a shocking discovery with intersectionality in mind – after all, some LGBTQ+ students are also religious. These kinds of policies openly discriminate against students with intersectional identities.

5.4 Community Resources

Community resources are important in supporting schools with relevant material, and for students who go to schools where LGBTQ+ topics are invisible. In Bloomington, Indiana there are several resources available for both teachers and students.

The PRISM Youth Community is an inclusive social group for youth of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions. Their goal is to create safe and affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ and allied youth. PRISM is open to youth aged 12-20. This group

has two meetings every week – one for group discussions and another for activities such as games and films. One of the weekly meetings takes place at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington while the other is organised at Hopscotch Coffee downtown. There is also an extension group called PRISM+, which is specifically for young adults aged 18-23. This group has biweekly meetings. In addition to the meetings, PRISM organises events, trainings, discussions, outings and dances, and they volunteer in the community, helping those in need. PRISM is completely youth-led, and they have several different committees covering areas such as education and training, fundraising and marketing, volunteering and outreach, and weekly meetings and special events.

Some of the PRISM events are open for the general public, and I had the chance to take part in a Community-Wide Education Night on LGBTQ+ History. This event was organised at the Unitarian Universalist Church and it focused on three different eras of LGBTQ+ history. The event was organised by the Education and Training Committee of PRISM



and it was completely taught by teenagers. I learned that this committee organises special trainings on LGBTQ+ themes for both adults and teenagers as well as presents at conferences.

It also needs to be mentioned that having an open-minded church in the community that collaborates with an LGBTQ+ organisation such as PRISM is a sign of open-mindedness and inclusion. It is important that religious communities also show their support to LGBTQ+ people, especially when it comes to religious LGBTQ+ people. Churches like this acknowledge and accept the intersectional identities of religious LGBTQ+ people.

In addition, the Indiana University Campus in Bloomington has an LGBTQ+ Culture Center. I visited it, and found out that it is open to everyone, not just IU students. They have a library with a large collection of LGBTQ+ themed picture books, YA novels, fiction, non-fiction, research literature, films and zines. In addition, they support people who may experience harassment or discrimination, and provide information and other resources. They organise events and workshops as well as various group meetings, including one for Hispanic LGBTQ+ people. Having a place like this in the community increases visibility and, with that, the sense of acceptance, inclusion and respect for



LGBTQ+ people. The Culture Center is also part of the yearly IU Culture Fest, and many other events throughout the year. Finally, the LGBTQ+ Culture Center is a good place for teachers to go to learn more about the topic and make their classrooms more inclusive and diverse.

Bloomington also organises a yearly PrideFest, which I was lucky enough to get to attend. There was no parade, but there were many speeches, musical performances, as well as stalls with information and rainbow products. Local companies also showed their support with rainbow-coloured products. I spotted many teenagers, many with their parents as well, looking happy and geared up in rainbow products such as flags representing different LGBTQ+ identities, jewellery, leis, and facial painting. An event like this is important for LGBTQ+ youth to see that they are supported and accepted in their community as well as given the chance, even if it is only once a year, to go out in the streets and be open about their identities without fear of judgment.

5.5 Online Resources for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Schools

There are several websites where teachers and students can go to find material for LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools. The websites I examined were www.glsen.org, www.welcomingschools.org, www.gsanetwork.org, and www.transstudent.org. All of these websites provide printable resources for schools.

The GLSEN website has resources such as safe space kits; material for LGBTQ+ themed events such as LGBTQ+ History Month, Day of Silence, and No Name-Calling Week; discussion guides; tips on how to make libraries safe spaces; and a guide to working with LGBTQ+



students of colour. The materials are available in English and in Spanish.

The Welcoming Schools website is aimed towards elementary schools, and some of the materials available are related to ending bias-based bullying, embracing diverse families, understanding gender, and creating LGBTQ+ inclusive schools in general. They also offer book recommendations, tips for addressing challenging

questions with children, and actual lesson plans.

The GSA Network website has material for building gay-straight alliances and instructions on how to make them inclusive for all. This means that there are also tips for including straight allies as well as students with LGBTQ+ parents or intersectional identities. There is an advisor handbook for the adult responsible for the club, as well as legal resources. Similarly to GLSEN, the materials are available in both English and Spanish.

Finally, the website for Trans Student Educational Resources has a link collection for relevant websites, a list of the workshops they offer, graphics such as the Gender Unicorn that teachers are encouraged to print out and share with their students, and you can also order posters, buttons and stickers through them.

All in all, I discovered that there is plenty of material available through all of these organisations, and these are not the only organisations that focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools.

5.6 School Policies, Teacher Training Material, and Counselling

Finally, I will discuss some of the things I found out through documents obtained from other Fulbright teachers. An American Fulbright teacher from Maryland was kind enough to share school policy and teacher training documents on LGBTQ+ topics, while a teacher from my own Fulbright Cohort shared LGBTQ+ related school counselling materials with me.

The school policy document I received is for the Board of Education of Frederick County, Maryland, and its main purpose is to create welcoming and affirming schools for transgender and gender nonconforming students. The document defines LGBTQ+ related terminology such as sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, and names all three as protected statuses. Thus, Frederick County in Maryland has an anti-bullying policy which enumerates LGBTQ+ identities *and* defines what is meant by them. In addition, the document states that students have the right to discuss and express their gender identity and expression openly and as they wish, and that these students' gender-related medical information is to be kept confidential. Furthermore, all students have the right to be referred to by their preferred name and pronoun. They also must have access to facilities, including

restrooms and locker rooms, that correspond to their gender identity. Access to these needs to be provided easily, without any additional complicating procedure. Also, students are permitted to participate in P.E. and extra-curricular sports according to their gender identity. Similarly, on overnight field trips, students are allowed to stay in the same room with others according to their gender identity. Dress codes for school events such as dances and graduations need to remain neutral. Finally, staff are required to participate in professional development training on LGBTQ+ topics annually. This policy is definitely one of the most comprehensive ones I have encountered anywhere, and all schools should aim for inclusion and understanding of this magnitude.

The teacher training document I received from the same American Fulbright teacher educates teachers on LGBTQ+ themes. The document was created as a response to a survey conducted in Frederick County, Maryland that revealed LGBTQ+ students' experiences of injury, violence and suicidal thoughts. The document is used in professional development trainings at Frederick County schools. It includes the more outdated version of the Gender Unicorn, the Genderbread Person, as well as "True or False" type questions on LGBTQ+ students' rights in schools. It also clarifies terms such as cisgender, transgender, and gender nonconforming. The document then goes on to offer ways to support transgender students, drawing teachers' attention to the fact that not all transgender or gender nonconforming students are the same, and that some of them might want to use restrooms and locker rooms based on their gender identity while others may prefer using those matching their birth gender. Students' legal and preferred names are also mentioned, and teachers are advised to have their students' preferred names available for substitute teachers as well. Finally, the importance of students' privacy, not making assumptions, and encouraging students who have come out is discussed. Overall, in its simplicity, the document is highly beneficial in

providing teachers with more information on LGBTQ+ students regarding gender identity and expression.

Finally, I will talk about the counselling document I managed to obtain. It is a document for the American Counseling Association in general, and the Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues in Counseling (ALGBTIC) in particular. Its purpose is to provide school counsellors competencies to work with LGBTQ+ youth. The document discusses the previous and very harmful practices of reparative therapy (also known as conversion therapy, reorientation therapy, and Sexual Orientation Change Efforts), and physiological changes forced on intersex people. Instead of such measures, competent counsellors will need to understand that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia exist, and recognise that these can harmfully affect LGBTQ+ youth's developmental decisions. The document also points out that LGBTQ+ youth's development may be complicated, delayed or compromised by things like identity confusion; anxiety and depression; suicidal thoughts or behaviour; substance abuse; academic failure; physical, sexual and verbal abuse; or homelessness. The document further mentions the importance of understanding family diversity, addresses the need to acknowledge intersecting identities, and educates counsellors on how to be a competent ally. Therefore, for school counsellors, there are available resources on LGBTQ+ youth as well as guidelines on how to best support them through their school years with their possible identity-related issues in mind.

6. Conclusion

I was quite surprised to discover just how well LGBTQ+ students were included in many of the schools I visited. In Bloomington High School North in particular, many of the signs of LGBTQ+ inclusive schools listed in my literature review were present – allied teachers, safe space stickers and posters, a GSA, inclusive policies, and LGBTQ+ literature were all available. Most of the schools I visited had safe space stickers, inclusive policies and diverse literature in their collections and were actively promoting diversity in general.

However, what I also found out was that even if schools have LGBTQ+ visibility, it is still not necessarily accepted. For example, at BHSN, some students had tried to destroy the rainbow flag in the school library as well as organise a straight pride club in response to the gay-straight alliance. Still, the most important thing is that, despite these setbacks and opinions, the rainbow flag remains in the library. It is important to persist because visibility is definitely needed on the way to acceptance and respect.

Furthermore, the LGBTQ+ books that were available in school libraries focused on different things in elementary schools and in middle and high schools. While the picture books and novels in elementary schools were mostly about diverse families in general as well as families with two mums or two dads, the YA novels in middle and high school libraries dealt more specifically with identity questions. Thus, LGBTQ+ inclusion through literature often looks different for different age groups. Younger children are usually introduced to the topic from an outsider's point of view, though books about diverse gender expression and trans children were also available, while teens are more often provided with the thoughts and experiences of young LGBTQ+ characters. Also, BHSN had several non-fiction books around

LGBTQ+ topics covering various things such as intersectionality, HIV and trans identities in particular.

What was missing in all the schools that I visited was LGBTQ+ inclusive curricula. While LGBTQ+ people were mentioned in passing in some classes such as the ad analysis lesson on demographics, they were never the main example or topic of the discussion. Similarly, while the libraries usually had LGBTQ+ themed collections, the books and novels read in class did not include LGBTQ+ content, apart from one novel that was not even compulsory reading but rather just one option among 48 other books. This was also the case with the TV shows, films and video clips shown in various classes. This seemed like a missed opportunity to include diversity in the classroom, especially since textbooks were mostly not used in the schools that I visited anymore, and therefore the teachers would have had the chance to use more versatile material to cover the same topics.

Furthermore, even if there were two social studies elective courses available on various minority groups at BHSN, the LGBTQ+ community was not one of the groups covered. Instead, the place for LGBTQ+ students to learn about their own history was their own gay-straight alliance where their plan was to cover these topics themselves. Thus, it seems that American schools need more LGBTQ+ inclusive curricula, for example through using more diverse literature as compulsory reading, choosing video material with LGBTQ+ representation, and discussing LGBTQ+ history and human rights issues in social studies classes.

Finally, it is also important to mention that my project covers only a very small part of the USA. While I found out that in some schools in Indiana and Massachusetts, LGBTQ+ inclusion is realised quite well, it is most likely not the case in all parts of the country, or even in different parts of the same state. Having examined the results of the 2015 GLSEN National

School Climate Survey, I can say that many schools still lack resources and policies for and regarding LGBTQ+ students. I suspect that things like region (urban vs. rural), political climate and religion each play their own role in the climate of an area or a school. For more versatile findings, it would be important to carry out research in several different parts of the USA, including for example both the East and the West coast, the Deep South, and big cities as well as small, rural areas.

As for my conclusions regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion in Finland compared to the USA, the situation is drastically different. As opposed to the USA, quite a few subjects have LGBTQ+ inclusive curricula in Finland, but the content is not extensive, and it is usually covered quite briefly. However, some of the newer primary school textbooks that follow the most recent (2014) Finnish National Core Curriculum deal with for example diverse families, so it is possible that in the future, LGBTQ+ topics will be more widely covered starting from an early age in Finland. However, when it comes to visibility through flags, safe space stickers and clubs, there is mostly none in Finland. Therefore, I will be able to return to Finland with a lot of practical tips and ideas. My plans for the future are finding ways of training teachers on LGBTQ+ topics and inclusion; creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ and other minority students; starting a website with information and material for LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools together with my partner; starting a youth group for LGBTQ+ students in my current hometown; and doing research on LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools in Finland.

7. Teachers' Toolbox for LGBTQ+ Inclusion

In this section, I will provide teachers with material for better inclusion of LGBTQ+ students. My main product is a collection of multidisciplinary, phenomenon-based modules for LGBTQ+ inclusion to be taught at my school, or at any school. In addition to this, I have included tips for LGBTQ+ in several different subjects; a list of LGBTQ+ inclusive children's and YA books; a list of LGBTQ+ inclusive films and TV shows to be used in class; and a list of useful apps and websites on LGBTQ+ themes.

7.1 Phenomenon-Based Modules for LGBTQ+ Inclusion

I have designed four phenomenon-based modules for LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools. These modules are called Introduction to LGBTQ+; LGBTQ+ Literature; LGBTQ+ Films and TV; and LGBTQ+ in Media. The modules can be used in several different ways and in both secondary (middle) schools and high schools:

- 1) Combined together, the modules can be taught as a course of their own (for example, as an optional/elective course).
- 2) They can be used as material for a gay-straight alliance or an LGBTQ+ youth group.
- 3) They can be used as four separate modules that can be taught in the context of many different subjects/team-taught with two or more different subject teachers as one part of a course. The modules would work especially well as one part of a course on diversity in general.

The third option is probably the best way of using these modules as it allows LGBTQ+ topics to be a smaller part of many bigger things and subjects. Also, because when LGBTQ+ inclusion

is just one element of a course, students do not need to be singled out for choosing a course on these topics. However, I also see the importance of having a full course on LGBTQ+ issues and would encourage educators to try it out to see how such a course is received.

I have chosen these specific modules based on my own subject, English, as all of them can be taught within the curriculum for English in Finland, in case collaboration with other teachers is not possible. All of these modules also teach critical thinking and multiliteracy, which are some of the most valued skills in the Finnish education system.

It is also worth mentioning that in Finland, different schools follow different course, timetable and lesson patterns. For example, the school where I work used to function in a 5-period, 75-minute system where each period lasted between 7 and 8 weeks, and each group had three 75-minute lessons per week. Many schools still use this system, while my school has now opted for a 4-period system where, depending on the subject, groups have either one or two 90-minute lessons on a given subject per week over the course of about 9 weeks. Furthermore, some schools use 45-minute or 60-minute lessons. Therefore, I want to avoid planning lessons that are too strictly tied to one specific system. In addition, my general opinion is that quality learning is more valuable than being a slave to the clock. With this in mind, I *will* provide estimated times for activities in my lesson plans, but these estimates are loose and can be adjusted depending on the discussion and the general enthusiasm in the classroom. My lesson plans are for 90-minute lessons, but they can easily be adjusted to fit different timetables and course systems.

I will now introduce the four modules in more detail, as well as provide some sample lesson plans to clarify how these classes can be constructed. The title of each module is followed in brackets by a suggested collaboration between subjects. Since I am an English teacher myself, English is a suggested (though not the only possible) partner for all modules.

7.1.1 Introduction to LGBTQ+ (possible collaboration with Health Education)

This module is divided into four different sections:

- 1) Inclusion and Exclusion of Different Groups
- 2) Sexual Orientation 101
- 3) Gender Identity and Expression 101
- 4) Being an Ally

The aim of this module is to introduce students to inclusion and exclusion of different groups in general, and then go on to teach more extensive lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in particular. Finally, students will be taught how they can be allies for their LGBTQ+ peers.

Lesson Plan 1 – Inclusion and Exclusion of Different Groups

Goals: Creating a safe space for everyone in the group; making students aware of inclusion and exclusion in general; introducing students to people with different backgrounds, identities and their possible experiences.


	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Creating group rules (20 minutes)	<p>It is important to create a safe space where the students feel comfortable about discussing personal topics such as identity and culture. Ask the students what they need to be able to feel safe in the classroom, and write down a set of rules to be observed throughout the course/module.</p> <p>The students get post-it notes for writing down their ideas and these are glued on the board. The notes are then read together, and a Word document is created of the agreed rules. Once the document is ready and printed, everyone in the group, including the teacher(s), signs it. This can happen during the following lesson.</p> <p>To make students feel safe, it is a good idea for the teacher to have an all-inclusive safe space poster or sticker of some kind on the wall so that the students can instantly see that the teacher respects all kinds of people.</p>	Group work and independent work
2.	Inclusion/Exclusion writing task & reflection	The students are asked to write one brief memory of a situation where they felt included and one where they felt excluded. The teacher will also take	Independent work, group work, frontal teaching

	(30 minutes)	<p>part in the activity. The students are told that they are expected to share what they write in small groups.</p> <p>The students are then asked to form groups of four and share their experiences with each other. At the end, some students are asked to share their stories with the whole group. The teacher can also share their stories to set an example.</p> <p>The teacher will then lead a discussion on intentional vs. unintentional inclusion and exclusion.</p> <p>→ Inclusion is always intentional! → Talk about why it is like this and why it is important. → Also talk about how exclusion can sometimes be unintentional and make the students aware of things that can lead to unintentional exclusion. → Explain what is meant by multicultural inclusive education (section 3.1 of this paper) and why it is important (inclusion of everyone and celebrating diversity).</p>	
3.	<p>Diversity Kahoot!</p> <p>(20 minutes for a 20 question Kahoot!, more for a longer one, less for a shorter one)</p> <p>(30 minutes or what's left of the lesson for the discussion)</p>	<p>This Kahoot! is an anonymous survey, not a quiz. The purpose of the quiz is to expose the students to and make them aware of the diversity within themselves, the group, and the people around them. The teacher will also participate.</p> <p>Some of the questions are about the students themselves and some focus on their social networks and interest. This Kahoot! doesn't focus only on LGBTQ+ topics but rather includes different examples of diversity in general. Make sure to have both positive and negative statements in your Kahoot! to ensure all kinds of identities and experiences can feel included.</p> <p>Example statements: "I am a girl." YES/NO "My textbooks at school don't have pictures of people like me." "The language we use at home is not Finnish." YES/NO "People stare at me because of the way I look". YES/NO</p> <p>To create your own Kahoot!, go to https://kahoot.com/.</p> <p>The survey is followed by a circle discussion led by the teacher:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How did this exercise make you feel? 2) What surprised you? 	<p>Survey taken individually</p> <p>Circle discussion with the teacher</p>

		3) What else would you have included? etc.	
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Lesson Plan 2 – Sexual Identity 101 & Gender Identity and Expression 101, Lesson 1/2

Goals: The modules on sexual identity and gender identity and expression overlap, which is why they are discussed side by side during two lessons. The first lesson concentrates on identity in general and then moves on to LGBTQ+ identities in particular, with a special focus on sexual orientation.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Identity Soup (Teaching and Making) (40 minutes)	<p>http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2012/10/individual-difference-and-group-similarity/#sthash.JaTsvJpO.btJK716B.dpbs</p> <p>The teacher explains the concept of identity with the help of the Identity Soup (link above).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discuss the concept of identity → what kind of markers does identity have? - generalise the answers given by the students (for example, if someone says “girl”, write down “gender”) - the teacher writes the different general identity markers on post-it notes and glues them on a cauldron drawn on the board → the identity markers are placed in the cauldron in the following order:  <p>Blue: Base and Broth = core identity markers Green: Early Additions = the environment that influences us in our early years Yellow: Optional = personal interests and choices Pink: Secret Ingredients = personal experiences and identities</p> <p>Make sure to talk about intersectional identities!</p>	Frontal teaching

		Once the identity soup is ready, make your students create their own identity soups, which they don't need to show to anyone.	Independent work
2.	Explain the LGBTQ+ Words (15 minutes)	Give each group a pile of laminated cards with LGBTQ+ identity vocabulary on them. Tell the students to try to explain what the words refer to to the best of their ability. Also tell them to sort the words into three piles as they go along: 1) I know what it means, 2) I'm not sure if I know what it means, 3) I don't know what it means.	Group work
3.	LGBTQ+ Vocabulary (15 minutes)	Make a PowerPoint presentation on LGBTQ+ vocabulary. The teacher explains the LGBTQ+ identity words with the help of the students. Include pictures of people who identify as each category to visualize the diversity of LGBTQ+ people.	Interactive frontal teaching
4.	Kahoot! (20 minutes)	A trivia-style Kahoot! quiz on the people pictured in the PowerPoint presentation.	Game played individually

Lesson Plan 3 - Sexual Identity 101 & Gender Identity and Expression 101, Lesson 2/2

Goal: To revise and build on the students' LGBTQ+ vocabulary, to discuss LGBTQ+ identities in schools, and to expose students to LGBTQ+ peers and experiences.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	LGBTQ+ Terminology Worksheet (10 minutes)	https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%20Safe%20Space%20Kit.pdf p.9 Revising LGBTQ+ vocabulary from the previous lesson with a worksheet.	Independent, pair or group work
2.	Videos on LGBTQ+ identities and school and a reflective discussion (15 minutes + 15 minutes)	Stories Project: NOW (LGBTQ+ students talk about their experiences at school): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDVr7lfppA0 Ruby Rose talks about being gender fluid: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOP_HDXdydc Watching a video clip of LGBTQ+ teens talking about their experiences at school, and another one on being gender fluid. The videos function as a warm up for the Gender Unicorn. Reflective discussion in small groups: 1) How do you think it feels to be LGBTQ+ at school? (Invisibility/no proper representation/being in the closet) 2) What can be problematic for an LGBTQ+ student or teacher? ("That's so gay!") 3) What kind of gendered elements can you think of at schools? (Locker rooms, P.E. lessons, bathrooms, school uniforms, accommodation on field trips, teachers using terms like "girls" and "boys", sex education...)	Video Group discussion
3.	The Gender Unicorn (20 minutes)	The teacher explains the gender unicorn. While explaining, it's good if the teacher can share where they place themselves on the spectrums. Make sure to touch upon the following things:	Frontal teaching

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gender identity can vary over time; trans identified people don't have to have surgery and/or take hormones to be trans; talk about the importance using everyone's preferred name and pronouns - gender expression contains hair, accessories, clothing, gestures etc.; mention "tomboy" as a negative term - masculinity and femininity are some, but not the only, forms of gender expression - sex and sexual orientation are not the same thing 	
4.	Filling in the Gender Unicorn (5 minutes)	The students get a Gender Unicorn of their own and place themselves on its spectrums. They are not expected to share where they place themselves, but they can if they want to.	Independent work
5.	Rainbow Walk (25 minutes)	<p>The students get role cards with pictures and descriptions of LGBTQ+ and straight characters. The teacher has a list of statements, and the students step forward if their character can identify with the statement. Idea developed based on the Walk a Mile in My Shoes Activity: http://www.lfi.fi/material/language-games-for-teens/.</p> <p>For this, you will need a lot of space so that all the students in the group fit in one row. They will also need a lot of space to walk forward during the activity.</p> <p>Make sure you create age appropriate flashcards – sometimes students find it difficult to identify with someone very old or someone from a country they know nothing about, for example. It is important that the cards you use do not reinforce negative stereotypes or othering.</p>	Group activity

Lesson Plan 4 – Being an Ally

Goal: To introduce the students to coming out experiences, the importance of safe spaces and safe space symbolism, and being an ally to LGBTQ+ people.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Coming Out Stories (15 minutes + 15 minutes)	<p>Watching one or two coming out stories on YouTube and then having a reflective discussion. Alternatively, there can be a speaker who tells their coming out story in person, or the teacher can tell their own coming out story if it is possible or if the teacher is willing to share.</p> <p>Reflective discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What do you think would have made coming out easier for this person? 2) What do you think helped this person with coming out? 3) How do you think it feels to keep your identity a secret? 4) Is there LGBTQ+ visibility in your school? 5) What could you do to help someone who's LGBTQ+? 	<p>Video or frontal teaching</p> <p>Group discussion</p>
2.	Being an Ally – Statistics, Instructions, and an	A PowerPoint on the importance and results of safe space campaigns and allies (use statistics from GLSEN National School Climate Survey https://www.glsen.org/article/2015-national-school-climate-survey). Also include pictures of	Frontal teaching

	Introduction to Safe Space symbols and LGBTQ+ visibility (15 minutes)	safe space symbols in schools. Go through basic instructions on how to be an ally (use https://www.glsen.org/allyweek/betterallies).	
3.	Creating Safe Space symbols (45 minutes)	Creating LGBTQ+ safe space symbols – posters (www.canva.com), buttons (if you can access a button machine), flags, text... Note: This activity can be continued during another 90-minute lesson.	Independent work, group work, pair work

7.1.2 LGBTQ+ in Literature and Textbooks (possible collaboration with mother tongue)

This module is divided into four different sections:

- 1) Heteronormativity in Children’s Picture Books
- 2) Diversity in Children’s Picture Books
- 3) Young Adult Books with LGBTQ+ Characters
- 4) LGBTQ+ Writers
- 5) Diversity in Textbooks
- 6) Creative Writing on Diverse Themes

Lesson Plan 1 – Heteronormativity in Children’s Picture Books

Goal: To make students aware of heteronormativity and the limited representation of gender in children’s picture books.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Reading Picture Books (30 minutes)	The teacher brings a pile of children’s picture books with no specific focus on diverse characters into the classroom. Some of the books have inanimate objects as the main characters (use for example Claudette by Tom Lichtenheld and Supertruck by Stephen Savage as examples of gendered picture books with inanimate objects as characters), some have girls and boys, some animals. Students first get time to read some of the books in peace without attention drawn to the nature of the task.	Independent work

2.	<p>Researching Representation of Identity in Picture Books</p> <p>(30 minutes)</p>	<p>Students get a handout for reporting how gender, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation are portrayed in picture books. Each student or pair can go through 1-3 books for this activity.</p> <p>For example: How are girls and boys described? How many main male and female characters are there? How do the characters look? Is their hair long or short? What do they wear? Are they active or passive? Do they take care of others? Do they break things? Do they climb trees? Do they go on an adventure? Are they looking for a prince or a princess? What are they interested in? Are they masculine or feminine? What colours do they like or wear? What colour is their room? What do they have in their room or on the walls? Do the families in the books consist of one parent, two parents, a mum and a dad, two mums, two dads?</p>	Independent work, pair work
3.	<p>Conclusions and Statistics</p> <p>(30 minutes)</p>	<p>The teacher writes “girls” and “boys” on the board. At the end of the activity, these categories will be full of stereotypes on gender.</p> <p>The results are then discussed together and at the same time, the teacher writes whatever the students say about the characters in their books under “girls” or “boys”.</p> <p>At the end, the “girls” and “boys” categories on the board are examined. The students are asked questions based on the lists: “How many of you like adventures? How many of you like pink?”</p> <p>→ The books give a narrow picture of gender and not everyone can identify.</p>	Group discussion

Lesson Plan 2 – Diversity in Children’s Picture Books

Goal: To familiarise students with children’s books with LGBTQ+ themes and characters and to raise acceptance and respect towards diversity.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	<p>Picture Books with Diverse Characters with a focus on LGBTQ+ characters</p> <p>(30 minutes)</p>	<p>The teacher brings children’s picture books with diverse LGBTQ+ characters into the classroom. Some examples of these can be found here: http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//welcoming-schools/documents/WS_LGBT_Inclusive_Books_Elementary_Recommended.pdf</p> <p>Students get time to read and look at some of these books in peace. Finally, they are told to choose one to focus on, either</p>	Independent reading, reading with a partner

		on their own or with a partner. Students read the book of their choice completely.	
2.	Similar vs. Different (35 minutes)	Students get a piece of paper with two categories: Similar and Different. They now need to go through the book they read to find things that are similar between them and the characters of the book, and things that are different between them. The desired end result of this exercise is that the things that are different are external (skin colour, gender) while the things that are similar are interests, values and experiences. → The importance of connecting with different people, finding out about them, accepting and respecting diversity. → outside vs. inside (we may look a certain way on the outside but have more experiences on the inside), never assume!	Independent work
3.	Video (25 minutes)	Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg The group watches a video on the danger of taking one example and using it to represent everyone from that group of people. After the video, the intersections of different identities are briefly talked about and the hidden identities of the Identity Soup can be brought back. The purpose of this is to make students realise why many books with diverse characters are needed and why one book with for example a lesbian character is not enough → different individuals always have different experiences.	Video

Lesson Plan 3 - Young Adult Books with LGBTQ+ Characters

Goal: To introduce students to YA novels with LGBTQ+ characters and topics.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	LGBTQ+ Book Tasting (90 minutes)	The teacher brings a pile of YA novels with LGBTQ+ themes and characters into the classroom. The books are placed on different tables around the classroom. The lesson is spent going from book station to book station with a handout, looking at the books, browsing through them, reading the covers and taking notes on them. The students get a worksheet with questions such as: Author Name of the book What do you think it's about What do you think about the cover What do you think about the language Would you give it a try? Why or why not? Rate the book on a scale from 1 to 5 based on how interesting it seems.	Station work

Lesson Plan 4 – LGBTQ+ Writers

Goal: To introduce students to LGBTQ+ writers.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Research on LGBTQ+ Writers (45 minutes)	The students use computers or tablets to find information on different LGBTQ+ writers. The teacher prepares a list of writers who identify as LGBTQ+. Each student or pair finds information on one writer and creates a short PowerPoint presentation (2-3 slides) on them. Things to include in the slide: - a picture of the writer - a list of at least a couple of their books and pictures of them - some basic information on the writer (where they are from, how old they are, how they identify etc.)	Independent or pair work
2.	Presentations (45 minutes)	The students present their slides to the rest of the group. Note: This lesson would be better if it consisted of two 90-minute sessions: one for research and one for the presentations.	Mini presentations

Lesson Plan 5 – Diversity in Textbooks

Goal: To make students aware of the representation or omission of different groups of people in their textbooks, LGBTQ+ people being one of the groups.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Textbook Scavenger Hunt (60 minutes)	The purpose of this scavenger hunt is to examine the representation of diverse people in textbooks. The students go through their own textbooks, and in addition, the teacher brings both older and newer textbooks for the students to examine. The students get a handout with things they need to find in the textbooks. For example: Subject Name of the Textbook What kind of pictures can you find of straight couples? What kind of pictures can you find of LGBTQ+ people? How many pictures can you find on non-white people?	Independent work, pair work

		What ethnicities can you find represented in the images? Does the book deal with LGBTQ+ topics? How?	
2.	Discussion and Conclusions (30 minutes)	A discussion on the results of the scavenger hunt. 1) What was surprising? 2) Who is represented? 3) Who is not represented?	Group discussion

Lesson Plan 6 – Creative Writing on Diverse Themes

Goal: To allow the students the chance to create more diverse stories and to produce diverse material for students to read.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Creative Writing (90 minutes)	<p>Students will write a creative story using diverse characters. The characters can be LGBTQ+, but they can also be diverse in other ways (race, ability, religion, socio economic background). The teacher will combine these stories into a collection that is printed out and given to all the students in the group – and with the students’ permission, to other students as well. The students can write alone or together with a partner.</p> <p>Possible material and tips to inspire the students in their writing:</p> <p>Bring pictures of different people and tell the students to pick some of them to write about (e.g. who’s a couple, who’s trans etc.).</p> <p>The students can also be encouraged to write a retelling of an existing fairy tale, including diverse characters.</p>	Independent work or pair work, shared result

7.1.3 LGBTQ+ TV and Films (possible collaboration with Finnish/History/Social Studies/Drama)

This module deals with LGBTQ+ themes, characters and representation in TV shows and films.

The module will deal with the topic with the help of the following development timeline:

Invisibility → gay jokes → token gay characters → LGBTQ+ as the main topic → inclusion.

Lesson Plan 1 – Introduction to LGBTQ+ in TV Shows

Goal: To make the students aware of LGBTQ+ characters in TV shows and how they have been depicted over time.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	What TV shows with LGBTQ+ characters do you know? (10 minutes)	Tell the students to list as many TV shows they can think of with LGBTQ+ characters. Once they are ready, go through the lists so that the students also briefly describe the TV shows they've listed in case not everyone is familiar with them.	Group work
2.	LGBTQ+ TV show handout (15 minutes)	Now give the students a handout with more detailed tasks. For example: TV shows that...have one gay character; deal with traumatic experiences, coming out, bullying; have trans characters; include misrepresentations of LGBTQ+ people; the TV show circles around LGBTQ+ topics without actually naming them... Tell the students to also write down the year of release. It's also okay, if the students cannot come up with TV shows in all cases.	Individual work, pair work, group work
3.	Circle discussion (25 minutes)	Discuss the findings of the previous exercise in a circle, make the students elaborate on their answers, and try to make them draw connections between the topics they saw and how old the TV show in question is. However, don't draw any final conclusions yet.	Group discussion
4.	Video clips and reactions (40 minutes)	Show the students clips from different TV shows with LGBTQ+ characters. The students write down their reactions : What topics did you see? What are your thoughts? What are your feelings? Choose several clips/scenes with different takes on LGBTQ+ people. Some examples: Friends (gay jokes) Gilmore Girls (gay jokes; Michel's sexuality not named in the original series)	Video and independent work

	<p>Desperate Housewives (the neighbourhood protesting against a gay couple moving in and the gay couple going around proving they are just like everyone else)</p> <p>ER (Dr. Weaver struggling to accept her lesbian identity)</p> <p>House (Thirteen and shaming)</p> <p>Glee (bullying, good coming out experiences, being out; Kurt, Santana and Brittany)</p> <p>13 Reasons Why (Tony, no coming out, but instead expecting everyone to realise that he is gay)</p> <p>The Fosters (the trans characters Cole and Aaron, no sex ed for gay teens, gayming, a lesbian who used to have a husband, lesbian parenting)</p> <p>Pretty Little Liars (Emily; boy and girl troubles)</p> <p>Modern Family (two dads with an adopted daughter, extravagant gay characters)</p> <p>Queer as Folk (Nathan's school experiences)</p> <p>The teacher takes the students' reactions home to see if they already have the thoughts the teacher wants to point out later.</p>	
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Lesson Plan 2 – LGBTQ+ in TV Shows and Films: Timeline

Goal: As above.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	<p>Discussing the students' reactions and the development of LGBTQ+ themes in TV shows</p> <p>(45 minutes)</p>	<p>The teacher teaches the group about the development of LGBTQ+ themes in TV shows with the help of the students' reactions and a PowerPoint presentation. The teacher uses the students' reactions in connection to the development timeline. Now, conclusions are drawn; inclusion doesn't come from nothing, but instead, it's a process:</p> <p>→ partial visibility (mentioning gay, even if it's through gay jokes) (Friends, Gilmore Girls)</p> <p>→ coming out and other issues like suicide, struggling with one's identity, AIDS, being kicked out by the parents, questions like "when/how did you know you were gay?" (ER, Melrose Place)</p> <p>→ "gay" and "lesbian" as the main topic of a TV show (Queer As Folk and the L Word)</p> <p>→ "normalising" gay ("we are just like everyone else", "we want the exact same things as straight people" (Desperate Housewives, Sex & the City)</p> <p>→ inclusion as characters whose main feature is not "being gay", but instead the characters can have many different roles and features (The Fosters)</p>	Frontal teaching

		→ LGBTQ+ people as side characters who just happen to be gay/lesbian/trans/etc. (Riverdale, 13 Reasons Why) Make sure to add pictures of the TV shows to the presentation.	
2.	Kahoot! on LGBTQ+ actors and films (45 minutes)	Play an extensive Kahoot! on films with LGBTQ+ topics and LGBTQ+ actors. The purpose of this exercise is to make the students aware of LGBTQ+ people in the field of film and to teach them about existing LGBTQ+ themed films. For LGBTQ+ students, this exercise provides possible role models. Use chronological order for the questions.	Game played individually

Lesson Plan 3 – Film

Goal: To watch a full-length film on an LGBTQ+ theme.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Watching an LGBTQ+ themed film	The group watches an LGBTQ+ themed film. Examples can be found in section 7.4 of this paper. My recommendation is Boys Don't Cry because it is powerful, deals with a trans topic, and is based on a true story.	Film

Lesson Plan 4 – Film Review

Goal: To reflect on the watched film.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Watching an LGBTQ+ themed film	The group finishes the film.	Film
2.	Film review	The students write a film review based on the film they have just watched. In addition to a general review, make them write about their own feelings and reactions.	Independent work

7.1.4 LGBTQ+ in Media (possible collaboration with Mother Tongue/History/Art)

This module will take a closer look at ads, consumer culture, blogs, vlogs, social media, newspapers, magazines and zines, and the representation and omission of LGBTQ+ people in them.

Lesson Plan 1 – Advertising

Goal: To make students aware of bias in advertising.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Ads (45 minutes)	Bring both old and new ads into the classroom. You can also show some ads on YouTube. Make the students go through different ads and take notes on for example the following things: Who is targeted? Is there LGBTQ+ visibility? Who is left out? What does gender look like? What do couples look like? What ethnicities can you find? Pay attention to colours, types of products, language/text/descriptions, hair, make-up... Finally, have a circle discussion on the students' findings.	Independent work, pair work, group work Group discussion
2.	Recreating ads (45 minutes)	Make the students pick one ad that they create a more inclusive version of. The creations are briefly presented at the end of the class.	Independent work, pair work, group work

Lesson Plan 2 – Consumer Culture

Goal: To make students aware of the consumer culture, bias and issues in their own environment.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Video on gendered clothing (5 minutes)	As a warm-up, show the students this video where an 8-year-old voices her opinions on gendered children's clothing. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9R1Pf7zFHF1	Video
2.	Mall Hunt (85 minutes)	Send the students to a mall to take pictures of and examine how shops advertise their products aimed at different genders, with a special focus on children's clothing and toys (colours, texts, types of toys, how they are advertised, anything gender-neutral available?). Also, tell the students to try and spot LGBTQ+ friendly shops or products.	Pair work, group work

		<p>The students take pictures and present them at the beginning of the following lesson.</p> <p>The teacher goes to the mall with the students to supervise.</p>	
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Lesson Plan 3 – Blogs and Vlogs

Goal: To make students familiar with what kind of LGBTQ+ blogs and vlogs are available, and to provide role models for LGBTQ+ students.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Presentations (30 minutes)	The students present their Mall Hunt findings with pictures.	Group presentations
2.	Blogs and Vlogs (60 minutes)	<p>Give the students time to check out different LGBTQ+ themed blogs and vlogs online. The purpose is to let the students find out what is available and concentrate on whatever they find interesting.</p> <p>Some examples: Tuure Boelius, What Wegan Did Next, Rose & Rosie/The Roses (Roxatera and RoseEllenDix), Sarah + Laura, Tämän kylän homopoika...</p>	Independent reading and video watching

Lesson Plan 4 – Newspapers, Magazines and Zines

Goal: To examine the representation of LGBTQ+ topics and people in newspapers (paper and online), magazines and zines and to see what kind of commenting from the general public can be found under these articles.

	Task and Time	Description and Material	Type of Activity
1.	Examining newspapers, magazines and zines	<p>Bring newspapers, magazines and, if you can, zines into the classroom for the students to examine. These can be in different languages, too, as it is also important to examine images, and the magazines can be focused on different themes (sports, health, family, teens, LGBTQ+ topics).</p> <p>In addition, bring laptops/iPads and tell the students to also examine online newspapers and magazines, especially the writing below any LGBTQ+ related articles.</p> <p>Tell the students to find articles on LGBTQ+ topics and people and to focus on the articles, images and commenting. Tell them to take notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are there such articles - are there such pictures 	Independent work, pair work or group work

		- read the article: how does it talk about LGBTQ+ topics? - what is the commenting like? Is it friendly/hostile/positive/negative/othering/inclusive?	
2.	Discussion (30 minutes)	A circle discussion on the students findings.	Group discussion

7.2 LGBTQ+ Inclusive Tips for Different Subjects

In this section, I will introduce some simple tips for LGBTQ+ inclusion in different subjects.

Math:

Use statistics related to LGBTQ+ issues in exercises.
Use diverse characters in exercise descriptions.

Music:

Introduce students to gay icons and their importance to the gay community (Madonna, Barbra Streisand, Cher, Kylie Minogue).

Discuss the Eurovision Song Contest and its meaning to the gay community.

Sing and play songs by LGBTQ+ artists such as Sam Smith, Saara Aalto, Lauren Jauregui, George Michael, Elton John, Sia, Tegan and Sara, Darren Hayes, Adam Lambert, Mary Lambert, Beth Ditto.

Sing songs that are performed from an LGBTQ+ point of view or reflecting identity issues (for example songs by Mary Lambert and Sam Smith, Reflections from Mulan, Let It Go from Frozen).

Address the experience of LGBTQ+ people having to sing songs with a straight point of view.

Art:

Introduce/recreate/find inspiration from the works of LGBTQ+ artists such as Andy Warhol and Keith Haring.

Study LGBTQ+ symbols.

Study LGBTQ+ imagery in art.

Home Economics:

Bake rainbow muffins or a rainbow cake.

Plan a gay/lesbian wedding.

History:

Discuss LGBTQ+ history in different countries.

Social Studies:

Discuss the development and state of LGBTQ+ rights in different countries.

P.E.:

Make sure you don't divide students into teams based on gender.

Allow same-sex couples in dancing.

7.3 LGBTQ+ Children's and YA Books

For this section, I have listed some children's and YA books that include LGBTQ+ characters and relevant topics.

Children's Picture Books

De Haan, Linda & Nijland, Stern: King & King
De Haan, Linda & Nijland, Stern: King & King & Family
Ewert, Marcus: 10,000 Dresses
Newman, Lesléa: Heather Has Two Mommies (specialty book)
Newman, Lesléa: Mommy, Mama and Me (specialty book)
Richardon, Justin & Parnell, Peter: And Tango Makes Three
Willhoite, Michael: Daddy's Roommate (specialty book)

YA

Beam, Cris: I Am J
Chbosky, Stephen: The Perks of Being a Wallflower
Cronn-Mills: Beautiful Music for Ugly Children
Danforth, Emily M.: The Miseducation of Cameron Post
Dole, Mayra Lazara: Down to the Bone
Donoghue, Emma: The Lottery Plus One
Farizan, Sarah: If You Could Be Mine
Farizan Sarah: Tell Me Again How a Crush Should Feel
Garden, Nancy: Annie on my Mind
Garsee, Jeannine: Say the Word
Gephart, Donna: Lily and Dunkin
Gino, Alex: George
Green, John and Levithan, David: Will Grayson, Will Grayson
Hartinger, Brent: Geography Club
Kolu, Siri: Kesän jälkeen kaikki on toisin
Lee, Mackenzi: The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue
Levithan, David: Boy Meets Boy
Lo, Malinda: Ash
McLemore, Anna-Marie: Wild Beauty
Myracle, Lauren: Kissing Kate
Russo, Meredith: If I Was Your Girl
Ryan, Sara: Empress of the World
Sáenz, Benjamin Alire: Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe
Silvera, Adam: More Happy Than Not
Salla Simukka: Kun enkelit katsovat muualle
Salla Simukka: Minuuttivalssi

Simukka, Salla: The Snow White Trilogy (As Red As Blood; As White As Snow; and As Black As Ebony)
Sutcliffe, Lucy: Girl Hearts Girl
Wilkinson, Lili: Pink
Williamson, Lisa: The Art of Being Normal
Wittlinger, Ellen: Parrotfish
Wittlinger, Ellen: What's in a Name

7.4 LGBTQ+ TV and Films

This section contains a list of useful TV shows and films with LGBTQ+ topics and characters for introducing and including the topic in the classroom. The TV shows are grouped under the categories of positive representation and negative representation. Positive representation refers to natural representation of LGBTQ+ topics and characters while negative representation usually refers to homophobia through things such as gay jokes and ridiculing feminine gender expression on male-identified characters, or silence and avoiding LGBTQ+ topics that are still present in the TV show.

Positive Representation

13 Reasons Why (gay male characters, also in a school setting)

The Fosters (lesbian parents, foster children, teenaged gay boys, trans men, many current issues around the theme; school and home setting)

Glee (gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans; school setting)

Grey's Anatomy (lesbians and lesbian mothers)

How to Get Away with Murder (gay boys)

Modern Family (gay men and gay dads)

Pretty Little Liars (lesbians; school setting)

Riverdale (gay boys; school setting)

Negative Representation

Friends (gay jokes)

Gilmore Girls (gay jokes)

Films

Beautiful Thing

Blue is the Warmest Colour

Boys Don't Cry

Brokeback Mountain

But I'm a Cheerleader

The Danish Girl

Freeheld

Fucking Åmål/Show Me Love

The Hours

If These Walls Could Talk 2

The Kids Are Alright

Milk

Pariah

Pride

Rent

Transamerica

[7.5 LGBTQ+ Apps and Online Resources](#)

This section contains a list of useful LGBTQ+ related apps, as well as useful websites for material for LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools.

Apps

Bisexual App – info videos

Edge – LGBTQ+ related news

Gay Pop – an LGBTQ+ online radio station

Lesbian Guide – info videos

Make Me Pride – rainbow flag photo editing

Pink News – LGBTQ+ related news

Pride Stickers – photo editing

Pride World Radio – a British LGBTQ+ online radio station

Quist – LGBTQ+ History

Available Online Resources

Both GLSEN and Welcoming Schools have amazing, downloadable resources to support educators in their LGBTQ+ student inclusion. On the next few pages, you will find links to some that, in my opinion, are the most useful ones.



GLSEN

Safe Space Kit

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%20Safe%20Space%20Kit.pdf>

Safe Space Stickers

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/SSK Sticker 10up.pdf>

Safe Space Poster

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Safe%20Space%20Kit%20Poster.pdf>

Ally Week Educator Guide

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN Ally Week Educator Guide.pdf>

Tools for Librarians

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN ToolsForlibrarians.pdf>

Guide for Educators Working with LGBTQ+ Students of Color

https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/LGBT_studentsofcolor.pdf

Day of Silence Guide

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/NEW%20DOS%20Educator%20Guide.pdf>

LGBTQ+ Inclusive Game Plans for P.E.

<https://www.glsen.org/sports/adults>

LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum Guide for Educators

https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/LGBT%20inclus%20curriculum%202014_0.pdf

Unheard Voices: Stories and Lessons for Grades 6-12

<https://www.glsen.org/unheardvoices.html>

Ready, Set, Respect! GLSEN's Elementary School Tool Kit

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/GLSEN%20Ready%20Set%20Respect.pdf>

Pride Month Guide for Educators

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Guide%20to%20LGBT%20Pride.pdf>

GLSEN's Companion to NEA's Read Across America: Lessons for Grades K-5

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/readacrossamericadiscussionguidesonly.pdf>

LGBTQ+ History Timeline

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/LGBTQ-History-Timeline-References.pdf>

LGBTQ+ History Timeline Lesson

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/LGBTQ-History-Timeline-Lesson.pdf>

LGBTQ+ History Cards

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/LGBTQ-History-Cards.pdf>

Misgendering and Respect for Pronouns

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Misgendering-and-Respect-for-Pronouns.pdf>

Think B4 You Speak Guide

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Guide%20to%20ThinkB4YouSpeak.pdf>

No Name Calling Week Elementary School (K-5) Lessons

<https://www.glsen.org/nonamecallingweek/elementary>

No Name Calling Week Middle School (6-8) Lessons

<https://www.glsen.org/nonamecallingweek/middle-school>

No Name Calling Week High School (9-12) Lessons

<https://www.glsen.org/nonamecallingweek/high-school>

The Breakdown: Exploring Transphobia and Genderism

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/The%20Breakdown.pdf>

Beyond the Gender Binary

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Beyond-The-Gender-Binary.pdf>

Challenging Ableist Language

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/Challenging-Ableist-Language.pdf>

Welcoming Schools

LGBTQ Inclusive Picture and Middle Grade Books

http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//welcoming-schools/documents/WS_LGBT_Inclusive_Books_Elementary_Recommended.pdf

Books Including Gender Expansive and Transgender Children

http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//welcoming-schools/documents/WS_Gender_Expansive_Transgender_Elementary_Students_Books.pdf

Challenging Gender Limits with Picture Books

http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//welcoming-schools/documents/WS_Challenging_Gender_Limits_with_Books.pdf

Transgender Children: Books to Help Adults Understand

http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//welcoming-schools/documents/WS_Transgender_Children_-_Books_for_Adults.pdf

Websites

As a result of my Fulbright experience, me and my partner, who is a subject and class teacher, have decided to launch a website called www.lgbtqplusinschools.com. The website will eventually provide material for LGBTQ+ students and teachers, children of LGBTQ+ parents, and parents and teachers of LGBTQ+ children and youth. The website will contain a material bank for teachers, making use of my Fulbright project. Later on, we are also planning to have both a Finnish and a Hungarian version of the website to be able to reach out to those whose English is not as strong as well.

8. Gratitude

One of the most valuable things I have learned during my Fulbright period is the importance of expressing gratitude. Therefore, I would like to thank a bunch of people for making this project and the whole Fulbright experience possible for me. I want to thank Mirka McIntire from Fulbright Finland for all the practical help and mental support; my dad for looking after our home, and my mum and sister for taking care of our cat Nessu while we have been on this American adventure; my colleagues Annika Sillanpää and Nina Lintumäki back in Finland for helping me with the application process and for getting me here in the first place; Jacob Butler from CIEDR for always listening and for being the most professional and helpful person in the world; my IU audit course professors Dr. Ben Edmonds for inspiring thoughts and Dr. Donna Adomat for the best class I have ever taken; my faculty advisor Dr. Y. Barry Chung for guiding my project towards the right direction; my inquiry project coordinator Özlem Erden for the encouragement and for believing in the future of my project; my host teacher April Hennessey at Bloomington High School North for being the best host teacher I could have wished for; and the whole Fulbright Cohort for the support, the love, and sharing the whole experience with me. Finally, I want to thank my wife Julcsi – I could not have done it without you!

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