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Being Mila: Creating An Lgbtq Curriculum That Is Authentic, Follows Policies And Ethics, And Teaches Acceptance

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CREATING AN LGBTQ CURRICULUM THAT IS AUTHENTIC, FOLLOWS
POLICIES AND ETHICS, AND TEACHES ACCEPTANCE

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“Even Today....”

“Even today, there are kids who tease me, or call me by a boy name, or ignore me altogether. This makes me feel crummy” (Herthel & Jennings, 2014, p. 22). As I read the book *I am Jazz* for a lesson presentation in my Culture & Diversity class at Hamline, I feel a sense of uncertainty as to what extent I will be able to teach this lesson in our schools. I continue by having my colleagues write what they think are girl attributes on pink paper, and what they think are boy attributes on blue. The idea is to show how we tend to stereotype, maybe not purposely, but unconsciously. We have a discussion on gender bias and how this can impact our students.

I proceed in showing a short film created by a dear friend of mine, along with her son who both identify as Genderqueer. *Raising Owen: A Genderqueer Love Story* (Western & Brown, 2015), is a documentary about an eight year old boy growing up in tutus and who uses the pronouns they/them/theirs. The awareness arises that this may be a new concept for many, but it is important that all children feel safe and accepted regardless of their pronouns. We end our lesson by drawing our family portrait, and I show a slideshow presenting the diversity of families.

What I learned from teaching this condensed lesson, is that many do not know how or when to teach to LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning) issues. This particular topic is something that is dear to my heart. I live the LGBTQ life daily, I am gay. It is important for me to be able to talk openly about myself, it is also important that I am teaching my students how to be accepting, and that we are all safe being who we are. This has led me to my research question: How can I create an LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policy and ethics, and teaches acceptance?

In this chapter I will share my background with the LGBTQ topic, including my personal experiences. I will express how such a curriculum would impact various stakeholders such as; students and teachers. Within the curriculum is the need for more children's literature to help LGBTQ students to see themselves in a story, and this will be included. I will also discuss how my research will inform my knowledge of policy going forward with my project.

My Background

I was married for 12 years to my high-school sweetheart, a man, and with him I had a beautiful daughter. It was not until I was 35 years old that I came out as gay and my life was changed forever. I went through the guilt of hurting the man I loved, I did not understand how I did not know I was gay sooner. It took me awhile to forgive myself for what I did not know. I can look back at my high-school days and realize I never learned about the LGBTQ community growing up. It was never talked about, it was not taught in my school, I did not know anyone who was gay, and it certainly never crossed my mind

to consider this for myself. It was not until I was divorced that I truly realized my attraction to women.

In 2010 I met a woman that would become the love of my life. Marriage was not yet legal, but we had a ceremony, became domestic partners, and I took her last name. My daughter was in first grade when she was given two moms, and though she is such an accepting soul, I had to hope others around her would be too. I remember picking her up at school when a few of her friends came up to me and asked if my daughter really had two moms. They were only curious, but now a middle school student, my daughter still has not learned about LGBTQ topics in her classes.

Now I am a teacher, I finally have the opportunity to educate students on acceptance. I have the opportunity to educate students on the diversity within each one of us. I want to develop a curriculum that will create a safe environment for questions and for discussion. I want LGBTQ students and those from LGBTQ families to feel supported and understood. This is why I desire to answer the question: How can I create an LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policy and ethics, and teaches acceptance?

Students

Children are coming out as LGBTQ at younger and younger ages, and still others are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity (Fedders, 2006). There is not a magic age for when a person comes out. Some children are aware they are different but they do not understand exactly why they are the way they are. I personally know of two transgender youth, one genderqueer, and three openly gay, all are under the age of ten. It is important that they see themselves in others in order to know what they are seeing in

themselves. It is up to us as educators to give our students this opportunity. It is also important that students feel supported by their teachers, other students, the school, and their community. Our LGBTQ students encounter cruelty rooted in the values that continue to allow homophobia as an acceptable norm of bias and harassment in schools (Wozolek B., Wootton L., Demlow, A., 2017).

I cannot leave the door closed on bullying, mental health, suicide and academic achievement when it comes to our LGBTQ students. The suicide attempt rate is four times greater for LGBTQ youth than heterosexual students (Harte, 2017). The National Climate Survey shows that a negative school climate results in a higher proportion of LGBTQ students than heterosexual students who skip or drop out of school, 61% versus 17% (Page, 2017). I plan to incorporate research surrounding these all important issues and how having a curriculum for our students is not only necessary, but should be mandatory.

I have watched as three of my friends have transitioned, all are in their late 20's or 30's. All have been addicted to drugs, attempted suicide, and two have been beaten for wanting to be their authentic selves. One survey revealed that 41% of transgender Americans had attempted suicide at one point in their lives (Gitlin, 2018). If this is not enough of a reason to support and teach to our LGBTQ community, I don't know what is.

All of this being said, I feel there needs to be more direct curriculum addressing as many aspects of gender identity, LGBTQ topics, and inclusion surrounding this as possible. I have discovered the need for more inclusive LGBTQ children's literature to aid in this process. It is important that our students are able to see themselves in what we

teach. We need to include not only books on two moms, or two dads, but we also need books that demonstrate what it is like to be genderqueer, or to be transgender. This is why I will research: How can I create an LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policy and ethics, and teaches acceptance?

Teachers

My hope is to create a curriculum that educators can trust to be authentic. Meaning, providing necessary information based on experience and research. A curriculum that will follow policies and ethics of their school so that there is not the concern of overstepping the grounds of educational policy. I hope this curriculum will be just the beginning for me in pushing the LGBTQ teachings further, bringing this topic to the forefront in a way that it becomes a comfortable avenue for questions and discussions.

I cannot express enough how important it is for teachers to teach about and talk about LGBTQ topics. We are the daily support of our students. We can help build the confidence for students and make our classrooms and schools a safe place for students to learn. This can be a challenge initially, but schools can do this. It is what educators have done all along: meeting the needs of kids by creating a better learning environment where everyone feels safe and respected (Gitlin, 2018). If a teacher does not have clarity in how to comfortably teach within the LGBTQ topic, there are ways we can help our students throughout the day with or without a guided curriculum. Here are a few reminders for LGBTQ classroom inclusiveness: First, we can expose our students to literature, lessons, and classroom guests. Second, we can be careful of hetero-normative viewpoints such as; a boy will grow up to marry a woman, or lining up boys here and

girls there. Third, we can use more inclusive vocabulary such as; respect, ally, or diverse. Fourth, we can watch our use of gender stereotyping that show different expectations for girls versus boys. Fifth, we can create respectful learning plans, respond to name calling, bullying, bias, discuss family diversity, and discuss gender roles. Sixth, we can ask as many questions as we can of our students by encouraging dialogue that develops a deeper understanding of the material presented. Finally, we can listen to the students and assess their readiness and what tools are helping them to understand (Sears, 2005). With the use of these basic guidelines, we as teachers can create a classroom that is both educational and inclusive.

Policy and Ethics

I am not currently teaching at a specific school as I am a substitute teacher. I plan to look at policy as a whole as well as in regards to an urban Midwestern school district where I primarily teach. I think it is important to look at aspects of policy and ethics to ensure I am creating a curriculum that is accepted. It is also important to me because I anticipate having the desire to advocate for further implementation into the schools. This will give me the resources, the direction, and the guidelines to do so.

I am hoping to find information to support the need, and effectiveness for LGBTQ curriculum. I know ethically there are concerns from a variety of religious and cultural viewpoints. I am going to strive to find information that will demonstrate why this curriculum is not meant to nor will it be taught in a way that will go against religious or cultural views. My idea behind this project is to thoughtfully create a piece of curriculum that demonstrates another aspect of diversity that needs acceptance. We are blessed to

live in a country full of multiple cultures and perspectives, we may not always agree, but we all deserve the same level of respect.

Summary

Within chapter one I have included the lesson I taught that started my inquiry into how to truly teach LGBTQ curriculum. I shared my background and how it relates to my connection with my research question. I have also included how such a curriculum can impact a few of the key stakeholders driving my research, including the need for children's literature to assist in this. Finally, I recognize the importance of policy and ethics in the development of my curriculum. In Chapter two I will deepen the research connection as I present literature reviews along my main themes of stakeholders, curriculum, children's literature, and Policy and Ethics. In chapter three I will describe my project and how it will contribute to LGBTQ curriculum. In chapter four I will be reflecting on my research, project development, and the conclusion. In all of the chapters I will be focusing on the answer to my research question: How can I create a LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policy and ethics, and teaches acceptance?

CHAPTER TWO

Teaching LGBTQ Curriculum

While conducting research on LGBTQ topics in the schools, it is clear that many of the districts lack policies, support groups, or curriculum to guide LGBTQ students. This is a matter that is disturbing and it continues to fuel the fire to be an advocate for LGBTQ students.

The following chapter will be providing information on the main topics supporting the LGBTQ project that will be created. There will be analyzing of the policies that are currently in place, this includes those for an urban school district in the Upper Midwest. It will also include looking at the implications for the main stakeholders involved: students and teachers. There will be variations provided on the LGBTQ curriculum that have already been created and how it has helped our LGBTQ community. Finally, there will be a review of the children's literature that is available to support the curriculum for elementary school classrooms. These topics will guide the project question of: How can I create an LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policies and ethics, and teaches acceptance?

Policies

Policies as a whole. It has been demonstrated that lesbian, gay, and transgender youth are often exposed to school environments that are hostile towards them (Patterson, 2013).

Yet, LGBTQ-affirmative school-based interventions have limited freedoms that are protected by the First Amendment (Meyer & Bayer, 2013). There are only 14 states that have non discrimination policies in their schools, and only 19 states have anti-bullying laws (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). While conducting the research, it was discovered that many school districts that do have anti-bullying laws, do not address LGBTQ youth directly (Kahn & Gorski, 2016).

Almost 2 in 3 LGBTQ adolescents report feeling unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation (Patterson, 2013). It is a concern as to why there are not policies in all school districts, and why the policies are not consistently monitored and enforced. It has been demonstrated that LGBTQ students in schools that do have laws in place, feel less danger and experience less harassment than those that do not provide laws (Patterson, 2013).

It is possible that there are not policies in all states, all districts, and all schools because this issue is often met with strong opposition from the thought that there is infringement on free speech and constraints on religious freedoms (Meyer & Bayer, 2013). There are those that fear having interventions in place, fear that the moral education is being taken out of the parents' hands and instead students are being taught conflicting views (Meyer & Bayer, 2013). So what are the ethical considerations that can be taken?

Critics of LGBTQ interventions primarily come from a place of law and conservative public advocacy groups (Meyer & Bayer, 2013). It is believed that LGBTQ school-based interventions have limited freedoms that are protected by the First Amendment (Meyer & Bayer, 2013). It is agreed that when addressing LGBTQ issues there are deeply held

cultural and religious beliefs and values at stake (Meyer & Bayer, 2013). These are some of the legal and ethical issues that present themselves when designing LGBTQ interventions (Meyer & Bayer, 2013).

It is a concern that such interventions take the moral education out of the parents hands and it is a fear that children will be instilled with values that conflict with parents and religious values (Meyer & Bayer, 2013). To combat this, legal scholars have focused on the importance of the safety of schools. School officials must have greater authority to intervene before speech leads to violence (Meyer & Bayer, 2013).

As far as religious critiques, it is believed LGBTQ interventions are promoting homosexuality. However, under the First Amendment principles the values of non religious people need to be respected just as those of the religious people are (Meyer & Bayer, 2013). LGBTQ affirmative interventions do not inherently violate religious or First Amendment freedoms. LGBTQ school based interventions are not requiring that the community endorse LGBTQ affirmative views, but rather that LGBTQ students are provided a safe and supportive educational environment (Meyer & Bayer, 2013). In ethical analysis, it is found that interventions are important because they promote the dignity and rights of LGBTQ students and contribute to the social good of preparing all students to live and work as citizens in a diverse society (Meyer & Bayer, 2013).

The Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network (GLSEN,2018), pronounced “glisten”, was founded in 1990 by a small group of teachers in Massachusetts. They came together to improve the education system for LGBTQ students. Over 25 years later this group is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe and

affirming schools for LGBTQ students (GLSEN, 2018). The members and volunteers are students, educators, parents and community members who volunteer time to support students, gender-sexuality alliances, train educators and provide opportunities for all to make change for their local schools (GLSEN, 2018).

The GLSEN conducts extensive research, authors developmentally appropriate resources for educators, partners with decision makers, and empowers students to affect change (GLSEN, 2018). The GLSEN policy team works with policymakers at all levels to ensure the best and most inclusive safe school policies are considered, passed, and implemented. The GLSEN is a strong advocate for change on all levels of advocating for LGBTQ students. (GLSEN, 2018).

Another program created in support of LGBTQ youth are the various types of GSA's available. GSA stands for Gender-Sexualities Alliance. A GSA is an LGBTQ racial and gender justice organization that empowers and trains queer, transgender, and allied youth leaders to advocate, organize, and mobilize an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities. (GSA, 2018). The GSA's mission is to create safe environments in schools for students to support each other and learn about homophobia, transphobia, and other oppressions, to educate the school community about homophobia, transphobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation issues, and to fight discrimination, harassment, and violence in schools (Meyer & Bayer, 2013).

Policy as a whole plays an important part in how LGBTQ students are made to feel safe and protected. The next section will look specifically at an urban elementary school

district and their policies. This will be the district in which the the piece of curriculum will initially be developed for.

One school district's policies. It has been found that this particular school district has policies in place to protect LGBTQ students, yet many districts still do not. One such policy in place is a Gender Inclusion Policy. Within this policy it states that all students are deserving of respectful and inclusive learning environments (Policy 500.00). The Policy includes steps to include gender inclusiveness such as: referring to students by their correct pronouns and preferred name, prohibiting the separation of students by gender unless it serves as a compelling pedagogical tool, providing all students opportunities to participate in activities consistent with gender identity, and providing all students access to facilities that best align with a students gender identity (Policy 500.00).

The district also has an equity department that includes Out For Equity, this program advocates specifically for gender equitable practices, programs, and policies. The website meets needs by providing LGBTQ support groups, resources, and events for students, families and the community (Out for Equity, 2018).

All of these resources culminate into a policy that is striving to provide the goal of creating a safe environment for LGBTQ students to learn. What can help further would be to include curriculum specific to the LGBTQ culture. The next section will look at the impacts curriculum would have on various stakeholders.

Stakeholders: Students

School climate. It has been found that many of our school districts still do not have LGBTQ curricula and if they do it is limited. It has been shown that lesbian, gay,

bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youth experience more difficulties with mental and physical health and education compared with their heterosexual peers (Snapp, McGuire, Sinclair, Gabrion & Russell, 2015). LGBTQ youth are at higher risk for truancy, lower grades, and dropping out of school (Snapp et al., 2015). Much of the discussion on school climate is measured through a students self-reported data on experiences and perceptions (Snapp et al., 2015). When talking about school climate it is in reference to the safety and well-being of LGBTQ students at school, as well as the degree to which schools enact policies and programs that are supportive of LGBTQ students (Snapp et al., 2015). School climate can entail speech, action, lack of support, anything that is making the school positive or negative for a student (Snapp et al., 2015).

The author of the book *Acting Out!* had a sign on the door that said, “No Homophobic Remarks Spoken Here!” (Blackburn, Clark, Kenney & Smith, 2010). This led to a discussion about what homophobic remarks consist of (Blackburn et al., 2010). This also demonstrates to LGBTQ students that there is support for them and that it is a safe classroom. From talks with various students about their experiences it has been reported that there are frequent remarks such as: “That’s so gay”, “dyke” “queer”. Sometimes the teacher will just say, “stop it” but most of the time there is nothing done. For LGBTQ students, hearing words such as these cuts deep to the core of their being (Peter & Taylor, 2013). To not acknowledge such remarks, questions, or discussions serves as a great injustice to our students (Blackburn et al., 2010).

Similar to homophobic language, terms of abuse that are often used towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. Is the gendered language which are statements

that: assume a woman is going to marry a man, or ask for a strong men to help them move. When such language is used, what is being taught to children about strength? What is being taught to youth about gender ideals? (Peter & Taylor, 2013). LGBTQ students report more verbal and physical victimization than non-LGBTQ students. This demonstrates the need to get the message out that it is hurtful to harass anyone regardless of whether or not they are LGBTQ (Peter & Taylor, 2013).

Impacts of curricula for students. There have been several school based strategies that have had the potential to minimise health and educational disparities for LGBTQ students and to also help create supportive school climates (Snapp et al.,2015). The options to help the school include non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies, supportive teachers and the presence of GSA's (Snapp et al., 2015). Another strategy is to include curriculum that reflects the lives and histories of LGBTQ people (Snapp et al., 2015).

The study conducted by Snapp and Colleagues (2015), discovered some intriguing findings when looking at individual versus school outcomes. The study examined the association between LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, students' reports of bullying and their perceptions of school safety (Snapp et al., 2015). On an individual level it was discovered that the presence of inclusive and supportive curricula was more strongly associated with safety, but there was more bullying due to sexual orientation, gender presentation, or having LGBTQ friends (Snapp et al., 2015). This could be due to a variety of reasons such as; topics being raised in a negative fashion, or a response to a an individual being bullied (Snapp et al., 2015). It is also possible that students have still experienced

bullying outside of the courses that taught LGBTQ curricula, students being more aware of bullying because they themselves are bullied, or having LGBTQ curricula may in itself create more awareness of bullying taking place (Snapp et al., 2015).

However, at the school level it was found to have a positive impact. Supportive and inclusive curricula was associated with more safety and less bullying across the school (Snapp et al., 2015). So what does this mean exactly? Why would students be considered to be individually bullied more, but as a school less? It has to do with the critical mass. In schools with little inclusive and supportive curricula, individuals may not have noticed the curricula because of personal negative experiences, which also created negative association (Snapp et al., 2015). Once the curricula reached the critical mass within a school, then the overall school climate improved, demonstrating a positive association at a school level (Snapp et al., 2015). What this says is that the overall school climate improves when LGBTQ inclusive curriculum is taught and is supportive. Implementing the curriculum will have broader implications for the entire school climate and will eventually outweigh the negative implications associated at the individual student level (Snapp et al., 2015).

Stakeholders: Teachers

One teacher's story. So what about the support and safety of LGBTQ teachers? An art teacher at an elementary school in Texas was suspended with pay recently for discussing her sexual orientation, the sexual orientation of artists, and their relationships with other gay artists (Limon, 2018). The district said that it is the parents right to control these conversations with their children (Limon, 2018). Incidents such as these leave

some teachers in fear to teach LGBTQ curriculum or for LGBTQ teachers to feel safe being “out.”

Indeed there have been many dismissals and much disciplinary action taken against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer-identifying teachers (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). Most of the studies done surrounding LGBTQ in schools has been in regards to students. It is important to recognize the support and safety of the teachers teaching our students. “Few professions are as gendered and as publicly scrutinized in the United States as teaching” (Kahn & Gorski, 2016, p.16).

The history of teachers. The history of teachers has involved a journey of segregation and divide. During the colonial period, formal teaching was dominated by men (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). During the 17th and 18th centuries girls received little formal education. By the turn of the 19th century and the industrial revolution, white men began more lucrative work in the factories, and white women moved to teaching (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). A big part of women moving into the teaching profession was led by Horace Mann, the first US Secretary of Education in 1837 (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). Among some of Mann’s accomplishments were the push for tax funded well-developed and state public education system, a push for training of teachers and the promotion for the necessity of academic rigor (Kahn & Gorski, 2016).

Another dynamic that is important to mention from the 19th century is, the trend of schools only hiring single women as teachers because it was a concern that women would have mixed loyalties if they were married (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). It was during the late 19th century and early 20th century that researchers began to associate the single teachers

with lesbianism, leading to what was called the lesbian threat (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). By the time of the post World War II era there were increased teacher shortages, therefore more demand for teachers, this meant that marriage bans were eliminated, but they then started policing the sexualities and gender identities of teachers (Kahn & Gorski, 2016).

In 1969 were the Stonewall Riots which involved constant police harassment at the Stonewall bar to gay men (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). The Stonewall Riots were a series of violent demonstrations by members of the gay community against a police raid that took place on June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn (Johnson, 2015). This riot is widely known to constitute the most important event leading to the gay liberation movement and the modern fight for LGBTQ rights in the US (Johnson, 2015).

With all of the visibility and increased homophobia and heterosexism in schools, activists created organizations such as; the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) (Kahn & Gorski, 2016). These organizations helped to alleviate and raise awareness about the increased LGBTQ issues. Unfortunately LGBTQ educators and gender nonconforming educators continue to be implicitly or explicitly forced into the closet, and when they are not they are often at risk for high levels of discrimination (Kahn & Gorski, 2016).

Teacher education. There is more education and support based on racial and cultural dimensions of education justice, and not as much available for gender and sexuality-based justice in schools (Rosiek, Schmitke, & Heffernan, 2017). There has been a newly revamped graduate program, University of Oregon master's degree and teacher certification program. In 2008 UOTeach replaced its previously existing teacher

education program because it had been criticized for failing to address diversity issues in schools sufficiently (Rosiek et al., 2017). The new teacher program made dramatic changes. First, UOTeach students are required to earn an English for Speakers of other Languages(ESOL) Endorsement on their way to a license, a commitment was made to address issues of culture, language, and justice throughout curriculum, it included significant curricular changes to address gender pluralism and the needs of LGBTQ students and families, included a full-day workshop on supporting LGBTQ students and families, and regularly hosted extracurricular programming focused on promoting gender pluralism and LGBTQ school inclusiveness (Rosiek et al., 2017).

The protests that happened due to the lacking curriculum pressured the school to do something, these protests were necessary to have the changes occur (Rosiek et al., 2017). The second lesson was to invest in institutional change. This meant getting new courses, new degree programs approved, hiring new faculty with expertise in relevant areas, and hiring full time faculty with appropriate knowledge base and ideological commitments (Rosiek et al., 2017). The third lesson is that intersectionality matters. The awareness that different forms of oppression interact and need to be responded to effectively one at a time (Rosiek et al., 2017). The final lesson is that discursive struggle matters (Rosiek et al., 2017). As the struggles faded, the need for gender pluralism and heteronormativity become the primary image for advocacy (Rosiek et al., 2017).

The need for teachers that are prepared to be advocates for gender justice and LGBTQ students and families is a necessity. What should teacher educators be learning? It is hoped to have content on teacher education programs such as education about sexual

harassment laws and strategies for intervention, how to create and support gay-straight alliance clubs, how to support families with same-sex parents, the inclusion of LGBTQ history in history curriculum, unisex restrooms and support for unique needs of transgender students (Rosiek et al., 2017). These are only a some of the content areas yet to be learned, but until then advocating for this learning will be important. As teachers it is necessary to recognize and not ignore the fact that sexual and homophobic harassment are endemic in schools and have serious consequences for students (Rosiek et al., 2017).

Curriculum

History of why. Homophobia continues to be an issue of fear for many teachers, especially in elementary school (Prettyman, 1997). Many believe it is not an appropriate subject for children and find it difficult to know what is developmentally appropriate. With more and more youth having parents who are LGBTQ, it becomes important in various degrees to make certain this subject is taught, and taught at a younger age. Prettyman (1997), states that elementary school is the right time to discuss LGBTQ issues, children are affected by homophobia and introduced to the subject often before they come to school. A great way to look at this is demonstrated in a quote, “I don’t think talking about gay and lesbian sex with elementary school kids is appropriate-or that they’d really have any interest in hearing about it from their teacher. But talking about people and different communities and biases and discrimination and how that affects people’s lives-I think that is appropriate” (Prettyman, 1997, p.94). This is a good approach for teachers who are struggling with repercussions of teaching to this subject.

Harvey Milk. Before he was assassinated, Harvey Milk helped lead the fight to protect the right for gay men and lesbians to teach in California's schools (Donahue, 2014). It is interesting that with how much Harvey Milk has done for not only LGBTQ people, but those of all diversities, he is not discussed in school curriculum. Harvey Milk not only cared about gay people, but spoke in favor of people who could not speak to it and believed in the diversity of everyone (Donahue, 2014).

Teachers can play an important role not only in social studies, not only in teaching about Harvey Milk, but also by using such information as a way to teach that students are part of a bigger picture of community action of multiple diverse people (Donahue, 2014). Keeping Harvey Milk's notion of hope alive through focusing on working for justice, challenging assumptions about what is "normal", and by providing lesson plans that lead students to take action and preparing them for the difficulties in creating justice, this will provide students with the hope Harvey Milk stood for (Donahue, 2014).

How to teach this. Being that many students never learn about LGBTQ persons throughout their elementary and secondary education, teaching about Harvey Milk can be an important first step, but teaching on a single person in history can have its limitations (Donahue, 2014). Banks has proposed a four level pattern of how to integrate diversity and critical pedagogy (Donahue, 2014). Level one is called the "contribution approach" which presents an uncritical focus on fragmented pieces of culture (Donahue, 2014). Level two, is the additive approach, new content and themes are added to the curriculum without changing the structure of how it is taught (Donahue, 2014). Level three, the transformational approach, the structure of the curriculum changes so students can

understand concepts and issues from multiple perspectives (Donahue, 2014). Level four, or the social action approach, the students are not only learning about issues but are also learning how to take action to solve them (Donahue, 2014).

It has been discovered that curriculum about Harvey Milk at the center of it does present limitations, but also presents opportunities for students' to learn about LGBTQ persons and issues (Donahue, 2014). When teaching about Harvey Milk he is often discussed only in terms of the hero that he is. By focusing on him being a gay hero, there is not complete examination of homophobia or heterosexism (Donahue, 2014). When looking solely at what a person contributes to society, this is called the "contribution approach" or an "about the other" approach, the idea is to connect a person or event to students' lives, contemporary issues, and a deeper understanding of why and how they can create change for equality and justice (Donahue, 2014).

It has been found that most of the educational materials are taught at a level one, and this limits a students opportunity to learn about a wider array of LGBTQ people and issues (Donahue, 2014). A way to use such heroes as Harvey Milk in history in a way to extend beyond a level one, would be to add to the exploration of contemporary LGBTQ issues such as; coming out, bullying, homophobia, and the process of striving for justice and achieving human rights (Donahue, 2014). When working at the contribution approach level one, the idea of normativity is kept in and the day to day reality of homophobia is left out (Donahue, 2014).

One teacher's lesson. The next discussion involves one particular teacher, Janice, and her elementary education curriculum and what makes it great. The idea of this

curriculum is to interrupt heteronormativity and recognize our LGBTQ people (Martino & Potvin, 2014). This particular curriculum is an example of how to use a variety of books to scaffold further instructional opportunities, it is also one of the few found on elementary school LGBTQ curriculum. Within this is to recognize the need for analytical framework when it comes to gender fluidity as well as political issues that meet the needs for those who wish to embrace certain gender norms (Martino & Potvin, 2014). By reflecting on the use of LGBTQ themed texts in the classroom, there is pedagogical potential for disrupting heteronormativity and support of more equitable and diverse forms of gender expression in the elementary school classroom (Martino & Potvin, 2014).

There is a practice of parents requesting that their children be opted out of school during anti-homophobia education (Martino & Potvin, 2014). There are equity policies in place at some schools that do not legally allow students to be withdrawn, but often these policies are blown off (Martino & Potvin, 2014). It has been asserted that religious institutions have given the biggest backlash when it comes to making sure there are negative consequences in terms of living queer (Martino & Potvin, 2014). The particular teacher in this article was aware of the need to protect oneself from the idea of “pushing a gay agenda” and risking the questioning of professional integrity (Martino & Potvin, 2014). The concern was not so much in terms of the job, but wanting to be understood in terms of increased parental surveillance on the teacher’s integrity (Martino & Potvin, 2014).

It was Janice's vision to use LGBTQ storybooks as resources that will introduce children to non-normative representations of sexuality and gender, to create places for questions about heteronormative limits of gendered and sexual normatives (Martino & Potvin, 2014). There was a careful juxtapositioning of a variety of LGBT themed texts in a way that makes sense, rather than a random reading of texts (Martino & Potvin, 2014).

The main way teachers can provide LGBTQ curriculum to elementary school students is in the form teachable moments and Janice focused on such moments as a pedagogical approach in the classroom (Martino & Potvin, 2014). In response to discussing a student using the homophobic remark, "you're so gay," when heard it was used as a teachable moment to have a conversation about definitions of words such as "gay" and if the students knew the meaning (Martino & Potvin, 2014). Then Janice chose to read the book *And Tango Made Three*, a story about 2 male penguins named Roy and Silo who create a family together. The zookeeper gave them an extra egg and they were able to have their own baby penguin named Tango (Richardson & Pornell, 2005).

Another experience involved a boy who was being teased for wearing a pink shirt to school. This was a 2nd grade class where Janice introduced the phrase, "it just is...". So in this circumstance the language used was, "It is just a color." Which then led into a discussion about what students thought about toys, were there girl toys and boy toys? This moved into, "It is just a toy." This helped students to see that "It is just..." It is not a negative aspect of a person. (Martino & Potvin, 2014). These types of teachable moments cement curriculum content and a student's personal biography (Martino & Potvin, 2014).

There was more LGBTQ themed teaching with Janice. *The Day of Pink* is a public school board supported initiative that began from two straight identifying boys bullying a gay boy for wearing a pink shirt. This grew into a national and international anti-homophobic and anti-bullying initiative (Martino & Potvin, 2014). Janice saw this as not only a day, but an opportunity to have a strategic reading of texts leading up to this day. By continually scaffolding and building on the student's understanding about genders and sexualities, the students were not "shocked" with developmentally inappropriate material (Martino & Potvin, 2014). It was a gentle approach, each leading into another with careful reflection of understanding.

One of the books read is titled *It's a George Thing*, a story about a zebra whose friends Peachy the gorilla and Moon the lion were more "boyish boys" who were interested in bodybuilding, but George liked to sing and dance (Bedford, 2008). This book was used to encourage students to think critically about the gender normativity limits that were characterized in this text. Following the reading was an activity that involved presenting students with advertisements of stereotyped toys targeting boys and then girls. This was juxtaposed by disrupting the gendering with representations of girls playing soccer or with trucks, and boys playing with hula hoops or dolls (Martino & Potvin, 2014). This helped guide the students into a discussion around gender identity and expression. In the following section there will be continued discussion on various pieces of LGBTQ literature themes and variations.

Children's Literature

Multicultural inclusion. The numbers of children's and young adult fiction including transgender and genderqueer characters are becoming easier to find, but still the amount is considered very low compared to how many books are published a year (Bittner, Ingrey & Stamper, 2016). The concern with the books that are written is on how the characters are shown in the book, how authentic the characters are, and what can be learned to ensure better representations are created in the future (Bittner et al., 2016). The lack of such books is what has guided the decision to write an LGBTQ themed book as part of a curriculum.

The social identities of race, gender, sexuality, and others are shaped at an early age by way of the socialization process (Logan, Watson, Hood, & Lasswell, 2016). Educators unknowingly, and sometimes knowingly, send the message that some students and families are not equal (Logan, et al., 2016). There have been debates on what is multicultural literature. The definition has been broadened to include books that feature elderly, gays and lesbians, religious minorities, language minorities, people with disabilities, gender and class, and people of color (Logan et al., 2016).

Sims (1983), has categorized literature into three groupings. The first is the Social Conscience text. In these books the intention is to develop empathy, sympathy, and tolerance for LGBTQ children and to encourage readers to become aware of social injustice and how they can make things better (Logan et al., 2016). The next set of books is what is called the Melting Pot texts. In these books there is a hetero-normative approach where they ignore anything that might indicate a character is LGBTQ (Logan et al., 2016). The final works are Culturally Conscious works told from the perspective

of LGBTQ characters and reflect the distinctiveness of the LGBTQ experience and the universal human experience (Logan et al., 2016). It is clear that the type of text and how it is used can vary, but the importance of including LGBTQ literature remains important.

The importance of children's literature in the classroom. For many teachers adding LGBTQ-themed literature can be risky because of fears and lack of professional safety that is associated with raising such controversial topics (Logan et al., 2016). As a teacher delves into reading such books, it is important that educators work within the cognitive, social, and emotional development of the students to make sure they are addressing gender and sexuality diversity at every grade level appropriately (Logan et al., 2016).

It is important for teachers to not just grab any book and start reading it in hopes they are providing adequate LGBTQ curriculum. It is necessary to select literature that is relevant. It is important to ask questions such as: Why read this book? In what way would children read this text? Is it allowed for children to question what they read? How can this book promote multicultural inclusiveness in the classroom? Are there parents and students who may not be ok with this topic? (Logan et al., 2016). It is important that the books are not only being read, but that the literature is also challenging children critically. It is not only about presenting the LGBTQ themes randomly, but to also select LGBTQ-themed literature that promotes literacy, development of language arts and reading skills as well (Logan et al., 2016). The literature should meet literary standards for character development, plausibility of plot, and believability of setting and the importance of theme (Logan et al., 2016). If the book selected meets the criteria of the

teachable moment, curriculum relevance, and literary merit, then the piece of literature has rationale for being read in the classroom (Logan et al., 2016).

It is important that educators engage children in thinking about equitable treatment and the acceptance of others and how this influences their own social identity (Logan et al., 2016). By including literature with themes that bring about acceptance and inclusion, children can thoughtfully be guided in conversations that pertain to similarities and differences, and the rights for equal treatment (Logan et al., 2016). It is helpful to find literature that includes characters that have their distinct gender and sexual orientations as well as their intersections with other aspects of diversity (Logan et al., 2016).

Included in the actual Children's literature that is available is how to use this literature as strategies to teach through scaffolding, sequencing, and recognizing challenges (Bittner et al., 2016). In the following section, pieces of LGBTQ literature will be analyzed further.

Children's literature analysis. In this next section a variety of LGBTQ themed literature will be summarized, limitations discussed, and opportunities for teaching within each of these pieces of text. This will help in developing a piece of curriculum that can be scaffolded, sequenced, and the texts chosen for the curriculum.

When looking at texts to use, it is important to look at the character that signifies LGBTQ and what this character could be teaching. First are books where the LGBTQ characters are the protagonist's parents. In one particular book titled *My Mixed Up Berry Blue Summer*, the protagonist faces homophobia about her family and does not like the woman her mother is going to marry (Gennari, 2012). However, the reasons are more to

do about personality not about gender/sexuality. In this book and others there is more hardship in ways of blended or divorced families, and less about hardship surrounding living with lesbian or gay parents. This book and others like it provide then positive mirrors and windows which may not hold true for many in similar situations (Herman-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2014). In this book the parents are so much like everyone else in the book that their sexuality is barely noticed. The caution with such a book is that it can perpetuate the heteronormative notions that most people are straight, and that LGBTQ people just want to blend in (Herman-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2014).

Another example of literature is when LGBTQ characters are other adults in the lives of the protagonists. This is a good demonstration of children who are connected to gay people through many relationships in their lives (Herman-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2014).

One of the pieces of content analysis research reviewed elementary level books. The books were analyzed by range of characters, demography, sexuality, and stage of sexuality development. It was found that a majority of the books had a relative that was LGBTQ, and a vast majority were humans versus animals. It was found that 85% of the books included a gay or lesbian representation while only 14% represented transgender or transexual characters (Bickford, 2018).

In another analysis of picture books and chapter books involving LGBTQ characters, over 30 books were reviewed, each appropriate for elementary classrooms (Knoblauch, 2016). It is easy to find books with characters of diverse ethnicities, cultures, religions, geography, gender themes, socio-economics, or disabilities. However, there needed to be an intentional search for LGBTQ themed books and they were not as easy to find,

especially in libraries (Knoblauch, 2016). In turn, discussions and analysis of LGBTQ books is relatively non-existent (Knoblauch, 2016).

Children's books are a popular resource to use in curriculum. However, data demonstrates that most of the LGBTQ books have main characters that are children with LGBTQ relatives (Bickford, 2018). The books also tend to represent characters who are comfortable with their sexual identity and this is often not true in contemporary society (Bickford, 2018).

Specific books. The first picture book with a gender nonconforming child appeared in 1972 with *William's Doo* by Charlotte Zolotow. The first book with a non-gendered child character appeared in 1978 with *X: A fabulous child's story* by Lois Gould. The frequency with which picture books focusing on gender nonconforming themes slowed down significantly until the 2000's (Bittner, Ingrey & Stamper, 2016).

The book *10,000 Dresses* is known as the first transgender picture book for children. This book offers a look into the life of a young child who self identifies as a girl, yet the family still identifies him as a boy. Bailey is a young child who likes to wear and dream about dresses. The book also identifies with traditional roles of women's and men's work, and boys' and girls play (Ewert, 2008). As a teacher it is important to ask students what they recognize about gender roles and expressions and what they might see as contradicting the gender norms (Bittner et al., 2014).

In the book *I am Jazz*, Jazz identifies as transgender. Jazz is a child who lives as a stereotypical feminine child. Pink is her favorite color, she wears dresses. Jazz was not born a girl, yet she is more clear in her self naming, claiming she is transgender (Herthel

& Jennings, 2014). I have a girl brain but a boys body (Bittner et al., 2014). A question to ask students would be is there another way to be Jazz? In the book she is limited by the gender norms even as a girl (Bittner et al., 2014).

In the book *My Princess Boy*, the family accepts his nonconformity. Teachers can ask readers to consider if they would accept the Princess Boy, would they play with him, and love him, if they could recognize him as he is while accepting him (Kilodavis, 2009). In the book the protagonist does not have a face to reflect, this could demonstrate that he could possibly be lacking in his identity which could be a common feeling for many youth at certain points in their lives (Bittner et al., 2016).

Summary

Conducting research on the topic of LGBTQ curriculum demonstrated that there is still much to be learned on how to teach this topic authentically and the impacts it has on our LGBTQ students. What was discovered was that it is a necessary part of curriculum and teachers need to pay attention most importantly to their teachable moments. This chapter addressed the policies, the impacts on stakeholders, curriculum and children's literature. All to answer the question: How can I create an LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policies and ethics, and teaches acceptance? In chapter three I will be discussing the methodology used in the creation of this piece of curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

It is just a typical day in class, the students are coming in from recess settling in for independent reading, when the teacher hears a scene of harassment taking place in the corner. Joey is teasing Sam for wearing a skirt, “Boys don’t wear skirts you sissy!” The teacher recognizes the time for a teachable moment, the class quickly gathers to the carpet, the teacher pulls out the book *Being Mila*, and proceeds to read the title, author, and illustrator. The teacher has read books before on a having two moms or two dads, this was another necessary step in teaching to the many diversities of our world. This scenario provides an illustration of how a book about a transgender child, along with a resource guide could be a useful tool for teachers in the classroom.

Introduction

How to teach about LGBTQ topics is a hot button debate in the current educational system. The lack of policies and curriculum along with issues of morals and ethics can bring about fear for teachers in presenting LGBTQ material. The need for resources to guide teachers in LGBTQ curriculum is what started this journey to writing a book as a literary resource.

This chapter discusses the methods used to create a curriculum that will provide guidance through a book as a literary resource. The book will be created with this

question in mind: How can I create an LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policies and ethics, and teaches acceptance? This chapter discusses the school that the book will be used in, the intended audience, the rationale behind writing the book, the research paradigm, the design of the book, the timeline, and the guidelines the book is meant to follow within the curriculum.

The School District

The curriculum will be used in an urban elementary school district in the Upper Midwest. This is a progressive district that supports LGBTQ students with student led GSA's and an equity team that advocates heavily for this issue. It is also one of the few school districts that has a gender inclusion policy already in place. The team involved in Out for Equity advocates for gender equitable practices, programs, and policies, including professional development. The program also provides resources for LGBTQ students and their parents.

For the reasons of support and the amount of advocacy in this district, it is believed that this piece of curriculum will be validated if presented in this district, and in a classroom at any elementary grade level which will be discussed next.

Audience

The audience that is proposed for reading of this book will be urban elementary school students in grades K-5. It is decided that having the book be used for a wide variety of age groups will be the best because, it is meant to be a guide for teachers in discussing LGBTQ issues, or to be a tool to help in curriculum planning. A simple picture book is wonderful no matter the age, and the simplicity with which it will be written will allow

for students to ask their own questions, and for teachers to see what their understanding and interpretations of the text are. The book is meant to be a resource to guide discussions that are appropriate for the specific age level. The teacher resource portion of the book will include ideas on how to approach topics at each grade level. The book can be used as a resource for a broader piece of curriculum, or it can be used for unexpected teachable moments such as in the videot introducing this chapter. It is also meant to become a part of the classroom library for individual reading. The rationale behind this project comes from a personal place and professional experience.

Rationale

All children deserve access to books that are reflective of their culture and serve as self-affirming mirrors of themselves and serve as windows into other lives outside of their own (Smolkin & Young, 2011). The more that is learned from other educators, research on LGBTQ topics, and experienced time in the classroom, the more it becomes evident that there is uncertainty of how and when to teach LGBTQ curriculum. One of the greatest resources teachers have is the classroom library. It seems that the most comfortable thing for a teacher to do when directing a lesson on a topic that may bring about feelings of fear or uncertainty, is to read. With an additional resource guide the teacher has a formula for discussion at their fingertips.

The decision to write a book about a transgender child came from the research demonstrating that few books have been produced through the eyes of a transgender child. Based on an analysis of 60 children's books, DePalma found there was strong representation of gay and lesbian identities, but an exclusion of other aspects of sexual

diversity (DePalma, 2014). Understanding the pain transgender people have to endure throughout school and life, it was important to provide an educational tool that teaches acceptance for LGBTQ youth, transgender students in particular. While researching policies and ethics I discovered areas of policy that may directly influence a transgender child at school. One such concern involves the use of public restrooms. According to The American Academy of Pediatrics, transgender children often refrain from going to the bathroom at all during the school day due to feeling uncomfortable or unsafe (Gitlin, 2018). All of the elementary schools that I have taught in so far have restrooms that separate girls from the boys, thus demonstrating the importance of such a policy. The confusion a transgender child can feel when deciding where to go will be a scene demonstrated in my book *Becoming Mila*. Such research has helped me in designing a book that is authentic. How the book is presented will be important in how the message gets across to students. I will next discuss the research paradigm used to create my project.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm behind this project is the writing of a children's book to be used as a piece of curriculum in a K-5 classroom. The writing of a book is not a simple task and includes some important steps to making the creation appealing. It will be important to pay attention to four of the following steps as the book is designed.

Step one involves the creation of the plot. The plot needs to include a problem that is relevant to a child, and one that needs to be solved (Karl, 1994). It is also necessary that the plot has a clear beginning, middle, and an end (Karl, 1994). The plot in the story

being created will involve a transgender child who is struggling with aspects of acceptance and eventually finds a way to bring those surrounding her to a place of understanding.

Step two involves the creation of characters within the story. It will be important to make certain that the characters appear real to those reading the book, even if the characters are toys or playful animals (Karl, 1994). The characters in this story will include the protagonist who is the transgender child, her dog Buddy whom she confides in, a teacher, a doctor, peers, and family. As the characters are created a word needs to be thought out that describes each of them. This word will dictate their actions, movements, and speech throughout the story (Karl, 1994).

Step three will be the creation of the background. This will be where the story takes place. In this story the background will include home, a car, the doctor's office, and school. In making the backgrounds clear it will be necessary to come up with short descriptions that are clear about the significance of the background to the particular section of the text (Karl, 1994). It must be a background that is realistic to what is happening in the story, it has to make sense (Karl, 1994).

Step four involves thinking about the pattern of the story. Will the story be told in first person, or in third person? (Karl, 1994). This story will be told in the first person so as to bring the reader to the center of the action. Will the story be told in present tense, future tense, or a combination? (Karl, 1994). The book being written will be told as a combination of present and future tense to provide concepts of wishing, and dreaming for the future. A key piece to creating the pattern includes deciding where the story will

begin (Karl, 1994). The story has to begin with action to grab the reader from the start (Karl, 1994). This particular story will start in the depths of confusion of a transgender child, assuming that the students have already been introduced to concepts of homosexuality and are ready to be presented with this topic.

The development of the story would not be complete without the illustrations that will expand what the text is saying. This story will be written and illustrated by the same person so the conversation between author and illustrator will not have to be a focus. However, there will be other dimensions to consider as the illustrations are being created. It will be necessary to focus on the ideas of the pictures as the text is being written, it is important to remember to demonstrate the need for a picture for variety within the story (Karl, 1994). The pictures and the text on each page will need to agree with each other for there to be clarity in the story (Karl, 1994). The illustrations should represent the action taking place as well as extend what the text says (Karl, 1994). The story should avoid too much text between scenes, usually no more than 100 words per page (Karl, 1994).

Along with the key steps to creating an appealing story, there are basic elements to be considered in what a children's story format looks like. The average children's book is 32 pages in length, including the introductory pages (Karl, 1994). This will demand using the shortest format of description throughout the text, the text should not be too wordy (Karl, 1994). It is also suggested that a rough draft is written and then set aside for a week or more before coming back to it (Karl, 1994). With the short time given to complete this project, the plan is to work on the teacher resource guide during this time

frame so as not to lose ground. The next section will discuss the design used to create the accompanying teacher resource guide.

Design

“To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you’re going, so that you better understand where you are now, so that the steps you take are always in the right direction” (Covey, 1989, p.89).

The design method I chose to use is the Understanding by Design, or UbD method. The purpose of this design is for students to understand the material presented rather than simply taking in the information for recall (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). This will be important because the purpose of the literary resource chosen is for teaching acceptance and diversity. The goal in mind is for students to be able to walk in the world knowledgeable and respecting of the many diversities of people that surround them.

I will be using the UbD design method to effectively create the teacher resource guide that corresponds with the book that is written. The UbD design template is done in stages, this section will layout the teacher resource guide portion of the project as it pertains to each stage of design.

Stage One identifies desired results, the broad areas of learning, learning outcomes, and enduring understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The desired result to be gained from this resource will be for students to learn more about the LGBTQ community by learning about a transgender child. The broader area of learning comes with the goal of expanding knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the diverse world they live in.

The hope is for students to learn through a variety of teachings on a variety of cultures, genders, and people in the community where they live. This will help them to deepen their understanding, critical thinking, and ability to have discussions and ask questions effectively.

In Stage Two students will have activities that will serve as assessments. The UbD design looks at what students should accomplish, the role students will take, the relevant audience, the context or challenge, performance, and standards for success (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The piece of curriculum is being produced to teach students how to communicate effectively by asking questions and having discussions that will serve to deepen understanding. In this project students will work as a class while reading the book, they will pair share ideas throughout the reading, and will work in groups to complete an activity pertaining to the book. This project will be designed with the teacher resource guide to demonstrate grade level appropriate questions for discussion as well as juxtaposing activities. This will allow the book to be used for the audience of K-5 students.

The challenge will be to ensure dialogue is flowing in a respectful manner without judgement of the topic at hand. The hope is that students will be learning the impacts negative comments have on others, allowing the development of appropriate language.

One of the suggested activities in the teacher resource guide will be to have students divide into groups to create a poster relevant to the book that was read. This will be used as an assessment of understanding. A rubric will be provided for knowledge of performance criteria, and each student will use a different color marker on the poster to

represent their individual as well as group work. Students will complete each day with a journal reflection assignment to allow processing time as well as to provide their current level of understanding. At the end of the lesson students will be able to anonymously write questions they may still have on a slip of paper, and put it in a question box. This will allow the discussion to continue in further lessons and allow those students not comfortable with group dynamics to participate in a safe way.

Stage Three is the framework for designing the curriculum (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). This will include where the class is headed, and how students will be engaged at the beginning of the lesson, instructional approaches, content and perspective adaptive dimension, (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Where the class is headed, and where they have been will be important in how the resource is presented. This book should be read after other LGBTQ topics such as two moms, or two dads, gay, and lesbian topics have been addressed. The concept of transgender can be harder for students to understand if they have not first been introduced to other LGBTQ information.

To introduce the lesson on transgender people, the book that is created will be read to engage students in new vocabulary, as well as an engaging story to get them thinking. The teacher resource guide will include relevant vocabulary to review, as well as new vocabulary to introduce. Throughout the reading there will be pair shares, the poster creation will be done in groups, and the journal reflection will be individual. This allows for a variety of instructional methods.

When discussing content and perspectives the question is: Have I nurtured and promoted diversity while honoring each child's identity? (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). I

have learned from conversations with friends who identify as transgender, that it is common as a child to desire to dress as the opposite gender. This is often not accepted by members of the family, peers at school, or the society in which they live. It will be important to include this reality in the book to demonstrate what transgender children experience. Another common discussion that comes up involves the discomfort of being separated into boy and girl groups in school, and how this causes confusion for children who do not identify as a specific gender, or identify as the opposite gender. Such conversations will help shape the book in hopes of teaching each child in the classroom what it authentically feels like to grow up as a transgender child. The teacher resource guide will have a variety of suggestions for discussion that are developmentally appropriate for each grade level. This will allow for the adaptive dimension piece in the UbD design by addressing the realities of a transgender child.

Timeline

The planned timeline and layout of the project will begin two weeks following the end of Spring semester. This will allow time to take a step back and come back with a fresh perspective. There will be interviews set up with two members of the transgender community, as well as a parent of a transgender child. This will give me authentic information to use as the book is created. This will take a week to gather this information.

The UbD design is a backward design. Once the information is gathered the first step will be to develop the guiding questions and discussions that are to be promoted by the book. During the month of July the book will be written with the guided questions in

mind. The month of August will be used to illustrate the book as well as complete the Chapter Four reflection. It will be necessary to keep the Common Core Standards in mind as the project is being completed. Below the guidelines for each grade level are included.

Guidelines

While creating this book there can be a variety of common core standards followed depending on the grade level taught. Included here are the common core standards for English Language Literacy for the K-5 grade levels.

Minnesota Common Core Standards

Kindergarten Students

0.1.1.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

0.1.3.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

0.1.4.4 Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

Grade 1 Students

1.1.1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text

1.1.2.2 Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.

1.1.3.3 Describe characters, setting, and major events in a story, using key details.

1.1.4.4 Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.

Grade 2 Students

2.1.1.1 Ask and answer such questions as, *who, what, where, when, why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

2.1.3.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

2.1.7.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, settings, or plot.

Grade 3 Students

3.1.1.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

3.1.3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.)

3.1.4.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language, including figurative language such as similes.

Grade 4 Students

4.1.1.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

4.1.2.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, summarize the text.

4.1.3.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

4.1.4.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., *Herculean*).

Grade 5 Students

5.1.1.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

5.1.2.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

5.1.4.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the school, the audience, as well as explaining the rationale behind the specific piece of curriculum that will be created, the rationale behind the project, the research paradigm used, the design of the book, the timeline, and the guidelines to follow. All with the focus of answering the question: How can I create an LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policies and ethics, and teaches acceptance? The following chapter will include a reflection on creating the book that was written to address this guiding question.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of my project was to provide a piece of curriculum that addresses the LGBTQ topic. The book and teacher resource guide I created is meant to be used in answering my question of: How can I create an LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policy and ethics, and teaches acceptance? The book was written about a transgender child since there are few books that provide this. The Teacher Resource guide has discussion questions, activities, as well as vocabulary to review and introduce to expand on the book.

In this chapter I will provide what my major learnings have been as I created my project. The areas of knowledge I will focus on will include; learning what LGBTQ curriculum already exists, how to write a children's book, and how to connect UbD in the creation of my teacher resource guide. I will also discuss the pieces of literature that I learned the most from and what implications they had on the creation of my project. Next, I will discuss the implications of my project to the teaching profession, how the project can be used and by whom, and limitations I encountered. Finally, I will look at the future goals of my project, further questions I have, and where research can continue.

Major Learnings

As I conducted research for the creation of my project, and during the production phase, I encountered many new understandings of the LGBTQ culture and curriculum. The major learnings that took place for me were both personal and professional and included ; the resources that are already available to the LGBTQ community, the process of writing a children's book, and the use of UbD as a connection to creating my teacher resource guide.

The resources available to the LGBTQ community. While conducting my research I was able to dig deeper into my already existing knowledge of resources available to the LGBTQ community and the school district for which I created my project for. I had already had the opportunity to develop a GSA in a school I worked in, and had the information I gleaned from this experience in my toolbox.

One of the resources I had the opportunity to discover more about was GLSEN (The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network). I was able to take the time to learn more about the organization and the resources they provide. The website provides resources for schools for example, how to start a GSA support group. Information on policies and laws being passed around the United States such as; the "No Promo Homo" Research Brief. This briefing discusses the differences between states with "no promo homo" laws (laws that prohibit the promotion of homosexuality), and those states that do not have such laws. There are also resources for educators such as; LGBT inclusive curriculum and a Safe Space Kit. A Safe Space Kit is designed to help create a safe space for LGBTQ youth in schools. This includes strategies that will teach anti-LGBTQ bias and advocate for change. There is also a link to research GLSEN has or continues to

participate in, research that is used to provide facts about what is really going on in U.S. Schools. Overall I found this website not only useful in providing information for my project, but also an impactful resource for myself personally and professionally as a whole.

Writing a children's book. As I conducted my research I decided that the piece of curriculum I wanted to create included a book. I have always enjoyed writing, and have had the idea of writing a children's book someday. I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to delve into this challenge. What I already knew was that I would write a book about a transgender child for elementary school students, and along with this I would create a teacher resource guide to expand on the book. What I did not have much if any knowledge about was how to actually write a children's book. I discovered that the process involved many more steps than I anticipated. For example; listing out each character and a description of who each character was and how they would act. I also had to list plot ideas, setting details, and language patterns I desired to use. Once I did this I had to begin writing of the book each day, allowing for process time. I also had to consider the illustrations and how they would compliment as well as expand on the text. I had not thought about the expansion piece prior to starting my project so this was new information to take into my project. I knew this would be a huge undertaking in a short amount of time but I also knew that this was the project I was meant to do. I am not sure I could have anticipated the challenges that would come throughout each section of my project. For example; how often I would get writers block and have to move onto another piece of my project unexpectedly to allow for things to settle before returning. I

definitely learned more about the writing process, and about myself personally and professionally throughout this experience.

The UbD connection. The last example of a major learning I experienced was in how to connect the UbD (Understanding by Design) design to the creation of my teacher resource guide. This was a completely new set of tools for me that will impact my future professionally as I will be able to use this while creating other pieces of curriculum moving forward. The stages provided by this design method provided a guide for me in the creation of my teacher resource guide. Teaching students to understand the material that is presented rather than simply being able to recall the information.

Stage one guided the path for expanding knowledge, and acceptance of their diverse world they live in through the reading of a book about a transgender child. The key is how the discussion and expansion activities are presented to provide the opportunity for critical thinking that pushes for deeper understanding.

Stage two allowed me to focus on how teachers would assess a student's knowledge of the literature and the transgender community as well as making certain the activities were developmentally appropriate for each grade level.

Stage three guided the methods of instruction that would be helpful in extending understanding of the text. This stage also helped in deciding the review and new vocabulary that was necessary to understanding the text.

Stage four focuses on the adaptive dimension aspect. It was important in how I shaped developmentally appropriate discussions and activities in extension of the text. It

guided the common difficulties transgender people face and how to best discuss these struggles. This is important in providing authenticity to the curriculum I created.

As a whole I had many take aways throughout the journey to the completion of my project. I only include resources, how to write a children's book, and using the UbD design in this section but the entire process brought impactful moments. In the next section I will choose some of the most helpful pieces of literature I found while conducting research for my project.

Overview of Literature Review

As I conducted my research there were pieces of literature that I found more impactful than others.

Martin & Potvin (2014). First, I found the article by Martin & Potvin to be especially helpful in demonstrating how literature can be used in the classroom. The review of how one successful teacher used literature for LGBTQ discussions taught me how to use LGBTQ literature appropriately in the classroom. She taught me ways to scaffold LGBTQ curriculum further through the use of books, especially through teachable moments. Her ability to draw on experiences in the classroom to guide her teaching and how she did this. Her ability to use LGBTQ curriculum while creating a natural flow was an inspiration for me in bringing in my piece of curriculum as well as for my future as a teacher.

Logan (2016). In Logan's article I learned about Sim's categorization of literature. The categories taught me how I desire the characters in my book to be represented and the importance of extending beyond the text to create a culturally conscious work that

reflects the experience of the LGBTQ characters and the universal experience of all. I also liked the questions Logan encouraged teachers to ask before reading a book. Questions such as: Why read this book? In what way would children read this text? How can this book promote multicultural inclusiveness in the classroom? Such questions helped guide the writing of my book to ensure the message it conveys is the one I desired and answered such questions the way I wished. The questions also helped guide the creation of my teacher resource guide. I was able to consider the questions as I created some of my own for extended discussion about my book.

Herman-Wilmarth & Ryan (2014). Finally, the article by Wilmarth & Ryan taught me how characters in books are presented and what can be learned from each character. It helped me in deciding how to present authentic material, solving a problem but still showing that not all problems are solved. Life is not fixed just because you are accepted by your family as a transgender child, there are still difficulties that remain. It is important to demonstrate windows and mirrors for students that are authentic to the reality life brings while presenting positive aspects of learning from such experiences.

Broader Implications

I see my project as a starting point for LGBTQ curriculum development and implementation. The hope is by providing a guiding resource, decision makers will see the benefits of this in teaching acceptance of a broader range of diversities.

Benefits. The benefits of this project to my profession is teaching to the acceptance of others who are different from us. I think it is also important to our LGBTQ youth, for them to be able to see themselves in our teachings. It will be important to our schools to

provide curriculum such as this so that we can help prevent bullying inside and outside of school. This will continue to expand to the community as a whole.

Limitations. One of the limitations I encountered while creating my project was the knowledge that no matter how authentic and how much research I conducted, there would be those that will not agree with teaching LGBTQ curriculum. This will be something I will have to consider as I propose the teaching of my particular project in a school. I will have to prepare to state my case with the proper information I have learned about the positive impacts such a curriculum would have for LGBTQ students. Keeping the limitations in mind can help me to face adversity in a more prepared fashion.

Curriculum use. I plan to utilize this project in my classroom once I have my own classroom. I believe it will be an impactful resource that can safely be used without offending the masses. I also hope to continue the editing process in hopes of eventually having my book published. I plan to make this resource known once it is published by marketing it to my school district, on social media, and in board meetings.

Future Research

Where I see this project going for future researchers, is the creation of a variety of LGBTQ curriculum options, and most importantly how to implement this curriculum into the schools. I would recommend future researchers to use resources such as GLSEN to stay current on what has been developed and where policies and current resources stand. I found the GLSEN website to be a helpful resource for multiple avenues of research.

Summary

Chapter four provided a reflection into the creation process of my completed project. I included my major learnings of resource knowledge, how to write a children's book, and the connection between UbD design and creation of the teacher resource guide. I also discussed the pieces of literature that I found the most impactful to the creation of my project. I provided the broader implications of the project including benefits to the teaching profession as well as limitations. I included how the project can be used and by who, as well as where the project can be found. Finally, I looked at the future goals and questions for aspects of my project moving forward.

The goal of my project was to provide a piece of curriculum that answered the question of: How can I create an LGBTQ curriculum that is authentic, follows policies and ethics, and teaches acceptance? I look forward to continuing the journey of learning and implementation of my piece of curriculum.

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