

Being a Safe Place for LGBTQ Students

“Welcoming schools are essential for the well-being of our LGBTQ students.”



[Link to article](#)

Recently, I had a student share with me that she is transgender, that her preference was to be called Grayson, and her pronoun preference was he/him. This is not the first time I have encountered this in my life, but it is the first time as a teacher at Agora. While I already had this student's best interests at heart, it has become my personal mission to make sure he feels supported and welcome by me. When this assignment came up, I knew exactly what I wanted to look further into.

The article I read explored the ways that schools support LGBTQ youth and the benefits of certain factors for this community of students. Through the article, I learned about the importance of key supportive adults in school, the presence of GSAs and the need for more professional development across all areas to support our LGBTQ youth.

It is a sobering reality that LGBTQ youth have statistically higher suicide attempts, depression and substance abuse. With students generally spending 8 hours a day, 180 days a year in school, schools have the ability to be a place of safety or a place of negativity. The article discussed the strong connection between LGBTQ having strong adult support at school and a decrease of these sobering factors. Teachers and school personnel have the ability to greatly impact the lives of LGBTQ youth, simply by providing a safe place for students to be. Strong adult role models are an important part of LGBTQ feeling safe in school.

Additionally, the article highlighted the positive impact that Gay-Straight Alliances have within the school. Roughly 37% of US high schools currently have a GSA, and within those high schools there are statistically fewer health and academic concerns. LGBTQ youth involved in GSAs also have a large range of benefits from self-esteem to a sense of community and empowerment. When schools do not have a GSA present, students feel a greater sense of isolation, experience bullying more often and do not have a sense of community. Providing and promoting a welcoming GSA is a crucial way to help LGBTQ feel supported in school.

There is also an ongoing need for further professional development in LGBTQ topics and teaching to the LGBTQ community. Schools need to invest energy and time into this, because it is essential to provide LGBTQ students with best practice. As educators, we spend a lot of time professionally developing curriculum, planning, assessment. It is just as important (and I would argue MORE important) that we explore this topic as schools yearly as part of our professional development.

Certainly this article reiterated to me the importance that I provide a safe, welcoming and stable environment for Grayson, and to all of my students. It reinforced that I have much more to learn and develop professionally in order to be more knowledgeable about this topic. As I continue on in my career at Agora, I will continue to teach LGBTQ students. It is essential to me that they know they have an ally in me, and that I will always support them, 100%, no questions asked. I will continue to read, research and grow to better understand my role as teacher in supporting this essential community of children in our school community.

