

**Affirming Library Practices for LGBTQIA+ Kids in School
Libraries**

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>> HEATHER HORNOR: Hello, everybody. Thank you so much for attending our session on Affirming Library Practices for LGBTQIA+ Kids in School Libraries. We are so sorry that we couldn't attend with you in New Orleans. It kind of broke our hearts a little bit, but we are incredibly glad that we do get to do this on demand session for Live Learn X 2023. So, we're going to go ahead and get it started. You will notice there is a bitly here at the top. This is on every slide. But if you would like to follow along and be able to click on all of the resources and have access to those resources, you'll want to go ahead and get this bit.ly.

Okay. So, my name is Heather Hornor. I am a library coordinator in the North Texas area. Here is my email, here is my Twitter handle, and here is my Instagram handle. I would love to follow you. And if you want to follow me, that's also fine. But I mostly put these here for contact in case you have any follow-up questions. Whenever we present on this topic, we want to make sure that we are as available as possible, so that when you do have questions or want a thought partner or have concerns that you can contact us. I will give you a little bit of a heads-up that I do protect both my Twitter and my Instagram accounts, so you'll have to wait until I approve it, but I will approve you, especially when I see that you're a librarian. But you're always welcome to email me as well.

Next, I have my fabulous, fabulous colleagues. I'm going to go ahead and let them introduce themselves.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: Hello. I am Mahoganie Gaston. And like Heather said, I'm very disappointed I can't be in New Orleans. I love New Orleans, so I'm sad I can't get any beignets with powder everywhere or a really good po' boy, but we're here,

cold, in Texas. Yeah! So, I am a coordinator that works with LGBTQ+ students in the DFW area. My personal Twitter and email address is there, and my Instagram handle is the same as my Twitter. But I hope - I have to give a disclaimer. I hope you're not attending this session if you're not a safe and affirming person for students. So, if you have any questions, concerns, or you just want to know how to navigate something after this session, please reach out to me on social media. Maybe a little slow to respond, but I will get back to you.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: That's me. Hi. I'm Camille Stafford. I am a high school librarian and an equity, diversity, and inclusion trainer in Dallas as well, in the DFW area. I went ahead and put my Twitter on there. That's the easiest way to reach me. I do answer direct messages. So, if you have any questions, I will be available there.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Okay. So, I'm going to do our learning commitments. The first one is this is a safe space and an affirming space without judgement and harm, as Mahoganie mentioned a second ago. We respect that we are all in various stages of learning and allyship, so we like to give grace, and we are all here for kids, which is obviously everyone's why, I hope.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: Okay. So, the why. I just want to kind of set the tone. These are my awesome, awesome former GSA students, and we'll talk about what GSAs are in a moment. But these are my former high school students that I served as a librarian, but I also served as their GSA sponsor. They all gave me permission to share their pictures today. And many of them were officers in our GSA, so they served as president, treasurer, secretary, VP. And, really, the reason why I wanted to throw their pictures up here, besides it just making me smile and making me feel so, so happy, is because they're all successful young adults, some of them are going to college, some of them are working, some of them are studying to be teachers right now, and they want to be able to give back to the public education system because they had a great experience. But mostly, the why of these wonderful human beings is that they helped make sure that the library was a safe and affirming place for our LGBTQIA+ kids. I could not have done it without them and without their advocacy.

And on top of that, I am a cis-het individual, and they were the kindest, kindest people who really helped me understand what it meant to be a true ally. Being an ally is not something, I have come to learn, is not something that you gift yourself. It

is something that is gifted to you. And so, I used to claim that I was an ally, but because of these now young adults, I realize that was something I had to earn. And because of them, they really, really helped make sure that I stayed true to my learning journey on how to be a true advocate and ally as a cis-het individual.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: And I want to add to that, actually. I could have put up 100 pictures as well. Like we truly ran out of room on the slide. I think we all have these kids that help us be better leaders, better teachers, better educators, and better allies, and I could tell you ten stories right off the top of my head of kids that have made me better at what I do as well. I love that you shared that, Heather. Thank you.

Okay. So, we're going to talk a little bit about the terminology, the alphabet of it all. A lot of these definitions have been adapted from different resource guides and glossaries and things that these organizations put out that are focused on LGBTQIA equality and, you know, kind of advocacy and things like that, so please understand that this is not the end all be all of what all of these things are and understand that every gender identity and every sexuality is on a spectrum, so a lot of these things are going to seem very straightforward, but depending on the human being that you are associating with, these definitions could change and shift and move back and forth. So, just keep that in mind as we go forward.

So, we're just going to go through the alphabet, the LGBTQIA+. A lot of people ask why so many letters? Well, I always like to tell people that it is because there is a person attached to every single one of those letters. And in our case, there are students and young adults attached to those letters, and it's really important that we understand who they are and we embrace that they're trying to find some sort of, you know, community through these definitions and do our best to understand them as we go along and learn more.

Okay. So, the L and the G are the ones we've probably all heard of, lesbian and gay. Those are people whose primary sexual and affectational orientation - affectional - affectional orientation - sorry - is toward people of the same gender. Pretty straightforward. That is a sexuality.

The B is bisexual, a person whose primary orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or toward people regardless of their gender. Sometimes you'll see this coupled

with pansexual, which I think is on a slide a little bit later, and we'll talk a little bit about that, too.

The T is for transgender. It's used often as an umbrella term and is frequently abbreviated to trans. Trans describes a wide range of identities, as I mentioned before, and experiences of people whose gender identity and/or their expression differs from the conventional expectations based on their assigned sex at birth. So, again, that's sort of one of those things that's going to change and move around depending on the person that we're talking to.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: And before I go to the next slide for our viewers, I did go ahead and link on these arrows. This will take you straight to a resource slide at the end in case you wanted to check that out while you're watching this.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Thank you. I forgot that that's what those did.

Okay. So, the Q. This is a big one, and this is one that you notice how the paragraph is very large. It's hard for us to kind of like squish this one down. But I like to define this as queer, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming. In a super basic sense, it's everyone who is not heterosexual and/or cisgender. This can include people who don't believe in gender expression or subscribe to them, or the roles expected of them societally based on their assigned sex at birth. Sometimes these people embrace the whole spectrum of gender expression, so they're nonbinary or nonconforming. It just kind of goes across the gamut, right? One thing to note is that the word queer was originally or traditionally used as a slur against people in this community. So, it is still considered a slur in some parts of the community, so the best rule of thumb is that you shouldn't be using that word if you do not directly identify this way. That's - that's obviously going to change. That's my opinion. That's what I teach people. But it's not necessarily everyone's belief system, so it's just something to be careful with.

Okay. So, the I is intersex. This is someone who, for a variety of reasons, has anatomy that does not match the typical definitions of the female or male sex. Some people who are intersex may identify with the gender assigned to them at birth, but others may not. So, there was a word that we used to use for this that we don't use anymore because it's actually really

offensive, but this is a, you know, this is a physical condition that also applies to people's gender expression.

And then the A is asexual. And again, the asexual spectrum is massive. There are a lot of people on different varying sides of the asexual spectrum. We could do a whole presentation just on that. So, this is, again, very simplified. This is someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction. They experience attraction but doesn't feel the need to act on it or experiences sexual attraction differently depending on a bunch of different variables. So, you see how vague that can be. Many people who are asexual still identify with a specific romantic orientation. So, an asexual person could still consider themselves to be gay or a lesbian. And please understand, too, that this acronym includes both gender identities and sexualities, and those are two very different things. We can go ahead and go to the next slide.

Okay. So, here's a couple of other terms. Aromantic. This is part of the A spectrum. This is having little or no attraction to others. Pansexual I mentioned earlier. Sometimes used in tandem with bisexual. Depending on who you ask, some people think one is better than the other. It just depends on how people identify. And sometimes people's identities change. I identified as bisexual most of my life, and as I got more information and realized kind of like what the terminology really meant. I now identify as pansexual. So, it just depends on the individual.

Cisgender is a gender identity or expression that is considered traditional, a traditional match to the person's assigned sex at birth. As Heather mentioned earlier, she said she was cis-het. That is cisgender. And it is not a slur, contrary to what some people like to talk about. It is just a definition of who you are. I was born - my assigned sex at birth was female. I identify as female. I am cisgender. It's very simple.

Allyship. We talked about this a little bit. Action of working to end oppression through the support of, and as an advocate with and for, a group other than one's own. In this case, we are talking about the LGBTQIA+ community, but there are a lot of places that you can ally. And I will stop talking in a second, but I do want to say one thing. I like to say this all the time, that the ally is an action word. So, if you really want to be an ally, it has to come with the backing of your action and your choices and your advocacy. And I love thinking

about it that way, and that's made me a stronger advocate in a lot of cases in my own life. So, just a side note. We can move on.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Oh, this is still me. Okay. All right. Here we go. I mentioned this a minute ago. So, gender identity and sexual orientation. These are two different things. So, gender identity is how you see yourself, your innermost concept of yourself as male, female, both, neither. Like I said, it's a big spectrum. It will - it's how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth. You'll hear me differentiate between those things a lot. Your sex assigned at birth and your gender identity are not the same thing. Well, depends on who you are, but those two things are separate. So, sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. That's - think about it this way, gender identity is who you are, sexual orientation is who you love or who you want to spend your time with.

Expression - gender expression is how your outermost appearance matches your gender identity through your behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, and it may or may not conform to traditionally held ideas about what masculine or feminine are supposed to be. And a gender transition is when someone strives to more closely align their internal knowledge of their gender identity with their outward appearance. That might mean that they start dressing differently, using names and pronouns, or being socially recognized as another gender officially by friends, family, coworkers, whatever. Some people undergo physical transformations in which they may modify their bodies through medical interventions, but that is not always the case. And again, always going to depend on the human standing in front of you, so we need to know that these things are definitions with a lot of wiggle room because people are messy and chaotic and everybody is different.

Oh, okay. So, regarding terminology or anything that we've said so far, please go ahead and go to our Padlet. We have a little QR code you can scan or you can click on the link that Heather is demonstrating. And here's our Padlet, and it's by section, so you guys can ask questions specifically and we'll be checking back to answer those as we get them.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: And just as a quick aside, if you can look at the instructions here, we want you to put your questions, your comments, your concerns. And so, if you already see

something that's just like yours, you can just like it. And being true to our learning commitments, we just ask that your questions, concerns, and comments are respectful and inclusive as you put them down. Again, we wholeheartedly embrace all learning, even if you're at the very, very beginning of your learning, but we're just asking that you be respectful and inclusive in your questions.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: M-hmm.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: My favorite part, data. So, we're going to talk about the numbers. And even though there are people with heartwarming stories and sometimes heartbreaking stories behind the numbers, when you're working with school districts or places where money is attached, they want to see the data, so numbers are very important.

So, how are students doing across the U.S.? If you're not familiar with GLSEN, sorry, you're doing yourself a very big disservice. After this presentation, go to our resources, click on GLSEN, learn about them. But they're a national organization, and they try to be very intentional on collecting data on how LGBTQ students are being affected across the U.S. As we know, the U.S. is huge, 50 states and some territories, so things aren't the same as they are in California or New York as they may be here in Texas or Mississippi or Louisiana where you are right now, so it's really important for us to see where each state is and even how we're progressing or digressing over time.

And so, GLSEN does, like I said, these national comment surveys where students do self-report. And so, 81.8% of LGBTQ+ students in their survey reported feeling unsafe in school. Yeah. That's almost 100%. That is sad when it's 2023 and we have 81.8% of students who don't feel safe at school. But let me stop right there. So, GLSEN surveys are normally two to three years behind. So, I believe the last one was in 2021, so there should be a survey coming out in the next couple of years. But still, the number is way too high. And 58.0% of students reported hearing homophobic remarks from their teachers, other school staff, and 72% of those students reported hearing negative remarks about gender expression from teachers or other school staff. In my opinion, anything over 15% is way too high. When you start reaching past 50%, it's easier for that negative space for students to get closer to 100% than it is 0%. 76.1 experienced in-person verbal harassment specifically based around their sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity at some point during the school year, and 60.7 of those

students were verbally harassed based on their sexual orientation or gender expression. Oftentimes, what we see also is students are seeing harsher discipline when they are part of the LGBTQ community. And they could be reacting to someone making a homophobic remark to them, as we see the data shows. It's happening in front of a teacher or a staff member is doing it. If it's a staff member, they can't react. You know what the reaction is going to be if it's a staff member. The student is always going to be in the wrong, unfortunately. And then if it's another student, they can discipline them. But oftentimes, the person who was the aggressor in the situation will not get disciplined and the student who was being attacked gets disciplined because whoever is the disciplinary person has their own biases against the LGBTQ+ community. So, keep that in mind also when you're reading this data. Next slide, please.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: Do you want to do this last bullet point here?

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: Oh, sorry. I didn't even - thank you. Oh, I guess this is what I was kind of talking about. Okay, sorry.

Only one-tenth of LGBTQ+ students reported that school staff intervened most of the time or always when overhearing homophobic remarks. And so, I just gave you all a really good scenario. And then less than one-tenth of those students reported that school staff intervened most of the time or always when overhearing negative remarks about gender expression. And then one more scenario. I also have had staff members who have reached out to me when it comes to public displays of affection. If it was two - they would call and say, you know, there are two girls who were holding hands. I feel like I should call their parents. My response is always, well, if it was a boy and a girl, would you call their parents? And there's normally silence. And so, no, the discipline has to be the same across the board.

And so, more data for you. So, a 2022 Gallup Poll. If you're not familiar with Gallup, again, please go check out these resources. I don't know where that accent just came from. It's really important when you see national data to start thinking how you can be - and I use the word intentional a lot, because when you're working, especially with youth, you need to be intentional. But when you're seeing this big picture data, start thinking of what you can do to make data specific on a smaller scale. What are the numbers in your district? What are the

numbers on the campus that you're on? How can you change those numbers to be more respective of LGBTQ students and staff?

And so, according to Gallup, 7.1 of American adults identify as LGBTQIA+. And again, this is all self-reporting. And 20.8 of Gen Z adults born between 1997 and 2003 - oh, my gosh, that makes me feel so old - identify as LGBTQIA+.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: And you know what I find really interesting about this Gallup Poll when you compare it to previous years, and I highly encourage all of you to compare it to previous years, okay, so this is Gen Z, they are adults, and Alpha is right behind them. So, if we see this many Gen Z adults who are reporting themselves as LGBTQIA+, you can imagine what Gen Alpha may be because the numbers, especially when you go back in these Gallup Polls, and they do do this every single year, the numbers are just going up.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: And I imagine the numbers are probably higher, like you said, but, you know, where - you also need to think about where - where the survey is being located, like how are the youth getting access to these surveys. So, be intentional about that. When I do surveys for me, we do them in a Google form, completely anonymous. The only information we ask is school, so if there is an issue, we can go back at a later date and see if there's been numerous issues reported at that campus. But just lost my train of thought. We do it Google so students can access it, you know, scan the QR code, or they get the link from their GSA sponsor or a teacher or the librarian, and so then they can do the survey in their own personal space, on their own personal time, where they can give us true vulnerable information and results that they may want to share. So, really be mindful of that whenever you get data, how will students be able to access it, and when will they be able to access it in a safe space.

And so, health statistics. We know COVID was hard. It was hard for everyone. We're still dealing with the aftermath of COVID, if we're past COVID, whatever is wrong of it. But when you think about LGBTQIA+ students, you have to think about, one, they were already dealing with anxiety and depression pre-COVID, and then you put them in COVID where school and their librarian, the lady in the cafeteria, the one who checks them in in the front office, that was their safe space, that was their safe people, and they were isolated for almost two years, and then you come back to school and thrown into where everyone,

including adults, are trying to readjust to the world, we're going to see higher numbers.

So, 73% of youth, LGBTQ youth, experience anxiety, 58% experience depression. This is information from the Trevor Project. Again, another amazing national organization. You'll see more details about them later, but they do have online mental health services the students can access. They're completely confidential. So, one, please check out all these resources we're giving you. And then 63% feel sad or hopeless. I can say for myself, I know over the past year and a half, I've had more, you know, teachers, more counselors who've reached out because students were coming to them because they were feeling anxiety and depression and they wanted help. One, it's sad that our numbers are higher, but at the same time, it's also a plus that we have LGBTQ students who are going to those that they trust and who are getting help before we get to the physical harm or suicide.

So, 36% of LGBTQ and 37% of trans or nonbinary youth experience threat of physical harm or harm due to their gender orientation. And we all know if that's at school, at home, sometimes it can be both, sometimes it can be one or the other, but we know this is the data that they are letting us know about. If it's at school, we'll talk about it later, there are laws to protect students. If it's at home, please, please try to get that student out of that situation. I don't think we talked about this, but one thing, you know, we never want to do is out a student so that they're sent home to a harmful situation where they can be physically, mentally abused or hurt themselves. Seventy-three percent of LGBTQ youth and 71% of trans and nonbinary youth experience discrimination due to their gender and orientation. Again, that could be school, that could be their employer. It wasn't specific. But one thing that I try to do is let students know, one, make their school safe, but, you know, when you're going to, you know, they're at an age, you know, if they're high school students where they could be looking for employment, and so helping them find those employers that are safe and affirming, looking at colleges that are safe and affirming, you know. If those colleges have GSAs, helping those students get connected to the GSAs and knowing that they're equipped, so whenever they're in that situation, that they have people that they can turn to. And then 33% of LGBTQIA youth have been bullied. Bullying is something I take extremely seriously. When it's reported to me, I don't hesitate to rectify the situation because all students, regardless of their gender

identity, sexual orientation, they have a right to have - be as safe on campus as any other student.

Suicide. Forth-five percent of LGBTQ youth reported feeling suicidal in 2022. I should have checked beforehand. I'm just going to assume that the number is higher post-COVID than it was pre-COVID. And like I said, isolation. And, unfortunately, the cultural/political climate also played an effect into that. We may think that students don't notice what's going on, but they are fully aware of current events and how things are affecting them. So, always I'm on the side, you know, when I have someone who is like people are trying to push an agenda or blah, blah, blah, I always tell them I'd rather be on the side of we did something that when a student was feeling suicidal, that they reached out to us to get help instead of us being on the side of we're having to comfort a parent because their child tried to take their life. We're the adults in the situation. A student isn't here to make us feel better about themselves. Forty-eight percent of LGBTQIA+ youth reported feeling suicidal. Again, that number is increasing and, you know, we have to do a better job of making students feel safe on school. We have to do a better job of educating our school staff on policies and laws to protect LGBTQ students. And so, students know that they're protected at school because even, oftentimes, students may have a safe and affirming home, but then they come to school where they don't feel safe and that affects their mental health as well.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: And I was also going to mention, you'll notice the CDC stats are about three years behind, and so that's why I included it, because the Trevor Project, when you go to their website, specifically it says that their section of youth that they manage to have report is about 34,000. We live in a huge country that's much, much larger than that. The CDC doesn't say how many people that they interviewed, but the fact that the CDC hasn't updated their numbers, I just wanted to put that there just so you could have some idea of who is reporting about this. But also, for example, let's say in Texas, there are laws telling school districts you must have a bullying procedure. And I know not all states may be the same, but I certainly know that bullying has been a trend within public education for at least the past ten years. So, even if you perhaps don't have specific procedures that your district has for you, whenever you see someone being bullied, we need to make sure that if we see someone being bullied, it doesn't matter why they are, they are being bullied regardless, so kind of like what Mahoganie was talking about, calling parents because of physical or PDA and

whether it makes a difference about who the individuals are who are engaging in that, this is exactly the same. We should never ever deny a child's right to not be bullied and to feel safe at school. Even if they are dressing, engaging in something that you don't personally believe in, the fact of the matter is they are being bullied, so they need to be treated equally.

And then I can also speak to the suicidal part. I really love how Mahoganie said that, you know, a child can be in a very supportive family, but at school, they're not. And I can speak to that from experience because one of my children is nonbinary - they gave me permission to talk about it - and we're very supportive. Both my partner and I have been GSA sponsors for a long, long time, and they still have really, really struggled with their mental health, and part of it was because they were being bullied a little bit at school. So, even with a supportive environment, it doesn't mean that our LGBTQIA+ youth won't still experience SI, anxiety, depression, et cetera.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: And so, why are the risks so high? Access to care.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: According to the Trevor Project, you know, 82% wanted mental health care of our LGBTQ youth and 18% did not. That's a huge number of kids who wanted some help. And basically, 60% of those youth who wanted mental health care in the past year were not able to get it. So, you have a ton of kids - the majority of our LGBTQ youth, they want some assistance, they need that assistance, especially when you think about those stats with depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. And then 60% of them weren't able to get that. That's a lot. I mentioned earlier like how hard it can be for a youth to be different than most of your peers statistically. Imagine being - it's just hard to be a youth anyway, just trying to figure out who you are, especially if you're getting into your pre-teen or teen years. And so, that's a whole lot of kids who aren't getting the help that they need, so that also contributes to why some of the health statistics that we see and the percentages are so high for our kiddos.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: And I think one of the big problems, which I understand, completely understand the need for parental consent; however, when you have youth who aren't out to their parents, and they're afraid to come out, but they want to get help, but they can't get help without parent permission, it puts them in a very tough and difficult situation, and so then that

adds that extra mental health struggle on top of that. And so, it's like what do you do?

>> HEATHER HORNOR: And we're going to answer that in just a moment.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: So, again, our Padlet. If you have questions about numbers, or maybe you're like a data geek like me and you're like, hey, how do I help come up with a survey, go put your questions.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: Okay. So, we have told you all about just a little bit of some education in case you didn't know or some clarification thanks to Camille, and then we got a bunch of numbers and a lot of statistics with tons of resources to back that all up from Mahoganie.

So, now we're going to talk about some practical ways on how you can support our kids. And I say our kids because they belong to us. I don't care if you're watching from say Wisconsin. Your kids are my kids as far as I'm concerned, you know. We're all in this together and we need to take care of our youth regardless of age. You know, we both have been referencing quite a few mostly teenagers, but, honestly, a lot of our kids, they don't have the verbiage, but they know in elementary school that they're different. And so, whenever I say our kids, I'm really thinking about the whole gamut.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Well, and I'll add to that and say that I taught elementary school before I was a high school librarian, and the trainings that I do are designed for K through 12, so all of these things we're telling you guys apply at all ages. These kids know who they are.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: And I've done a lot - oh, sorry.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: No. I was going to say, Mahoganie, you do the same thing in your district.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: Yeah. I get - I've done a lot more calls for support from elementary campuses as well as parents whose child/youth has come out to them and it's new to them, and so they want to know how to support their second-grader or their fourth-grader.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: So, if you didn't already know that your kids who do identify don't know from an early age, many, many, many of them do.

All right. So, we have four basic ways, and these, you know, obviously, we're not limited to this - to these four areas, but these are four broad categories and ways that you can help support our babies.

So, the first one is to partner up and collaborate. So, what I mean by this is seek out your colleagues. So, if you are looking to help educate your colleagues about appropriate terminology, maybe you're just starting there, go ahead and make sure you involve your colleagues, talk to your admin, look and talk to your district officials and support. Most campuses should have some sort of Title IX position. If you don't, you need to ask where. So, if you think that someone is suffering from Title IX discrimination, which we'll go into later, you know, you have a right to talk to that Title IX individual and just ask some information. Is this legal? I see this happening with this child. I feel like they're being discriminated because of their gender. And you can do that. Yes, that's a tough place to be in, especially depending on the climate of your community that you serve, the district that you work in, all sorts of different things. You know, we're talking to librarians who are in all sorts of different types of districts throughout the nation. So, you may not be lucky enough to know who your Title IX person is, but every single school district must behold themselves to Title IX. There is someone in your district who knows the laws of Title IX. It's okay for you to find out. You can partner up with approved non-profit youth services, and so go ahead and see who is an official partner of your district who might help give you ideas just as your - just yourself, might be able to team up with your campus, your administrator, et cetera. Whether it's for you or for your campus, there's lots of different resources.

And then approved partnerships with city services. So, when I used to be a high school librarian and a GSA sponsor, one of my favorite partnerships, thanks to working with Mahoganie since we used to work together, is we got to have the LGBTQ liaison for the police department come out and talk to us, and the reason why I wanted them to come out is I really wanted my students to know their rights if they were to be arrested, and I wanted them to know what can I do if I get kicked out, what is available to me and what do I do. And I think that my kids learned a ton about when you interact with the police department, what are

your rights, what is supposed to be there to protect you, and who you can go to for help if you really - like you don't have a couch to surf on anymore. And if you live in an area where there aren't many services, local services, so let's say you're from a small town and you're not close to a mid-sized city or a large city, you can take advantage of a ton of online sources and you can collaborate online. GLSEN is awesome. Trevor Project is awesome. There are so many different resources that are out there where you can connect with other people who are doing the same work or even just receive support and information, lesson ideas, just anything that you might need to help support your kiddos. And so, I don't want you to feel that if you are not in a large area where you don't have that type of infrastructure that there aren't online resources for you to take advantage of because there are, and we have several of the main ones linked on our resources page.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: And I want to add to that. Trevor Project and all of the ones we've linked here, they have comprehensive support resources, like they have a toolkit for parents, they have a toolkit for kids about coming out, what to do once you come out, like there's all kinds of stuff available. It's almost like it's almost too much information. So, please feel free to explore those resources because they are incredibly rich.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: Okay. So, regarding curating library sources, we're not spending a whole lot of time on this because this is, you know, basic level of service that we do as school librarians. But some things that are here that you can utilize because, you know, there's a ton of LGBTQI+ award lists. ALA has their very own from their Rainbow Roundtable. There's also librarian curated lists at many of the vendors that we partner with. They actually reach out to school librarians throughout the country to help them curate some of those suggested lists. And so, when you're looking at your vendor, whether you're working with a small one or a big one, just ask them, hey, where are your lists with - for elementary or K to LGBTQIA+ friendly books. And then, of course, there's always your collection analysis. I think this is a really good tool because the explosion of all sorts of different types of books that are acknowledging so many different types of identities and experiences is awesome, but you should do a collection analysis. Do you have mostly books about lesbian and gay characters? What about intersex? What about asexual? And this really should be broadened out beyond the LGBTQIA spectrum just because I'm so passionate about making sure that, you know, your collection is

truly, truly representative not only of who you serve but also providing those windows and sliding glass doors so that others can learn about people who are different than them. So, a collection analysis absolutely for your LGBTQI+ collection, but also through neurodiversity and intersectionalism. Do you have a character who is both neurodiverse and bisexual, for example? Do you have things like that?

And then things to consider. Now this varies widely from district to district, from state to state, from region to region, so I didn't want to be too specific. But if you are not familiar with your board policy regarding literature and library resource curation, you need to know what it is and you need to know what it says. So, for example, here in Texas, we have the legal board policy and then we have the local. So, legal is set at the state level, and then the local policy mirrors and covers exactly what the legal policy from the state says, but then will go further to develop their selection policy according to what the district thinks is best for their students. So, if you don't know where your board policy is, it's all public, it should be a fairly easy Google search. And I'd just make - I would print it off and make sure you know exactly what it is. You may also have internal guidelines that are, quote-unquote, they're not board policy, but they are additional guidance whenever you are selecting literature for your library, so make sure you know what those guidelines are as well, if they exist.

You need to adhere to district guidance regarding age and grade recommendations and professional reviews. And so, a lot of districts around here do require professional reviews, and they do require that we adhere to those recommendations that those professional reviews give us. So, if your district happens to not use professional reviews, you can also use the publisher, but you need to know what your district guidance is on what age ranges apply to which grades because we have all sorts of different configurations. It's not always just a standard pre-K-6 or K-5 or what have you. There are lots of different configurations. So, you might work at a K-12 school. You need to make sure you know how to order books for everybody at your school.

And then most importantly, and this is a really big piece of advocacy and relationship building, is know your community. You've got to know your community. And that's the great thing about it being a school library, and we're all taught that each community is different and we get to specify our library collections, but specifically based on our community. So, make

sure you know your community and partner with your parents and caretakers. A lot of times whenever we hear fear regarding LGBTQIA literature and resources, it's - it's fear-based, but it's oftentimes because they don't know. And you having a one-on-one conversation with them about how you select your books, showing why this specific book is perfect for K-2, and showing them the evidence, for example, professional reviews or district guidance or policy, that can go a really, really long way to help reassure our parents and caretakers that you are there to serve them and you have their back, but you also serve all children. So, if they require something a little bit more specific, you know, you're there to partner with that family or with that community to help them with that.

Okay. So, be visual in your affirming practices. One thing that I think is super, super important is that you are visual, so here is a sticker on the back of my partner's badge. He is also a GSA sponsor, has been for a long time, and so that's his way, along with his colleagues, of letting students, whether they're out or not, or whether they're allies or not, or whether they're part of the community or not, know that they are safe places to provide support and a safe place to be.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: I also had lots of stuff. I had my ally pin, this is my pronoun pin, and this is just on my backpack. I had signs in my library and flags on all sorts of things. I do have a caveat, though. So, one question I usually get about being visual, and I know this highly depends on your district culture, your community culture, where you live, all sorts of different things about whether or not First Amendment rights cover you as a public education employee. So, through a conversation with a couple of school district lawyers, they just gave me some friendly advice. And again, I am not a lawyer, but just consider this, is that within your role as a public education employee at work, your first speech amendment rights are actually fairly strictly confined because you are on the job. And nothing at work is actually private, so you can't say as a private citizen that you have the right necessarily to fly a flag if you are asked to take it down. The one way that you can be supported in signage and flags and whatever you may choose to put in your area or on your person to show that you are someone that is safe is if your district has verbiage in its policies and guidelines that specifically say, yes, that's fine. So, you may want to go ahead and look through your district policies and guidance to see. I understand that in some places the verbiage and guidance may not be there, but it is not a question issue, but I also know - I've been asked this enough

times to know that this is something that has been requested of many, many school librarians, and sometimes has made it into the news. So, just some friendly advice from a couple of school lawyers when I asked them this question.

All right, Camille, this is you.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Okay. So, we talked about being an upstander, and this is a great word and I love this word. But basically, this slide is just some kind of rules of thumb, like some guidelines on how you can support these kids in your classrooms, in your libraries, in the hallways, just in your school on your campus.

First of all, affirm them and their identity. People being seen sometimes is the first thing they need, and I think it's important to consider that when kids are sharing their identities and their needs and their feelings and their selves with you. And also, thank them for that trust because that's a massive thing. Coming out is a massive thing. And especially at their age, they're dealing with so much, that is a lot of trust and a lot of care that they're showing for you.

Ask clarifying questions that maintain sensitivity and caution. I mean, if you're here, you want to learn more, so that's why we're giving you all the definitions first. That's why we're making sure that you understand that these things are varied depending on the person. That's assuming caution can be learned. And, you know, be honest about your limitations, be honest about your feelings, your needs, your boundaries. It is important. These are human beings and we need to learn how to treat them as such.

Share your pronouns and ask them for theirs. You'll notice mine are - well, maybe you will. I don't know if it's all going to show up on the video, but my pronouns are always in my Zoom bio just because I think it's important that people know that, you know, pronouns are something that I understand. Heather showed her pen. You know, I have - I have pronoun pens on my badge at work. It's important to let people know that that's something that you respect and acknowledge in others.

When you mess up, acknowledge it, apologize and learn from it. I think that's a really good rule of thumb for life, actually. Let them know you have their back, like let them know that you are going to support them and take care of them because that's your job.

Educate and assist colleagues when needed. This is a harder one. This is difficult because you have to speak up to people who are your peers. But it is important, and that's how you ally. I said before, it's an action word, so that's one of those actions that happens. And monitor your unconscious reactions and biases. We all have biases. No matter how long I've been doing the work of equity and activism, there are still things that I have judgments about internally because of my experience and my lens, and I think that it's important to acknowledge that you can identify those and set boundaries within yourself to make sure that you're not showing that on your face, for instance. I'm the type of person where - I actually just said this a minute ago - if I have an emotion, you're going to see it because I have a really hard time fighting my feelings on my face. This is work I've had to do as well.

D Just a couple rules of thumb. This is not an exhaustive list, obviously, but this is a good start.

So, GSAs. We mentioned these earlier. There is - there's - there's different schools of thought on what GSAs should stand for. But the national GSA says that you can kind of choose depending on the nature of your club and the climate and the culture of your school. At my school, we actually are the Gay Straight Alliance. That's kind of a more outdated term, I think, and a lot of people don't use it. But my kids made that decision. I gave them the choice at the beginning of the year. That's what they chose, and that's where we are. And then Gender and Sexuality Alliance, obviously, makes a lot of sense, too, based on what you've learned so far.

Okay. One thing really quick, and Mahoganie is going to do this. GSAs, just in case you don't know, it's usually an extracurricular club and there's a lot of things they can do. Heather mentioned that she was the sponsor of hers. I've been the sponsor of mine for four years now. It is literally my self-care. I adore and love those kids so much. And through GSA, we have been able to support and serve them in ways that help better their futures, not just in high school and their experience in high school, but as they go forward into the world, that support and learning and community and camaraderie really does make a difference for a lot of these kids. So, it's my little soapbox about GSAs, and then Mahoganie will talk to you about the real stuff.

>> MAHOGANIE: No, that is the real stuff. Camille did a really good job. And I don't think - and I just thought about it, Heather. I don't think we included it, but GSAs are protected by federal law. It's the Equal Access Act of 1984, and so it basically says that if you have one extracurricular activity club, you have to have them all, and they have the same rights as any other club.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: I have that on a later slide.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: Oh, yeah! So, if you have students and they're like I want a GSA, and you go to your administrator and they say no, not being one of those people, you know, we don't want to get you in trouble, but I like making people uncomfortable, but we don't want to get you in trouble, but they are protected by federal law, and it does create a safe environment for students. It makes the school climate better. Like I said, that's why getting that data is important because just from the short time, you know, in Texas, you know, there isn't a lot of data for LGBTQIA students. And so, in my district, we have been collecting data and we've seen the improvement on - from students on how their campus is getting better by having the GSAs, by me doing the training within the district on policy to procedures to protect students. So, the GSA is a huge reason why I feel like the climate changes because students know that they can go, you know, to their librarian or to that math teacher to be the safe person. They know when they come to school, if they have someone or they're dealing with a situation, they know who they can go to, and that's all thanks to the GSA.

So, back to the Padlet. If you want to know more about student support, or you have questions, or you have ideas, drop it right there. I feel like I'm Vanna White.

Okay. So, another thing - this makes me - I feel like I'm such a nerd. Besides data, I love policy. I'm spending my days right now watching Texas Senate. So, LGBTQIA support and legal rights and protection in school districts.

So, a really huge federal law - federal, doesn't matter where you are - is Title IX. And Heather mentioned it earlier. Your district has to have a Title IX coordinator. They may have like - they may be like district Administrator/Title IX coordinator. There has to be one. Somewhere, there has to be one because we get federal funds for Title IX. Basically, it is a federal law. It says no person in the United States shall, on the basis of

sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. That is any public school, any public school. Let me say it again. That's any public school. It bans discrimination based on sex, and it protects students at schools that receive federal funds. And courts have agreed, sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX not only includes discrimination for being a girl or a boy, but also includes sexual harassment and discrimination for failing to conform to gender stereotypes. It is important that we understand as our employees in a public school district to ensure that students and other employees are protected from sexual harassment in their educational environments. I know that's a mouthful, but it is taken seriously. Schools can be sued for Title IX. Title IX because it is a federal, you know, Heather mentioned earlier about bullying. Most school districts will have like, you know, bullying procedures that they get to come up with as a district. However, when you're dealing with a federal law, there are certain procedures, certain timelines that they have to follow. It is extremely serious. Like you can lose funds. You lose funds, you lose positions. You lose positions, you know what happens. You know, again, when you talk about money with people higher up, they - they hear that.

>> HEATHER HORROR: Mahoganie, I thought I included that slide, but I didn't, so I will add - and for everyone who is watching this, I will add a slide about the Equal Access Law. Mahoganie, would you mind talking about that a little bit more in-depth when it comes to extracurricular clubs for students?

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: Yes. So, in the district I am, I mean, our policy - oh, and back with federal laws. Also, Heather mentioned earlier, know your school policies. For us, you know, in the district I am, we have a lot of policies that protect LGBTQ students and staff members, which is highly important. But if you go north, south, east, or west of us, it's not going to be the same, even though we're in the same state. So, do be mindful, especially when you're in situations like this, or I grew up in a more rural area, it's really important to know state and federal laws. You know, there is language - in Texas, we call it [indiscernible 00:55:48] - there is language about youth who are transitioning about, you know, they can access the bathroom of their choice. There is language in there. You just have to know where to find that. But Equal Access as of 1984, again, 1984, so that makes it 38 years old, so it's not a new - yeah, I'm 38, yeah.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Me too.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: So, it's not - it's not a new law. It's been there. But it basically says that if you have one club, you have to have them all or have none. There have been school districts in the U.S. who have just decided, you know, we don't want a GSA, so we're just not going to have any clubs, which is so unfortunate. But I think, again, as Heather mentioned, it's because of lack of education. So, that's why GSAs are important. So, if you get pushback, education is very important. And like Camille said, there are a ton of great resources on the GSA network, so, you know, go print them out, show what they're about. But if the art club can put up signage, the GSA has to be able to put up signage. That is all there is to it. And again, it's a federal law, so if you get pushback - I don't know about some people. I mean, I do look good in orange, but I'm not trying to go to jail for breaking federal laws, you know. Just throw that out there. Okay.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: All right. There are things to consider. So, you know, we've been talking about GSAs and the Equal Access Law. You know, don't forget that you can - it doesn't have to be a GSA. So, for example, if you're in elementary school yet you know that you have some LGBTQIA+ students who would like some additional support, we - you can call it a leadership club, you can call it a mentorship club. And if you've never done a GSA or gone to a GSA meeting, it's kind of like what Mahoganie said earlier. I promise you they are not planning anything other than what are we going to eat, what are you doing this weekend, and I've got to get this assignment done, and I don't like that teacher. I mean, it is just that simple. They are laughing, hanging out, being kids. That is all they do. And so, it really is just a place where they can sit with people they know that are safe and just be with each other. And they just act like kids. And so, there's no reason that if you are serving an elementary school, there's no reason for you to also not consider an extracurricular club. That doesn't have to be titled a GSA, but it could be titled a leadership club or a mentorship club.

All right. So, some other things -

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: Sorry, I wanted to add really quick.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: Oh, yeah. Go ahead.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: But Camille had - did a really good job of it. And for us, we call them safe spaces in elementary, but when you start having middle school and high school students, I feel like giving them that ownership of naming their GSA makes them even more prideful of having a GSA. It really makes it theirs when they get to come up with a name for it. So, that's something to really keep in mind.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Well, and I also, for our GSA, I actually had the kids write our mission statement.

>> MAHOGANIE GASTON: Oh, I love it.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Which was really cool. Like we went through and we did, you know, just like a whole thing where everybody wrote down, like we talked about, like we looked at some sample mission statements, like what's important to us here, what do we stand for, what do we want to show to our school community that we are, and they came up with different points, and then we worked as a team to kind of put it together into a full like, you know, logical statement. And it was super cool to see like how committed they were to that because they really wanted to be seen as a community for who they were. And so, ownership is always important to give your kids in any situation. But especially kids who are already sort of marginalized in their spaces, it means the world and can really, really kind of change their trajectory in a lot of cases. So, yeah. Thanks, y'all.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: Yeah. So, other things to consider, and I just want to kind of speak to the overall trend that we're seeing in just about every state. So, if you ever have someone, regardless of who they may be, they may be a colleague, a parent, community member, administrator, it doesn't matter who it may be, whenever you bring up the idea of having an extracurricular club for your LGBTQIA kids, or if you're talking about library resources and literature, just remember that people feel incredibly intense about this, and so there's a lot of emotion. So, I think one of the best things that you can do for yourself and for your advocacy for providing affirming spaces is being respectful and calm even when others are not. And if it helps, practice some of those tough questions you might imagine you might get and practice what you might say. The more familiar you - familiar you are with your facts, your data, and how to help people trust you, the easier it will come out when someone is feeling a lot of feelings in a very calm and rational manner. So, I highly encourage you to practice it. I

practice all the time whenever I think about tough conversations.

We've already mentioned this, but I think it's super important to say it today on national and state legislation. And I do say national legislation as well because there's also some national bills that are up for consideration as well. And talk to your legislators, you know. Not at work, obviously. But you are a private citizen in addition to a public educator, so on your own private time, you have every right to calmly and respectfully talk to your legislator. Whether you're advocating, whether you're expressing your opinion about a specific bill they're sponsoring, you have that right. And then get your friends and family to contact your legislators, too, and their legislators because, frankly, whether it's right or not, non-library voices offer - often have a heavier weight than ours do in some places. So, start that networking, get people to speak up for what you know is right for kids.

And then if we're talking about legislators specifically, you know, it's really, really good to know what people who feel very passionately about LGBTQIA+ literature, what they're using. A lot of people are using Common Sense Media and Booklook, so go take a look at that and see what they're saying about some of the books that are on many, many, many, many of our shelves just so that you understand what is being said about that book.

And then in this specific context, especially if you're receiving a lot of pressure, in this case, social media may not always be your friend, so definitely don't get into any conversations with people who feel differently than you about these topics, you know. I would - I think social media is a really terrible place to have debates and conversations about heavy topics. So, yeah, just continue to use your social media to promote all the wonderful things you're doing for your students. Don't try to hack it out on social media.

And also remember, as a public education employee, that everything you do is open and public, so you could have an open records request asked about anything that you do, anything that you teach. And so, just remember if you use your phone for work, specifically your cell phone, your text messages can be asked for, your emails can be asked for, your files can be asked for. Pretty much anything you do on the job can be asked for, so just consider that whenever you are collaborating and networking and reaching out to people to receive support to help support your LGBTQIA+ students.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Can I add something there?

>> HEATHER HORNOR: Of course.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: So, I always say this in my trainings, and it's my favorite thing. Heather mentioned something earlier about how you have conversations, difficult conversations. One of the things I like to do - and some of my colleagues and I like to joke about this, but it really does work - is when someone says something that is harmful. A lot of times, if you just ask them to explain it, they will backtrack and they'll start to become more introspective about what they said. If someone says something that's offensive, say, well, you know, what did you mean by that, like can you explain what you mean by that. Especially in the case of educators, we entered into this profession because we want to help kids, we want to serve kids, we want to do what's best for kids, and I'm hard-pressed to find any educator who would admit out loud that they have chosen to dislike or disengage from a student because of who they are. So, I like to say that you have chosen to be an educator, you've chosen to work in schools, and these kids are there already, like you don't get to make a choice as to who you serve and who you support in any case, and this all applies as well. So, I just wanted to add that because I like to remind us that our why is kids, and it doesn't really matter who they are.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: All right. And this is our final Padlet slide. So, if you have any questions about all of the legal LGBTQIA+ support that you want to put down there, please do. And again, my apologies. I will make sure to add the 1984 Equal Access Law slide right after the Title IX one so that you can see for yourself, and you can see the verbiage. And that's my apologies once again. But we want to make sure that you do have that, because if you want to have some sort of extracurricular club, you need to know the data, you need to know what protects the rights of you and your students.

And then, of course, we have a column here also for anything else that perhaps prompted a question in you but we didn't specifically cover. We will be checking back with this. And, of course, don't forget, we had our contact information on our intro slides as well. So, if you don't feel comfortable putting it in the Padlet, you can always email or DM us on our social media accounts.

This takes you to the resource page. We have a lot of stuff here. I included the last time GLSEN did a state snapshot. So, because this is a national conference, I really wanted to bring your attention to this. So, you can see that according to 2019 what states snapshots look like for LGBTQIA youth in your state. I do believe that they're going to be updating this. I think I saw that it's coming out soon. They'll be updating that one soon. But this is the best I could find for now.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Also, we have on that second section, we have a couple of specific studies and articles about the experiences for different identity groups that are also LGBTQIA+. So, the ones we included here, there's one about specifically black and African American LGBTQ youth. There's one for elementary school students. The second thing is a toolkit about kind of coming out and living authentically as black LGBTQ people. There is also on that same site, I believe, I just this week noticed that there is a - one for Hispanic youth as well, and they keep expanding those because it is really important that we acknowledge that intersectionality with these kids because we are getting kids coming to us with multiple identities that need to be affirmed and respected and supported. So, Heather, do you want to -

>> HEATHER HORNOR: Yeah. And then these two right here, this is the glossary that Camille, she adapted some of those terms from. So, the whole entire glossary is there. The Trevor Project you see. Youth.gov, that's another government website that I found about LGBTQIA+ youth. We have library support, what it means to be an upstander. It's a great article. If you don't know what being an upstander is, we highly suggest that you read it. And then Camille also put a ton of different book lists, lesson plans, curriculum, resources from the CDC, and then educator resources from GLSEN. So, there's a lot of stuff. And this is certainly not comprehensive. There is so much more out there. But we really, really like, and each of us have used these resources within our own practice and within our own role serving LGBTQIA+ youth.

>> CAMILLE STAFFORD: Yeah. This is a good stopping - or starting point, I should say, for the research, if you want to do it, and the reading, if you want to do it, which you should because it's great. But it's definitely a rabbit hole situation. Like you'll get started and you'll keep clicking and you'll keep clicking and you'll keep clicking and you'll learn so much stuff and see so many things that are really, really beneficial.

I do want to shout out also itgetsbetter.org, which is another organization that I love, love, love, and they have amazing toolkits and coming out resources for families and individuals. I actually had an administrator come to me in the last couple of weeks to talk to me about their child coming out as nonbinary and was like I don't know much about this. What resources can you provide for me? Like what resources can I provide for them? And it was really cool because I already had these all compiled because these - these sites do an incredible job of keeping this stuff updated and making sure that they're supporting all different levels of understanding and experience.

>> HEATHER HORNOR: All right. So, we, all the three of us, we really are - all three of us are very, very passionate about this topic. We're passionate about making sure that we have affirming spaces for our LGBTQIA youth. And we're just really glad that you joined us on this on-demand session. And once again, please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us, one of us, all of us. We love to help and guide anyone because, at least I'll speak for me, I had a ton of people who were very patient with me and me learning, and so we would love to be those people for you as well. So, we really appreciate it. Thank you so much for attending this session.