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LGBTQ : incorporating it into the classroom

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Running Head: LGBTQ in the Classroom

LGBTQ: Incorporating it into the Classroom

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Abstract

The LGBTQ community has historically been neglected in a classroom setting because of its controversial nature. Because of this, many students feel uncomfortable fully expressing themselves and are often fearful of bullying and other harassment by students at school. In order to bring this problem to the forefront of schools, Gentry and Abby created a full resource book for Middle School classrooms highlighting the LGBTQ community in order to raise awareness and acceptance of middle school students. A small portion of the book was also implemented into an 8th grade classroom to not only receive feedback on the full resource book from teachers, but also to see the effect it had on the middle school students themselves.

Backstory-Gentry

It is important to me that LGBTQ issues are brought into the classroom regardless of the controversy that surrounds it. I would like to bring awareness to the LGBTQ issues that have arisen in the past couple of years. Young children are getting their views of gays and lesbians from the media which isn't always a positive viewpoint. There are many misunderstandings about the gay community by some people in the world. This means that there are people who are given information about the gay community that is only one-sided. It seems that the only statistics some people hear are stereotypes such as gay people have HIV or only party and do drugs all the time. Sometimes the only information that a person has about the gay community is that it is against their religion because it says so in the bible. My hope is that we can provide more information so that students develop a better understanding and more tolerance for the gay community. That isn't necessarily going to change an individual's opinion about the gay community but at least let them know more than just one side of the argument for or against the gay community. There are people who believe that those who are gay choose to spend their lives with someone of the same sex. I don't believe that those who are in the gay community chose to have attraction to the same sex but are born with that inherent attraction. We live in a society where it is more traditional to see a relationship as a boy and a girl. Those who are gay have trouble deciphering their own feelings.

In my own life I have experienced having family members who are gay and lesbian. One of my Uncles, Joey, is a gay man but he has had a unique coming out experience. When he began to explore his sexuality he thought that something was wrong with him. He came out to his parents and they encouraged him to go to a psychologist.

He needed to talk out his own feelings and feel better about himself before he could admit that he was gay. His parents just wanted him to be sure in his own feelings since he had such inner turmoil. Once he was sure about his feelings towards men he slowly began coming out to the family. For the most part the family was extremely open and happy for him. Unfortunately my Uncle Joey was met with hostility from one of his older brothers, Charlie. There was a fight between Joey and Charlie and the end result was Charlie disowning his own brother. My Uncle Charlie believed that homosexuality was wrong and that Joey was making the choice to be gay. They have only spoken to one another a couple of times in the past twenty years. This is such a sad thing. Today Joey is happy with his life partner.

One of the most recent events that happened in my life involves an ex-boyfriend. He and I were good friends and dated for about two months before he broke up with me. It was an abrupt breakup with little explanation about what had happened. He stopped talking to me and I thought that our friendship was over. One day he decided he wanted to talk to me and proceeded to tell me that he was gay and had a boyfriend. I was so happy to finally know what had happened and that we were finally being himself. He thought I was going to have a negative reaction but I was completely supportive and am still good friends with him today. He got a supportive and positive response from his friends but would find less support from his family. He comes from a strict Christian background so when he came out to his family they told him he was lying to himself. To this day the family still doesn't address the fact that he is gay but instead just ignores it. I know that it is hard for him to balance his life with his family.

In recent months there have been more suicides that are due to bullying happening towards gay or lesbian students. One boy by the name of Carl Joseph Walker- Hoover was eleven years old hung himself after being taunted at school for being gay. There are many suicides that are ruled out as being from gay or lesbian bullying. We need to introduce the topic of gay and lesbian tolerance at a younger age. The middle school age is the perfect time to introduce a curriculum because they are beginning to explore their sexuality at this time. There are students who are aware that they are gay or lesbian but are too scared to tell their peers in fear that they will be made fun of. Many of the suicides that have happened were students in middle school which means it isn't too early to introduce the material. These students who identify as LGBTQ need to feel they are safe at school and won't be discriminated against because of who they are attracted to.

Everyone begins to explore their sexuality at some point in their lives. Some begin to explore their feelings towards the same sex and find it right to be with someone of the same sex. There are some cases that people figure out they are attracted to the same sex earlier in life. Those people who come to the realization of their attraction to the same sex in their teenage years are faced with resistance from those around them. There is this resistance against the gay community because people don't fully understand homosexuality. I believe that the common goal shouldn't be that people have to fully accept those who are gay. The goal should be that everyone is educated and should be respected no matter what their sexual orientation. One of the most interesting aspects of the gay community is that they are so supportive and close net. There is so much support from the gay community for those who are coming out or do feel alone.

I believe that those who don't support the gay community need to really understand what made them come to that decision. Middle school students do have a mind of their own but sometimes have outside influence. We need to ensure that they have a full understanding of their view of the gay community. There needs to be a deeper discussion with them as to what their reasons are. There is a deeper message which is to respect peers and not be judgmental. This understanding and respect doesn't have to be on a deep level but at least to respect them in public so that there is no animosity. Those who have their thoughts and beliefs are more than welcome to keep them, but need to be able to be cordial in public. By cordial I mean that there is no need to verbally or physically bully two women who are walking down the street holding hands. It is better to respect that they have their own beliefs and you have your own beliefs. While those beliefs might not be the same each has its own validity and none should be less respected than the other.

I along with Abby Williams am hoping to use multicultural literature that has to do with LGBTQ issues to introduce to a middle school classroom. We want to make the problem more real to each of the students through reading these stories. Through a new curriculum I hope that students feel more comfortable with students who identify as LGBTQ. We hope that through the curriculum parents will feel more comfortable having conversation about their views with their children. These are only the beginning ideas of what we can do with the capstone.

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Backstory- Abigail

The LGBTQ community is continuing to become stronger and more confident as our society is becoming more accepting and welcoming of people of different sexual identities. However, there are still many teenagers who are struggling to determine their sexual identity and because the topic is not addressed in schools, they often feel uncomfortable coming out and expressing themselves as a their whole person. For Capstone, I would like to develop a capstone project that will make it easier for teachers and students in middle school to be able to open dialogue and help create an awareness, understanding and tolerance of the LGBTQ community in the classroom in order to foster an environment where all of the students can be respectful of one another and be comfortable expressing exactly who they are.

I have three close friends that are gay or lesbian. I witnessed the painful experiences of one friend who was in a committed relationship, had her heart broken by the woman she wanted as her wife, watched her leave our school, drop contact with everyone and has now stated that she is no longer lesbian. Another friend has been out as gay since I have known him. He is proud of who he is but I have watched as he struggled with issues such as Prop 8 and how he still feels that society is not ready for a change. The third friend came out as gay just last year. He was with one of my closest girl friends and after they broke up, he came out and began dating a guy. All of his friends at school accepted him and were so proud of everything he was doing for himself, but it was very hard for me to watch, as his family did not support him.

These three friends have a lot of differences in their experiences but some things are incredibly similar in all of their stories. At one time or another through their coming out and being out journey, they have felt uncomfortable with being their full selves in regards to their sexuality with all of the people that they love. They would hide this part of their identity from family or friends and some, even though they are out to everyone they know, just have to sweep the fact under the rug and pretend like it is not actually there. To me, this still shows that even though they may be out, there is still some sense of them not being completely comfortable around everyone for fear or resistance or backlash because of their identity.

Because of these friends that I am so close to, I really feel passionately about this topic because it hurts me to see them not be able to be their full, beautiful selves, and watch as they hide their true selves out of fear for how others will treat them or react to their sexuality. Knowing that the exploration of this aspect of a person can begin to occur as early as elementary school and middle school makes me believe that as a society, we need to make conscious and proactive efforts to bring this subject to students' awareness in classrooms. Pre-teens and teenagers need to be able to feel comfortable and not afraid to express themselves to their families and their classmates about any subject of life, including their sexuality. This also means that teachers need to be comfortable working with information surrounding this topic in order to make for a comfortable environment for all students to really open up and share what they are thinking and express what they are feeling.

Through this past semester, it was clear to see that, especially in middle schools, this issue is becoming more and more pressing to find a solution to help address this issue and encourage all people to become more respectful and understanding of LGBTQ issues. There have been multiple suicides of young people that have occurred because of bullying and the stress that was put on these young people because they were working through their identity issues regarding their sexuality. Two stories that were seen in news across the country were the stories of fifteen-year-old Justin Aaberg and thirteen-year-old Asher Brown. Aaberg committed suicide after breaking up with his boyfriend and facing constant ridicule and torment from other classmates. His suicide followed 5 others at the same school, 3 of which were assumed to have occurred because of difficulties with sexual identity. Brown also faced years of torment for being gay. His parents attempted many phone calls to the school in order to stop the harassment, however they never saw any results or changes by the administration. These suicides were only two of several that occurred in the fall season of 2010 because of harassment regarding student's sexuality. Seeing so many young people determine that suicide is the only way to get away from the bullying and the pain that they are going through is a horrific thing for other youth to see, especially if they are going through the same struggles. It is important to really work to create environments at school where all students feel safe and welcome to be open about

who they are and not have to worry about being bullied or being made fun of for any aspect of their identity.

In order to begin to address this issue, I am hoping to create some kind of lesson or curriculum, and work with teachers and students in classrooms to open up communication about LGBTQ issues through young adult literature. Using literature to look into the lives of LGBTQ youth and then encouraging dialogue and workshops around this topic in classrooms can really help make the classroom a safe place where youth can begin to feel more and more comfortable and safe expressing themselves. Students will feel more comfortable in asking different questions in order to become more knowledgeable about the topic and how to really be respectful and understanding of it. This can be a very controversial topic to discuss in the classroom so there is a chance I will face resistance, but I believe once healthy conversations about this topic begin in classrooms it will make school a safer and more comfortable place for many LGBTQ youth and create a greater understanding and respect for all people.

Literature Review

Introduction

Homophobic harassment and victimization experiences are an unfortunate but common part of growing up for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning adolescents. Middle school is a place where many students begin to explore themselves not only in a social context but in terms of their sexual orientation. Knowing one's social standing within a school setting is sometimes more important than the actual academics at school. It is essential to an adolescent's development that their identity be respected and accepted. Schools are the environments in which youth struggle to define themselves in relation to others and as sexuality become increasingly central to identity and social relationships...schools are critical social contexts in which dominant beliefs about sexuality are played out (Payne, & Smith, 2010). What isn't realized is that LGBTQ students are forced to endure the usual adolescent tensions but also have fears of having their sexual orientation discovered and losing friends. LGBTQ students are at greater risk of many social problems such as depression, suicide, dropping out of school, and drug use. A student's ability to succeed in school relies not only on quality teachers and academic resources but also on a supportive school environment that fosters their growth as individuals and affirms their worth as human beings within this social setting (Payne, & Smith, 2010). The inclusion of LGBTQ awareness in schools is important for creating an environment that is safe, comfortable and welcoming for all students.

What is the problem?

There is an idea that the youth shouldn't be taught about social issues such as LGBTQ topics in fear that they are too young to handle it. Youth are often shielded from information about LGBTQ lives; in many instances, college is the earliest opportunity for

young people to take a course in lesbian and gay history or in the sociology of sexualities (Fetner, & Kush, 2008). It is key to introduce this information at an earlier time than college so that students are more inclusive with their peers at a younger age. Since there are more LGBTQ youth who are becoming sexually aware of their identity at a younger age it is increasingly imperative that they are knowledgeable about the LGBTQ community. It doesn't necessarily mean that they should know everything about the LGBTQ community but just have general knowledge as well as tolerance for that group of people.

There are differences among the genders regarding their views, beliefs, and attitudes concerning LGBTQ peers. It has been shown that adolescent boys show greater prejudice against gays and lesbians than girls do (Mata, Ghavami, & Wittig, 2010). Boys have a higher tendency to reject their peers when they come out as gay or lesbian. A possible reason for this is because boys have fear of being perceived as gay by their other heterosexual peers (Poteat). The underlying theme is that there is a fear of being rejected based on sexual identity in a social environment. LGBTQ males have significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms than heterosexual, non transgendered males, whereas LGBTQ females actually had lower levels of depressive symptoms than heterosexual, non transgendered females (Alemeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2008). This only proves that there is a double standard within our social society between the genders and their sexual orientation. It is more socially acceptable to be a lesbian in our society than a gay man. In a perfect world we would live in a society in which both lesbian women and gay men are both equally accepted.

Age plays an important role in the acceptance of LGBTQ peers. Students in earlier grades are less accepting of their gay and lesbian peers (Poteat, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). As students get older, their chances of changing their negative attitudes increase. During this crucial time in an adolescent's life it is essential that schools are conducive to creating an environment where peers are accepting of the LGBTQ community. It is important that those who identify as LGBTQ feel that same sense of security in order to come out to their peers. Since there are students who are aware of their sexuality at a young age there needs to be a safe school environment for all children to be a part of.

Use of Biased Language toward LGBTQ students

Biased language related to sexual orientation is used frequently among students and is related to prominent social concerns such as bullying. It is unfortunate that the use of biased language is prevalent in many schools. Sexual orientation biased language can include pejorative statements, negative references toward, or epithets ascribed to sexual minorities, and it is the most common form of discrimination experienced by sexual minority youth (Poteat, & DiGiovanni, 2010). Biased language is the most common form of discrimination towards LGBTQ youth because it is the easiest way to discriminate against that specific community. It is important to note that biased language isn't always used in direct homophobic terms. These terms can be directed toward situations or an object, an example of that being the phrase, "that's so gay." Students tend to convince themselves that the terms are less serious by classifying it as humor. They often deny that there is any intention of prejudice being done on their part. These invisibilities need to be addressed within the school environment.

The strong association between the biased language and bullying could reflect that this language is associated with bullying among those who express either low or high sexual prejudice (Poteat, & DiGiovanni, 2010). Boys tend to report using biased language more often than girls but it is because they are trying to prove their heterosexuality. They don't want to be viewed as being any less masculine than their peers which force them to engage in this negative behavior. Students who bully and express sexual prejudice may be more likely to use biased language than those who do not hold these attitudes (Poteat, & DiGiovanni, 2010). It makes sense that those who are more sexually prejudiced are more likely to use biased language in a high tension situation. These students are less conscious of how they are affecting the people who they are using the biased language towards.

Students who use biased language can sometimes do so in order to establish dominance within their social groups. These insults can be used to place the targeted individual in a subordinate position due to the stigmatization of sexual minorities (Poteat, & DiGiovanni, 2010). This plays into the ideas of having social hierarchies within middle schools and having that feeling of superiority in those hierarchies. There are peers that are less likely to retaliate when being verbally attacked by those who are higher in that hierarchy. It is unfortunate that biased language can be associated with dominant behavior even though there are students who would consider it to be offensive.

Homosexuality vs Heterosexuality vs Questioning vs Transgender

There are different groups of people within the homosexual category that need to be addressed. There are the transgender youth of society who were born as one gender but feel they were meant to be the other. The term transgender can also be meant to

describe someone who gone through a sex change. The term questioning refers to people who are confused about their sexuality. These are people who are exploring who they are and trying to have a clear understanding of their identity.

The transgender youth have different obstacles to face than those who are homosexual or heterosexual. Transgender youth described their varied responses through fear, including transferring schools (sometimes numerous times), dropping out, and avoiding school (McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2008). It is disappointing that transgender youth are forced to deal with these major issues in their lives. Feeling so bad about their own identity that they change schools to avoid the harassment of others is extreme. There are people who identify as transgender who are as young as six years old. This only proves the fact that there needs to be more schools who provide a safe environment for those who are more confident in their transgender identity. Literature suggests that some transgender youth face significantly more mental health difficulties, such as depression, anxiety and self harming behaviors, and engage in more sexual risk-taking behavior than their gender conforming peers (McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2008). Schools should be able to help these students to make positive choices in their lives so that there are less people who are engaging in negative activity.

A study done by Arnold Grossman proved that there are LGBTQ students were more likely than non LGBTQ students to report that they did not feel safe at school and that the large majority of LGBTQ students reported that they had been harassed or assaulted in the past year. This is good because it means that they are willing to go to administration in order to ensure that some change is made within their schools. There are more schools who are apprehensive about standing out for these students and that is where the change

needs to be seen. Schools need to take responsibility for the actions of their students.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth were more than twice as likely as heterosexual youth to have considered attempting suicide in the past year (Alemeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2008). When this is heard by a school administration it is important that they take that information seriously. There is something that they can do in order to prevent these events from happening which can be having inclusive policies. Sexual minorities report more symptoms of depression and more drug and alcohol use than their heterosexual peers (Needham, & Austin, 2010). This is often tied to the fact that homosexuals are believed to struggle more with fitting into their schools social society.

Inclusive policies, Gay Straight Alliances, and Teacher Programs

The school climate is one of the most important places for LGBTQ youth to create a positive self image. It is true that variation in policy and program domains of a school's ecology can influence both the social environment and students experiences (Chesir-Teran, & Hughes, 2009). The more inclusive policies that are found within schools the safer the administration is making their schools social environment. It makes sense that the more open a school is about LGBTQ topics the more welcoming the school is going to be towards that community. Efforts to reduce anti-gay prejudice should focus on attitudes rather than trying to change adolescents' fundamental beliefs about homosexuality that may be rooted in longstanding ideological frameworks (Horn, & Nucci, 2003). When faculty is considering their student body they should focus on what is being done by the students. It isn't important to always try to change persons' beliefs but to at least come to an understanding and respect about that group of people.

There are extracurricular student groups that offer safe spaces, social support, and opportunities for activism to lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and straight students (Fetner, & Kush, 2008). One of these groups that are popular within school campuses are Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) that are able to bring together the gay community with the straight community of a school. A GSA is a student led group that aims to provide safe and supportive space on high school campuses for LGBTQ students and their straight alliances (Fetner, & Kush, 2008). This is a great way to get the students more involved in their own school climate and ensure their own safety. GSAs are way for students to change the outlook of students all over campus. Higher poverty schools may have fewer resources available than more affluent schools to implement programs that may help to reduce victimization targeting LGBTQ youth (Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009). A study done by Horn shows that schools with fewer support systems in place for LGBTQ students are less positive. It is true that sometimes without the proper resources it is difficult to start GSA programs in schools. It is important that students and faculty recognize this and attempt to do something about it.

There is a program in central New York that helps to bring awareness to LGBTQ issues. The Reduction of Stigma in Schools (RSIS) program is meant to provide school personnel with information and resources that will empower them to advocate for LGBTQ students and to disrupt institutional practices that limit these youths access to social power in the school environment (Payne, & Smith, 2010). It is important that this program is able to reach as many teachers as possible so that there are more actively reaching out to LGBTQ students as well as stopping the bullying that occurs on school campuses. Knowing the role that teachers play in fostering parental involvement and how

that contributes to student achievement, it is essential to continue investigations focused on teachers attitudes towards LGBTQ parenting (Bower, & Klecka 2009). This is an essential piece that teachers can encourage from their schools that many teachers don't realize.

It has shown that schools that are able to be more inclusive in their programs have students who are more inclusive. Schools with low homophobic teasing and a positive school climate will drastically reduce the prevalence of negative outcomes in LGBTQ youth (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2008). With that knowledge alone it should be enough to motivate school districts across the nation to implement more inclusive programs. It is important that programs such as GSAs and RSIS are able to at least begin on school campuses to see if they will have an impact on their student body. More welcoming social environments and an increased willingness on the part of the faculty and students to interrupt homophobic jokes and slurs (Chesir-Teran, & Hughes, 2009). Even something as small as interrupting a gay joke has a huge impact on the LGBTQ community. Those who identify as LGBTQ will feel like they have support even if only from a small group of people. Recent discourse emphasizes the role of supportive relationships in helping LGBTQ youth cope with this sexuality related stressors (Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl, & Malik, 2010). There are so many different groups of people who can help to encourage a positive environment for LGBTQ youth. It comes from their peers, teachers, and parents. When all these things come together it will ensure that a safe environment is created within schools for the entire youth community.

We have learned that there is no simple answer to creating an inclusive environment within school campuses. There are programs that are implemented in school

districts that are exceedingly successful but can't always easily be adapted in other school districts. It is important that there are people who are passionate about the inclusiveness of all students behind these programs.

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Community Partnership

Our capstone project is about introducing LGBTQ issues into the classroom. We are hoping to implement the curriculum that we create in an 8th grade middle school classroom. We have worked as service learners in previous semesters at Los Arboles Middle School and were hoping to implement our curriculum at the school. We had previously worked with Chris Hatch in his AVID classrooms and really enjoyed working with him. We approached Mr. Hatch about working with him for our capstone project and he agreed to do an interview. From our interview we learned a lot about how to approach the topic in his specific classroom and how to expand it to other middle schools.

Chris Hatch is a young teacher who is always willing to bring new ideas into his classroom. When we sat down with him to have the interview he told us that he was just going to tell us his honest opinion about our capstone. One of his main points about bringing LGBTQ issues into middle schools is that there are different maturity levels across the grades. On the one hand, there are kids who are completely willing to embrace new ideas that are introduced to them. On the other hand, it is important to note that there are students who are stuck in their own thoughts and ideals. He wanted to make a point that at this age almost all information that a child is receiving comes from their parents. At this age children believe that their parents can do no wrong and are always right. These obstacles will make it difficult to implement our project because at this age students mind are difficult to change and are closed minded to new ideas.

We asked him what he believed was being done in other places to begin implementing LGBTQ issues into the classroom. At this point Mr. Hatch isn't aware of any programs that are being implemented at schools. He knows he hasn't seen any school

wide programs in school districts he has been familiar with. The only thing that he could think of was for individual teachers to work to bring the issue to light in their individual classrooms. These teachers do things like tell students that using the phrase “that is gay” is discriminatory. He is one of those teachers who will ask them why they said that and have a further discussion in order for his students to have a better understanding of the impact of those words. This is his way of trying to get his students to think less about only them and look more at the real world impact.

Mr. Hatch believes that the earlier the students are introduced to controversial subjects such as LGBTQ issues the better it will be. The more exposure the students get to the topic the more it will be part of their lives. Ideally, he believed that elementary school would be the first place to start these discussions and acknowledged that it would be a great thing to bring to middle school classrooms, but will definitely be a challenge.

After our interview with Mr. Hatch, we noticed that there were some key points from his interview that we discovered in our literature review as well. One of the biggest things we noticed across both was the need for this topic to be in the classroom early in schooling. These discussions need to occur early so that children can develop an understanding of what these students have to go through and be able to create and acceptance across a campus. The challenge behind the topic was also acknowledged in both sources, however it is just a challenge that will have to be faced in order to really bring light to this issue to students across the world.

We began talking about how we would implement a curriculum into his classroom. He believed that it would be best to have small group discussion first so that the students would be more comfortable talking to one another. When in a large

classroom setting his students are more apt to conform to the ideas of their peers. We talked about the groups being no more than ten students so that it is a more intimate setting. We discussed having mixed sex in a group as opposed to the same sex. We still aren't positive how we are going to put the groups together but it is something we will discuss further. We then talked about furthering the discussion by bringing the whole class together after the small group discussions in order to see how the class dynamics would change in a bigger group where the students may not feel as comfortable. We are hoping that doing these many discussions will help make the students more aware of the topic as well as more comfortable with bringing it up with other students outside of their class.

This partnership will be very helpful for both parties involved. We will be able to gain a lot of insight because we will actually get to look at children's reactions to the subject, which can be very useful information for any current or future teacher who want to implement topics like this in their own classroom. We will be able to look at what worked and what didn't and evaluate how to make our lesson stronger. This will also be beneficial for Lob Arboles because they will also be able to look at the reactions of the students who participate and see how they can continue to implement things like this in other classrooms as well as evaluate whether they would want to continue working this topic into classrooms at the school.

We will begin with talking to Xavier, the principal at Los Arboles, so that we can get permission to implement our curriculum. We are going to incorporate articles that are stories that people their age have gone through to make it more real. We are going to use these articles as an opportunity for them to highlight and take notes so that they are

learning skills needed for college. We want to work on getting our students to understand that they are ambassadors that need to look out for people who are being discriminated against. These were all ideas that Mr. Hatch offered to us because he believed they would work well in his class and they were ideas that we had never considered. He made great points, which helped us to form a better organized curriculum. We are all so excited to begin implementing our curriculum in the classroom. It is great to have such a supportive community partner.

Project Plan

Project Goals

As we have begun exploring the deeper issues and problems behind the lack of support of the LGBTQ community, we have created some specific goals that we would like to address through our project. Through our literature review, we discovered that the entire student population at a school can be improved and feel more comfortable if the LGBTQ is also supported. We are hoping that through our curriculum, we can foster a stronger sense of support for the LGBTQ community in the classroom and create an environment where all students in a middle school setting can feel comfortable expressing who they are as well as standing up for fellow students in need.

Project Context

Our project will be set in a middle school context. Our curriculum focus will be able to work across the 6th, 7th and 8th grade classes, where teachers will be able to choose what they feel appropriate to address in their classrooms. For the project we will be implementing a portion of our curriculum into an 8th grade classroom at Los Arboles Middle School. We chose the 8th grade class because after talking to our community partner, we determined that the 8th grade classroom, because of the students in it, would be more mature and open to discussing the topic at hand.

Project Participants

We will be implementing the curriculum into an 8th grade AVID classroom. There are about 30 students in the class and there is a slightly higher ratio of girls to boys in the class.

Project Procedure

We are first working with our community partner in order to determine what he thinks would work best in a middle school classroom, and more specifically in his classroom, and how we can work that into the portion of the curriculum we would like to implement. We interviewed our community partner and asked him questions in regards to what types of assignments would work best in his classroom, as well as how to approach working with the class as a whole. We addressed different ideas of working individually, in small groups or in full classrooms and how to incorporate all of those types of learning into different aspects of the curriculum. We will spend the next couple weeks working through our full curriculum ideas, looking at literature, activities and assignments that we can add into it to create the most effective curriculum that we can. We will especially focus on the small portion we hope to implement in the classroom to make it incredibly successful in the class. After talking to our community partner, he suggested working with news articles and incorporating discussion questions in small groups with that article for his class. The particular class we will be working in is used to those types of assignments so we hoped to make that a comfortable transition with the topic because the type of assignment would be similar. After the students at Los Arboles are back from spring break, we are hoping to begin our implementation, over a couple days, in the classroom. After we have completed the lesson and received feedback, we will then complete our notebook and our project and assess how it went and how we can improve the project.

Role in Project Development and Implementation

Our role in the project will be to have our focus on creating this full curriculum and all of the aspects that will be involved in it. We will have to look at different types of activities that we can incorporate and how we want to make them available to teachers to use in their classrooms. In order to do this, we will be researching different curriculum ideas as well as talking to many different teachers in order to determine what would be successful at the middle school level in a curriculum. We worked closely together as partners on most of the aspects of the project. Some big specific tasks that were split between us helped us balance our roles within the project. Gentry will be doing most of the e-mail and phone communication with our community partner and informants and will create most of the individual lesson plan that was put in place in the classroom. Abby will be on formatting and putting together the full resource book as well as organizing the data and the final notebook organization. Most of our segments were worked on together and the actual presentation and all of the work at the school was completed with both of us there.

Community Partner Role

Our community partner is Chris Hatch, who is a teacher at Los Arboles Middle School. We will be working with our community partner on ideas for how to best work in the middle school classroom and what types of activities work best with these grade levels. We will also be working with our community partner by using his students and class and the group we implement our project with. He will be able to support us while we are working in his classroom in order to make this as successful as possible. We will also be using other teachers at Los Arboles as informants. We will be showing them our full curriculum and asking them to evaluate what they currently do in their classrooms as

well as if they believe our curriculum would be effective in their middle school classrooms.

Project Deliverables

At the end of our project, we will be turning in our full LGBTQ curriculum that would ideally be implemented fully in a classroom. We will also have a section where we will incorporate the responses of the participants and well as reactions and advice from the many teachers that we talk to. From the teachers, we are hoping to have them look through our full curriculum, and provide feedback and what aspects they would implement in their classroom and what advice they have for making it a stronger curriculum. See appendix C for complete Curriculum Resource Notebook.

Project Timeline

Week 7: Meet with principal at Los Arboles to confirm plans of implementing the curriculum in a classroom

Week 8: Begin formulating curriculum- Putting together the literature summaries, finding articles.

Week 9: Complete curriculum- Determining discussion questions, journal reflections to incorporate.

Week 10: Implement curriculum in classroom.

Week 11: Implement curriculum and collect and formulate assessment.

Week 12: Work on Retrospective Paper

Week 13: Organize and complete Capstone Notebook and submit Retrospective Paper

Week 14: Turn in Capstone Notebook and begin creating presentation

Week 15: Finish Capstone Festival Presentation

Week 16: Capstone Festival

Assessment

For the assessment portion of our project we have two different target groups. We want to assess the AVID eighth grade class at Los Arboles Middle School. We also plan on giving our curriculum to the teachers at Los Arboles Middle School and letting them look it over. We will be giving each of our targets different questions. We will give the students a survey assessment before we implement any of our curriculums with them. We are hoping the scaled assessment with a shorter amount of questions will not overwhelm the students for the project (See appendix B for complete survey instrument). The same survey will be given after we implement our curriculum to see how their views of LGBTQ issues have changed. We will also give them a brief questionnaire about how they liked the activities, in order to make us more knowledgeable about what the students would prefer. We will be giving the teachers open ended response questions in order to gauge what they think about our resource book and what the benefits are of having this type of guide be used in the classroom. They will be asked questions prior to looking over our curriculum to get a better understanding of what is already done in their classrooms. A different set of questions will be asked after they read our curriculum to assess how they would feel about implementing aspects of it into their classroom. This type of assessment was used in order to get much more detailed feedback on the full resource book.

The goal of the curriculum is to get the students to start thinking about their own perceptions of people who identify as LGBTQ. We are hoping to see changes in how the students we work with perceive this community, as well as positive feedback about the

resource book from teachers. We are hoping the resource book provides a variety of activities that will make teachers and students alike more comfortable addressing this topic in the classroom. After we look at our assessment results, we will be able to see how effective our project was in the classroom and whether or not the students have more awareness of the issue and possibly have changed perceptions from negative to positive. We will also be able to address the concerns from the teachers, in order to build up a stronger curriculum with a stronger variety of activities.

Results

The implementation of our capstone was done at Los Arboles Middle School where we knew that students would benefit from our curriculum. The eighth grade students who were part of the classroom that we implemented our capstone were extremely mature for their age. It was an AVID classroom where only the brightest students are admitted. It meant that we would be able to touch on such a controversial topic as the gay community with them. We created an assessment that would be used before and after we did our lesson with the students to see the effectiveness of our curriculum. It was a three day process in which every day we did something different with them. The first day was simply an introduction to us and the topic of LGBTQ. We wanted to make sure that they had a clear understanding of what the acronym meant. We gave them our pre assessment then passed out an article. The article was about a middle school student who had been bullied about being gay and the story of what she went through. It was meant to make the topic more real for the students so that it wasn't just some random person but someone they could relate to. The second day we had the students split into three different groups to talk about the article that we had read the previous day to get more reactions from them. The final day was done in a small group to see the dynamics between the large and small groups. The topic was again about any questions they had regarding the gay community. Overall it is an easy three day plan that will make the students more aware of the struggles that are happening within the gay community.

The pre and post assessments that were given to the students were meant to gauge how effective our lesson plan had been. There were six questions that were asked related

to how comfortable they were with the LGBTQ community as well bullying that happens on their campus. We asked the same set of questions for the pre assessment as well as for the post assessment to see if the students had changed their opinion about the LGBTQ community. There were questions asked about the amount of bullying there is on campus and whether or not it is related to a person who identifies as gay. The goal of the curriculum was to get the students to begin thinking more about their own opinions and standpoints.

When looking at Figure 1 (Appendix C) the results of the pre assessment show that there is about three fourths of the assessed students feel they are aware of the gay community. There was a small amount of students that didn't feel like they had been exposed to issues within the gay community. After we had implemented our curriculum with the students we were able to find that there was a change in how much they felt they were exposed to the gay community. There were nearly three-fourths of the students who strongly felt that they had been exposed to issues within the gay community. We had nobody respond that they didn't feel they had exposure to the gay community.

One of our main goals was to make the students feel like they can be more comfortable around people who identify as LGBTQ in their everyday lives. In the pre assessment we had about the same amount of students who disagreed that they felt uncomfortable around people who identify as LGBTQ. After we implemented our curriculum the number of people who strongly disagreed with feeling uncomfortable around the gay community went up, which can be seen in figure 5 (Appendix C). This showed us that by talking more about the gay community made the students feel more comfortable around them in public. Since there are more people who are familiar with the

gay community that means there will be less bullying happening. Figure 6 (Appendix C) shows that the number of people who feel more comfortable around people who identify as LGBTQ went up after the curriculum was implemented. Since the curriculum had been implemented we had nobody say that they aren't aware of LGBTQ issues. This can be seen in figure 7 (Appendix C) of our results.

The goal of the curriculum was to make students become more aware of their surrounds which includes the reality that they will meet someone who is in the gay community. Since this lesson plan was used in the classroom the students were able to identify with someone who is in the same grade they are and has gone through tough situations. Many of the kids had no idea the extent of the bullying that happens at their age. They could all identify with experiencing or seeing some kind of bullying and were concerned. We taught them to be an advocate and help to diminish the amount of bullying they see. Overall the curriculum was extremely successful and could be implemented in classrooms all over the country.

LGBTQ in the Classroom:

A Resource Guide

A Note from the Creators:

We want to thank you for choosing to explore the options presented in our resource guide in order to bring LGBTQ awareness and issues into more of our middle school classrooms. In the following guide, we provide you with short reviews of different literature that address different aspects of what LGBTQ youth go through in school. With each book, we also provide example discussion and essay questions that can be used for assessment as well as opportunities for students to journal. We also provide a couple brief articles found on the web with other discussion questions that can be used as small and large group activities. We hope you will use this book as a guide for resources you may not know about with questions activities that you can use and possibly alter in order to work the best in your individual classroom. Thank you.

Gentry Willcoxson
Abby Williams

LITERATURE REVIEWS
AND DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS

The House You Pass on the Way

The House You Pass on the Way, by Jacqueline Woodson, is a wonderful story about a young girl, Staggerlee, and her journey through understanding a homophobic world and exploring herself and her sexual identity within that world. Staggerlee doesn't really fit in with the girls and other kids at her school. Staggerlee knows that she loved a girl named Hazel. But also knows that she shouldn't tell anyone about it.

Staggerlee is going through a lot of fear in regards to who she is and who she loves. She knows that she is a lesbian but fears telling anyone because of the negative response she may get from her family and from other people around where she lives. She is worried that her family will not be okay with her being in love with this girl, even though there has never been a reason for her to really fear that. She did, however, experience rejection from the one girl that she loved, Hazel, which is a reason that she now fears coming out to others. She is forced to just quietly deal, or more like not deal with the feelings that she had for this girl. That is, until her cousin Trout came to visit, who we also determine is a lesbian. Staggerlee feels very comfortable confiding in Trout and talking with Trout about her feelings and becoming more open and truthful with herself. Trout is someone who is also like Staggerlee and shares many of the same feelings because they are both lesbians. This creates a comfort of community for Staggerlee, that allows her to really become open with herself. Trout allowed Staggerlee to feel more comfortable with herself, but still she does not tell anyone about her feelings by the end of the book. So even though Trout has helped Staggerlee become more comfortable with these thoughts and feelings she still has enough fear of not knowing what will happen if she comes out that it prevents her from fully expressing herself and how she feels.

Spending time with Trout helped bring out confidence in Staggerlee, even after Trout had left for the summer. This confidence leaves Staggerlee somewhat however when Trout stops writing and calling. When she receives a letter from Trout, who now wants to be referred to as Tyler, stating that she now has a boyfriend and is having a great time with him, Staggerlee feels rejected again, just like she was with Hazel. This puts some more doubt into Staggerlee about coming out and moving on because she has lost the community and support that made her feel stronger.

This was a very good book that really helped me think about how someone who has experienced a lot of fear and goes about thinking through who she is and her identity, especially in regards to her sexuality, and how the fear she is dealing with shapes that. The book walked through a small journey of hers that helped her really start thinking about who she is and how she wants to be able to portray who she is to others.

The House You Pass on the Way

1. Essay Questions
 - a. Trout became a very good friend to Staggerlee. Describe how Trout helped Staggerlee grow and what happened to the pair when Trout went home.
 - b. Why did Staggerlee fear coming out? Where did she fear rejection and why?
2. Discussion Questions
 - a. What role did Staggerlee's parents play in her life?
 - b. Do you remember when you explored certain aspects of your own personal identity? Did you have support in friends and family? Was it easy or difficult?
 - c. Is it important to have strong friendships in order to be comfortable with who you are? Why or why not?
3. Journals
 - a. Students should receive the discussion questions in order to reflect on what they will talk about in the classroom
 - b. Students reflect on the events that happened in each chapter in order to organize their thoughts
 - c. Students can reflect on how they feel about what they are reading but will not be obligated to share personal feelings in the classroom

Down to the Bone

The book Down to the Bone, by Mayra Lazara Dole, is the story of a lesbian named Laura and her journey through love and loss and exploring how to come out in the homophobic community that she lives in. Laura is a closeted lesbian to everyone except for her two year love, Marlana and her best friend forever, Soli. When her Catholic school finds out that she is a lesbian and then they inform her mother that she is a lesbian, Laura is not only kicked out of school but also out of her home because her mother refuses to have a daughter that is gay in the house. Laura can not be with Marlana anymore, as she is sent off to marry a man in Puerto Rico. Laura is forced to move in with Soli, the one person in her life who fully accepts Laura as she is. Laura is then introduced to many gay and lesbian people in her community who are out, but is at a loss for how to go about coming out and being a part of their community.

Laura goes through a lot of fear and rejection regarding her being outed at school. She is rejected by her mother, who kicks her out of the house until she will confess who she was with and can prove to her mother that she is not a lesbian. She is rejected by her school as well as most of the friends she had there, except for Soli. And finally, she is rejected by Marlana, who promises to come back to Laura but ends up marrying a man, and calling Laura to inform her that she has “turned straight” and that Laura should really consider finding a man to love as well because it makes everything easier. Laura is devastated, and eventually does try to do what Marlana suggests, and try to convince her mother, as well as herself that she is straight. She begins dating a man named Francisco, but is forcing herself to lie to him and pretend that she is fully interested, when really she can only think about Marlana and a new girl names Gisela, who has sparked Laura’s interest.

It is not until Laura begins to spend more time with her new friends like Tazer, a boy in a girls body, and other gays and lesbians who are out and have a lot of confidence in themselves does Laura slowly begin to realize that she can’t change who she is and who she loves. In the end, she is able to share her feelings with Gisela, come out to her friends such as Tazer and Francisco, and stand up to her mother and tell her that she will always be a lesbian and that her mother will have to accept her for that.

Laura has a lot of fear about the homophobic judgments of other people regarding the fact that she is a lesbian. When she sees lesbians and gays out that are with their partners and very comfortable with it, she has trouble with that and doesn’t feel that she can be with someone out in the open like that for fear that she will be judged. It wasn’t until she had a sense of community and support from her friends that she began to feel confident and realize that she could be out and there would still be many people who can support her and will stand behind her decisions.

Down to the Bone

1. Essay Questions
 - a. Laura faced rejection in many places after she came out as a lesbian. How was she rejected and by what people or institutions did she feel shut out from?
 - b. Why is having strong sense of community and support so important when someone is determining whether or not to come out to family and friends?
2. Discussion Questions
 - a. Marlana claims that she met a man and that made her “become straight.” Do you think that the influence of others, or the influence of the area you’re in, can have an effect of perceptions of being gay, lesbian, or straight?
 - b. How was Soli important to helping boost Laura’s confidence in herself? What about Tazer?
 - c. Laura often noticed herself having homophobic thoughts, before she came out as a lesbian. Do you think this happens often with members of the LGBTQ community who are not out? Why or why not?
 - d. What were the differences in the struggles that Laura went through versus the struggles that Tazer had to go through as a “boy in a girls body”?
3. Journals
 - a. Students should receive the discussion questions in order to reflect on what they will talk about in the classroom
 - b. Students reflect on the events that happened in each chapter in order to organize their thoughts
 - c. Students can reflect on how they feel about what they are reading but will not be obligated to share personal feelings in the classroom

Boy Meets Boy

Boy Meets Boy, by David Levithan, is a wonderfully funny book following Paul, a young gay sophomore and his travel through love, heartbreak, friendships and fights. The community that is created in Paul's high school is one that is incredibly accepting of all people no matter what their sexuality. Paul is gay and very accepted. Infinite Darlene is a homecoming queen and the star quarterback. The cheerleaders ride Harleys. They have created a very diverse and accepting community for all students to feel welcome in. Paul has two best friends, Joni and Tony. Joni and Paul have been friends forever. Tony, also gay, but who has unsupportive parents, is also a best friend to Paul. At the beginning, Paul is just moving through high school. He is moving away from his ex-boyfriend Kyle who destroyed his world and has just met a wonderful boy named Noah, who he is working to get to know.

Noah and Paul begin to get very close, emotionally and physically with each other, while Joni is also separating away from the group because of her own boyfriend, who no one likes. It is until Paul makes a huge mistake and kisses Kyle, who wants to be back with Paul, that Noah abandons him and Paul is devastated and forced to work harder than ever to get back to Noah. With Tony struggling with his parents after being spotted with Paul, Joni off with her boyfriend and all Paul's other friends fighting over one thing or another, Paul feels alone and struggles to fight for his friends and for the boy he loves. He is able to prove to Noah that he only has eyes for him and they are able to reconcile. Joni rejoins the group in order to help Tony, and Tony has a small victory with his parents in order to help create more independence.

As I read through this book, I felt an incredibly positive vibe coming with it because of the strength of the community around these students. The high school allowed these students to be comfortable with being out around each other. This allows all of these students to come out and be comfortable to grow and learn from each other without fearing negative reactions and incidents because of it.

Boy Meets Boy

1. Essay Questions
 - a. How did the accepting and positive community in the high school help make it so that all members could be comfortable with themselves?
 - b. Paul goes through many good times and struggles with friends and relationships through the book. Can you describe any similar good times and struggles you have gone through with friends and family members? How did you work through them?
2. Discussion Questions
 - a. How are the struggles that Paul goes through different than those of what Tony goes through?
 - b. How can students at a school create the same positive, accepting environment that is found at the school presented in the book?
 - c. What stereotypes or “cliques” do you see in your school? Are there any instances where the common stereotypes are broken, like in the novel?
3. Journals
 - a. Students should receive the discussion questions in order to reflect on what they will talk about in the classroom
 - b. Students reflect on the events that happened in each chapter in order to organize their thoughts
 - c. Students can reflect on how they feel about what they are reading but will not be obligated to share personal feelings in the classroom

The Mariposa Club

The Mariposa Club, by Rigoberto Gonzalez, is a wonderful story about the Fierce Foursome, Maui, Trini, Issac, and Lib, and their journey as four gay boys in high school who have to endure many different challenges in school and at home because they are gay. All of their stories are different but they all have a huge influence on each other and change each others lives through the community that they have built through their friendship. Maui, the main character of the story does not have too hard of a family life, although it frustrates him that his dad simply ignores the topic of him being gay. Maui struggles through much of the book with where he wants his place to be in the world. He is sure of his sexuality but unlike his three best friends, he is unsure of where he wants to take that once he is out of high school. Trini has been kicked out of his house because his mother does not support that he is gay. Even though Trini has faced these issues with his family, he is very sure of himself and where he wants to go in his life, which often frustrates Maui. Lib is the smartest of the group and is only a junior. His family is incredibly accepting of him being gay and they actually have a harder time dealing with the fact that he discovers that he feels most like himself in a goth style of clothing and attitude. Isaac is the friend closest to Maui, and is also the one friend that abandons the group and runs away in order to discover who he wants to be and finds himself and a boyfriend on his adventure away.

Maui struggles to really figure out where his place is throughout this entire book. He feels strong when he is in his small community of his friends who provide him with strength and understanding, but once he moves farther away from that community, he feels lost and isn't sure where he should go with it. The foursome work through much of the book to start The Mariposa Club, which ends up becoming a gay straight alliance, which they would like to start for their school. There is a lot of opposition from people in the school as well as from members of the community that takes away from the spirit of most of the boys, except for Lib, who is determined to win the fight. A riot at the mall where Lib was trying to promote the club resulted in the suicide of Tony, a member of the Mexican gang Los Calis, who was gay but did not feel comfortable enough to come out. The boys also took this as a loss to their own and really ended up bonding the three boys that were left, Maui, Trini and Lib, together after the loss of Tony and Isaac returning to his new life away from them.

This book really addresses the many struggles that gays and lesbians in high school must face in order to try and get some support for them. In this story, these boys created their own small community within themselves in order to stay strong and positive to work through their issues through high school. However, they did not have a lot of support when it came to the rest of the larger community around them. This made school bearable because they had each other, however they struggled when they were working with the community.

The Mariposa Club

1. Essay Questions
 - a. The Fierce Foursome are best friends. What are the similarities and differences between their struggles and successes as four gay males?
 - b. What differences occur between having a supportive small group of friends, versus the full support of the entire community? How might this affect how comfortable or uncomfortable someone who is gay or lesbian be with being out?
2. Discussion Questions
 - a. This issue of teen suicide is addressed in this book. How did this tragedy bring the friends closer?
 - b. Do you think Gay-Straight Alliances in schools help foster a more respectful and accepting environment?
 - c. Where do you go to when you are looking for support to help you determine your path for the future? What makes you feel comfortable talking to certain people or not talking to others?
3. Journals
 - a. Students should receive the discussion questions in order to reflect on what they will talk about in the classroom
 - b. Students reflect on the events that happened in each chapter in order to organize their thoughts
 - c. Students can reflect on how they feel about what they are reading but will not be obligated to share personal feelings in the classroom

God Box

The novel “The God Box” by Alex Sanchez was written about coming out with the background of being a religious person. I wouldn’t give the book a five rating because it was a slow read. I would give the novel a rating of four because there was the topic of homosexuality but I didn’t feel it was an actual representation of what would happen. Pablo, the gay boy in the book, was a religious person who was struggling with where he fit into the world according to the bible if he was a gay man. The reason he begins to seriously question his sexuality is because a new boy, Manuel, comes to the school and is openly gay. Pablo was dating his best friend Angie who he had known since childhood who was a girl. The book is set in Texas, which is historically a place that is less accepting of the gay community. Much of the book was spent analyzing different bible verses that have been used to discredit people who are homosexual. That aspect of the book was interesting but seemed to make the book move slower. There were a lot of repeated bible verses that were over analyzed every time. I understand that the character was trying to analyze them himself in order to find someone but I felt there was too much. I like how Sanchez had tension between Manuel and Paul through their arguments over what the bible verses truly meant. It made for a good dynamic between the two as well as development for their relationship.

Paul is feeling torn between who he is and who he wants to be throughout the book. He is dating Angie and feels that he does love her but only as a friend. He is always praying for the Lord to help him having stronger feelings toward Angie. He has a box in which he writes his prayers and always asks for him to change these feelings that he has. When Manuel comes to school and is out and proud Paul doesn’t know how to act. Paul has a group of friends who he always hangs out with and after Manuel joins the group two of his friends decide they can’t hang out with them anymore. The entire group is extremely religious and have been taught their entire lives that homosexuality is wrong. Angie and Dakota decide to start a Gay Straight Alliance on campus because Manuel gets harassed and made fun of so much on an everyday basis for being gay. Angie hopes that Manuel feels support from his peers which he wasn’t getting at that point in their lives. Paul won’t support the club in the beginning because he doesn’t want others in school to think that he is gay. He has a fear that he will be rejected from everyone that he knows. He has heard his entire life that gay is wrong and a sin so he doesn’t want to be wrong.

Paul finds that he wants someone to confide in about being gay and goes to his pastor. His pastor proceeds to ask him about having intimate relations with other men, which Paul hasn’t. The pastor says that as long as he stays chaste than the Lord will forgive him. Paul is being told that it is being a bad person and needs to be changed. The pastor truly believes that being gay is a result of a childhood trauma which makes Paul think about losing his mother. Paul is encouraged to meet with someone from an ex-gay community in order to see that he can hide his feelings. He meets with Eric, an ex-gay, who tells him about how he lived a crazy life while he was gay. Paul couldn’t identify with this man because he doesn’t do drugs or sleep with a lot of men. Eric told him that he still has feelings towards men he has just learned to not listen to them and accept who is now. Paul didn’t see how that was helping at all. He was more confused after the talk with the pastor and Eric. Paul has only had his sense of fear reinforced because the one

person he came out to rejected who he was. Manuel would soon help Paul feel more support.

Paul has a strong attraction to Manuel and their relationship develops over time. Paul feels more comfortable when the two are hanging out alone than in public. When Manuel forces Paul to go to a movie with him Paul begins to feel uncomfortable. He is aware of the strong feelings he was having but was still confused about acting on them. Manuel tries to kiss Paul which leads to Paul leaving Manuel stranded at the mall. He would soon find that Manuel was in a comma at the local hospital because of a gay bashing. A bully at school had decided that they hated Manuel enough to attempt to kill him. This is when Paul decides that he needs to take control of his life and begins to come out to the people he cares about. Manuel is that figure in Paul's mind that will be his support and guide him.

Paul finds that Angie had her own suspicions of Paul being gay. She becomes the only true support that Paul has because Manuel is in a comma. She is supportive of his decision to come out and encourages him to tell his father. There is an instance in the novel when his father's girlfriend mentions that a coworker has a lesbian daughter. His first reaction was to say, "That's too bad." Paul has fear that he is going to be rejected by the most important person in his life. When Paul does come out to his father there is no reaction and they go on living their life in the same exact way. Not until one day in church does Paul know his father's true feeling. The pastor is preaching that homosexuality is wrong and his father stands up to protest. Together Paul and his father walk out of church after his father yells that the pastor is wrong. It makes Paul feel more confident in who he is. He knows that he was the support of being a gay man in his own family.

One event that I hadn't expected was the bashing that happened in the novel. I liked this aspect of the book because it is something that happens to the gay community. The reaction from Paul and Manuel regarding the bashing was much different. Paul was angry at the people who attacked Manuel. He felt that they needed to be punished for doing such a horrific deed. When Manuel finally comes out of a comma he is more accepting. He writes his bashers in jail telling them that he forgives them. Manuel says that they are probably going through much worse than anything he went through. Manuel is so confident in who he is that he can accept that there are people who will have hatred towards him in this world. Paul still has to learn this lesson but I think it will happen as long as Manuel is in his life.

The God Box

1. Essay Questions
 - a. How does the book incorporate the bible verses into the novel to show both the positive and negative examples being homosexual? Use specific examples.
 - b. How different are the two lives that are lived between Paul and Manuel? What makes those lives different or similar?
 - c. What role does the setting of Texas play throughout the book?
2. Discussion Questions
 - a. What role does Paul's girlfriend play in the novel?
 - b. When Paul confides in his preacher what is his reaction? Is this supportive? What kind of affects could this have on an individual who identifies as LGBTQ?
 - c. Does Paul's father's reaction seem realistic?
 - d. Manuel goes through a life threatening situation in the book. Why does he react to it in the way that he does? How does Paul react?
 - e. Does having a supportive family matter when an individual is coming out? Does it matter if those people are family or friends?
3. Journals
 - a. Students should receive the discussion questions in order to reflect on what they will talk about in the classroom
 - b. Students reflect on the events that happened in each chapter in order to organize their thoughts
 - c. Students can reflect on how they feel about what they are reading but will not be obligated to share personal feelings in the classroom

Grl2grl

The novel “Grl2grl” by Julie Anne Peters is absolutely stunning. It is a collection of short stories about young women who are exploring their self identity. This novel would be a 5 on my scale. Peters was able to tell the story of many girls through showing only one event that would impact them forever. Each story was slightly different than the next and some were more serious than others. There is at least one short story that someone can relate to. I like that people can relate to the book even if you don’t identify with being a lesbian. There are stories about first love and first heartbreak that everyone can relate to at some point in their lives. The way that she was able to incorporate the feelings of a lesbian woman into these everyday scenarios is absolutely brilliant. The novel helps to show the reader that being a lesbian isn’t any different than being a heterosexual being. There are still the same feelings and thoughts no matter who the person might be. It will help to bridge the gap between tolerance and intolerance for those who discriminate against homosexual

One of the short stories called “Boi” was a powerful story. It was about a girl who felt she was suppose to be born a man. Peters was able to reach write so beautifully the feelings and emotions behind this girl. They way she was able to write the story of a girl who would be a victim to not only assault but sexual assault was absolutely stunning. This is only one way that Peters was able to frame the life of a lesbian girl. What I thought was best about the novel is that she deals with a deeper issue which is self identity and the emotions behind first love. In one of the stories there is a girl who has a crush on her teacher. It is one way to shed light on an individual’s infatuation with a teacher which can happen to any young student. She was able to incorporate the lighter more funny stories with the deeper darker stories. Since there were many different stories it kept me interested in reading more. I wanted to know what kind of perspective she would tell the next story in. The story entitled, “Tiad” was a look into cyber space. There are many students who find friends in places like Facebook and then believe they are falling in love with that person. Yet the only interaction these people have ever had is over the computer. This is all too common in middle and high schools across the country.

Gr12Gr1

1. Essay Questions
 - a. What is something that all the stories had in common? Use specific examples.
 - b. Pick a story that you liked or could identify with. Write about what the character was struggling with. Why did you identify with that story?
2. Discussion Questions
 - a. What is the main point of each story?
 - b. What is the overall theme of the book?
 - c. How does each character in the novel react to what is happening to them?
3. Journal Questions
 - a. Each student is to journal on every individual story.
 - b. Allow the students to express themselves in their journal but make sure they are aware they won't have to share.
4. Story Art
 - a. Assign a story to an individual or a group of students
 - b. Each group will make a picture of what they believe to best represent the story.
 - c. The group will write a response to the story as well as an explanation of what they drew. They should draw on the significance each symbol on their drawing has to the story.

From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun

The novel, “From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun” by Jacqueline Woodson tells the story of a young boy who is forced to figure out who he is based on his family. His mother is a single mother who is working a job and trying to go to school to become a lawyer. Melanin and his mother have a special relationship with one another because they are all each other have. Melanin begins to feel like his mother is becoming more and more distant. The reason that his mother, EC, has become more distant is that she has a secret. She has been seeing a woman and hasn’t told Melanin about her. Melanin already has an idea in his head of what it means to be a gay. His friends joke around that he is a “faggot” because he does things like collects stamps of endangered species. Melanin has this theory that there are two types of faggots. The first type is the people who aren’t super macho and has notebooks to write stuff in. This is the type of “faggy” he would consider himself. The second type he considers the really messed up kind which are the people who truly have feelings for someone of the same sex. He found these types of faggots to be disgusting and the thought would make him want to vomit. These are the ideas of gay people that society had already imbedded in his mind.

When Melanin’s mother finally tells him that she is in love with a woman Melanin has a negative reaction. He completely rejects everything that his mother ever stood for and decides he doesn’t even want to associate with her. He has these ideas in his mind that his mom doesn’t like him because he is a boy. He believes that since she is gay he somehow is going to be gay as well. The truth of the matter is that Melanin has no idea what it means to be gay in society. All he understands is that his friends make fun of those who are gay and he doesn’t want to get made fun of. He is too scared about what other people think about him and his mother and not enough about the relationship they have to each other. His mother didn’t exactly tell Melanin that he is gay in the best possible way but it was something that she was obviously struggling with. The distance that she had with Melanin was all based on the fact that he didn’t know she was a lesbian. Melanin was being ignorant in completely closing himself off from his mother and not asking the questions that he has in his mind. In the end Melanin finally opened up to Kristin, his mothers girlfriend, and found that he liked her because she reminded him so much of her mother. He finally got an understanding that it was okay to have a mother who was a lesbian as long as you are confident in whom you are. He discovers that the confidence he has in himself with project to those around him. He can’t worry about the comments about his mother that he might get but he needs to worry about the happiness of the family and most importantly his mother.

From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun

1. Essay Questions
 - a. What is Melanin's perception of the gay community at the beginning of the book? What influences him? What are outside influences those skew societies' perceptions of the gay community?
 - b. Does the way that EC comes out to Melanin affect his reaction? Is this true of not only coming out but other aspects of life?
 - c. Does Melanin have the correct perception of the gay community? Compare and contrast the perceptions of the gay community with the true gay community.
2. Discussion Questions
 - a. What influences Melanin Sun's perception of the gay community?
 - b. How are Melanin and his mother's relationship at the beginning of the book?
 - c. How does Melanin and his mothers' relationship change throughout the course of the book?
 - d. What are the two types of gay that Melanin believes there are?
 - e. How does EC come out to Melanin?
 - f. How does Melanin react when his mother comes out to him?
 - g. What eventually happens that makes Melanin feel secure with his mother being a lesbian?
3. Journals
 - a. Students should receive the discussion questions in order to reflect on what they will talk about in the classroom
 - b. Students reflect on the events that happened in each chapter in order to organize their thoughts
 - c. Students can reflect on how they feel about what they are reading but will not be obligated to share personal feelings in the classroom

ARTICLES AND **ACTIVITIES**

I. Article Discussion

- a. Hand out the discussion questions
 - i. How did the article make you feel?
 - ii. Did you feel that middle school students are portrayed in a bad light?
 - iii. Do you see bullying happening on this campus because someone identifies as LGBTQ?
 - iv. Is there use of the term “that’s so gay” in the school?
- b. Have them read the article
http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39639709/ns/us_news-life/
- c. Tell the students to write down any questions they may have about the article
 - i. Mention that they should be thoughtful questions
- d. Ask the students how they felt about the article
- e. Large group discussion
- f. We will ask similar questions that were asked in the small groups
- g. Want to have an open dialogue about the topic and how they feel about people who identify with LGBTQ

II. Article Discussion

- h. Hand out the discussion questions
 - i. How did the article make you feel?
 - ii. Do you agree with the standpoint that bullying is increased in the LGBTQ community? Why or why not?
 - iii. Do you see bullying happening on this campus because someone identifies as LGBTQ?
 - iv. Is there use of the term “that’s so gay” in the school?
 - v. What are stereotypes that you have seen about the LGBTQ community.
- i. Have them read the article
<http://www.washingtonblade.com/2011/03/10/why-does-anti-lgbt-bullying-persist/>
- j. Tell the students to write down any questions they may have about the article
 - i. Mention that they should be thoughtful questions
- k. Ask the students how they felt about the article
- l. Large group discussion
- m. Want to have an open dialogue about the topic and how they feel about people who identify with LGBTQ

B. Assessment Tools

Student Assessments

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am aware of LGBTQ issues	1	2	3	4
I know people who identify as LGBTQ	1	2	3	4
I have witnessed bullying of students who identify as LGBTQ	1	2	3	4
I have bullied people because I know they are LGBTQ	1	2	3	4
I feel uncomfortable around people who identify as LGBTQ	1	2	3	4
I feel comfortable around people who identify as LGBTQ	1	2	3	4

Teacher Assessments

Pre-Assessment

1. Do you address any LGBTQ issues in your curriculum currently? If so, how?
2. How comfortable would you be implementing LGBTQ issues into your classroom?
3. What difficulties do you anticipate if you choose to incorporate LGBTQ issues into your classroom?

Post-Assessment

1. Would you feel comfortable implementing aspects of the LGBTQ issues from our curriculum? If so, which ones? How would you use them in your curriculum?
2. Please provide us with any comments, concerns, or suggestions for us about the curriculum?

Appendix C. Results Graphs

Figure 1. Pre Assessment Results (Frequencies)

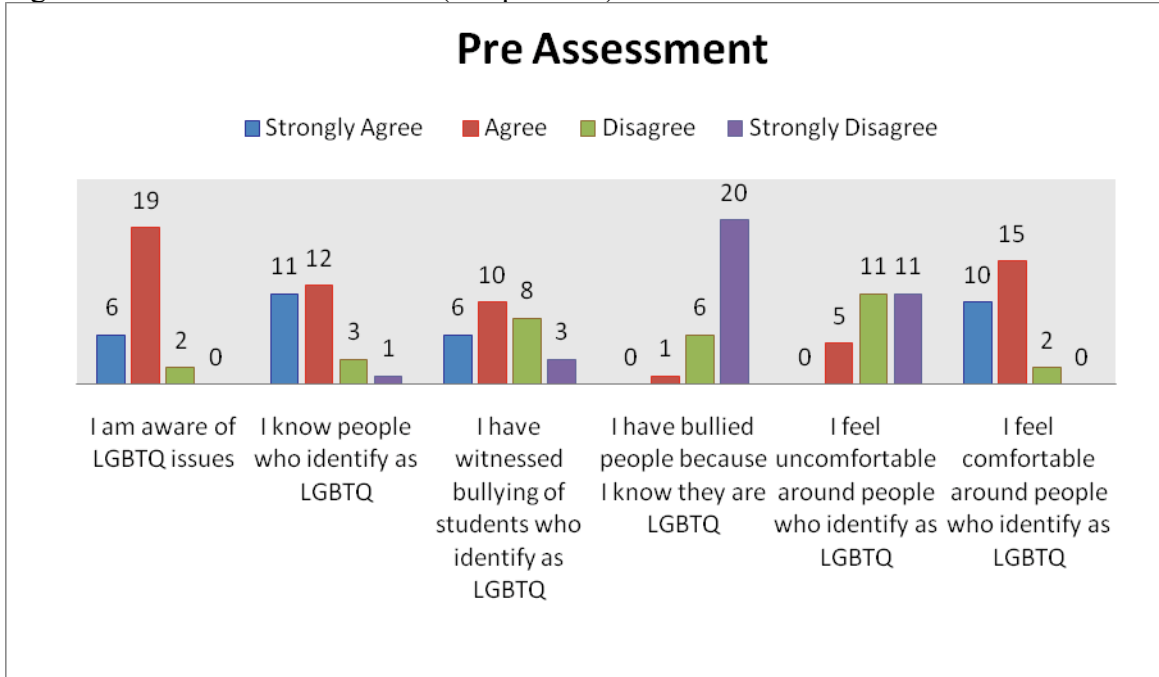


Figure 2. Pre Assessment Results in Percent (Percentages)

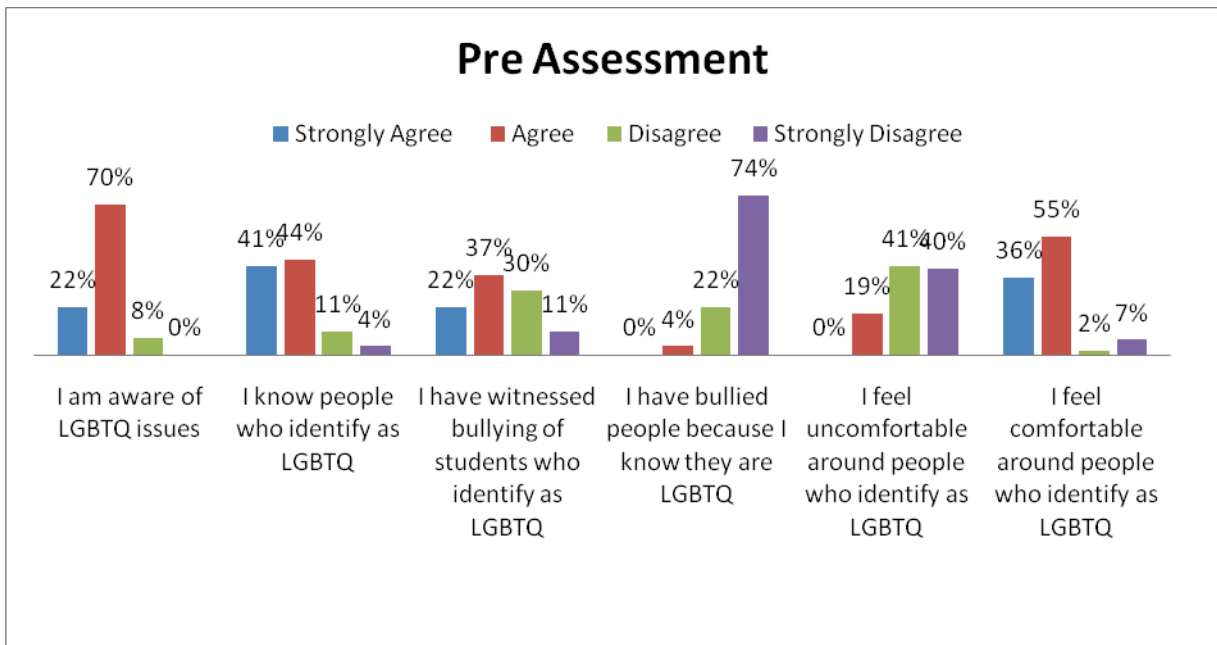


Figure 3. Post Assessment Results (Deliverables)

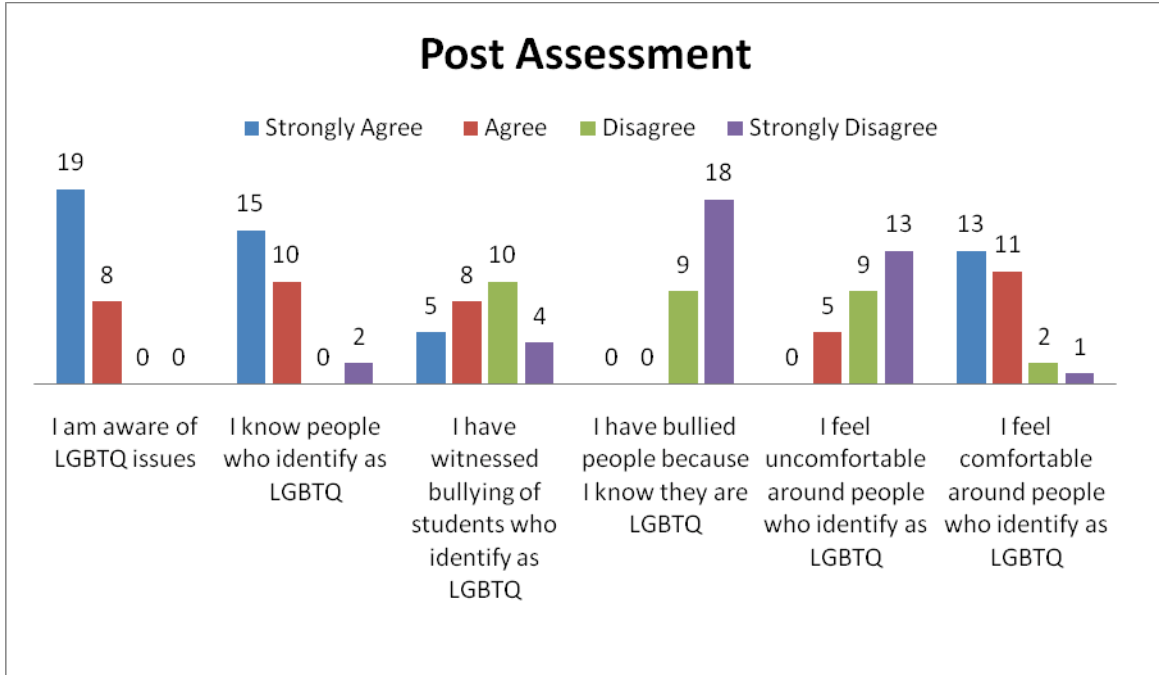


Figure 4. Post Assessment Results (Percent)

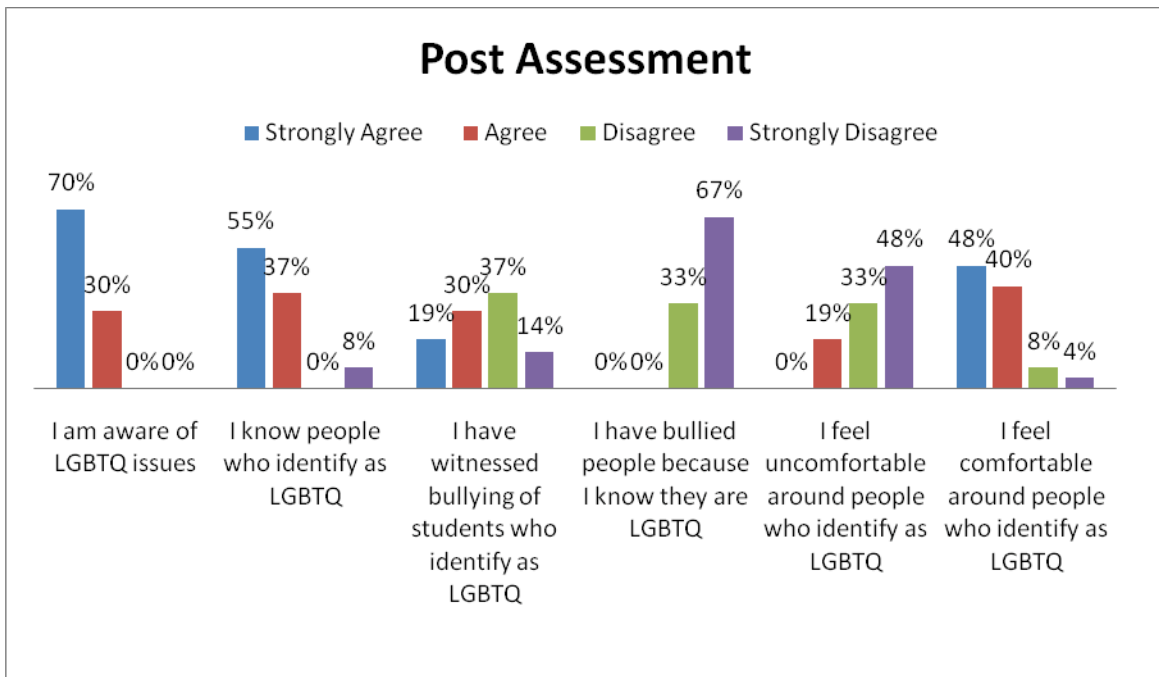


Figure 5. Pre and Post Responses: I feel uncomfortable around people who identify as LGBTQ

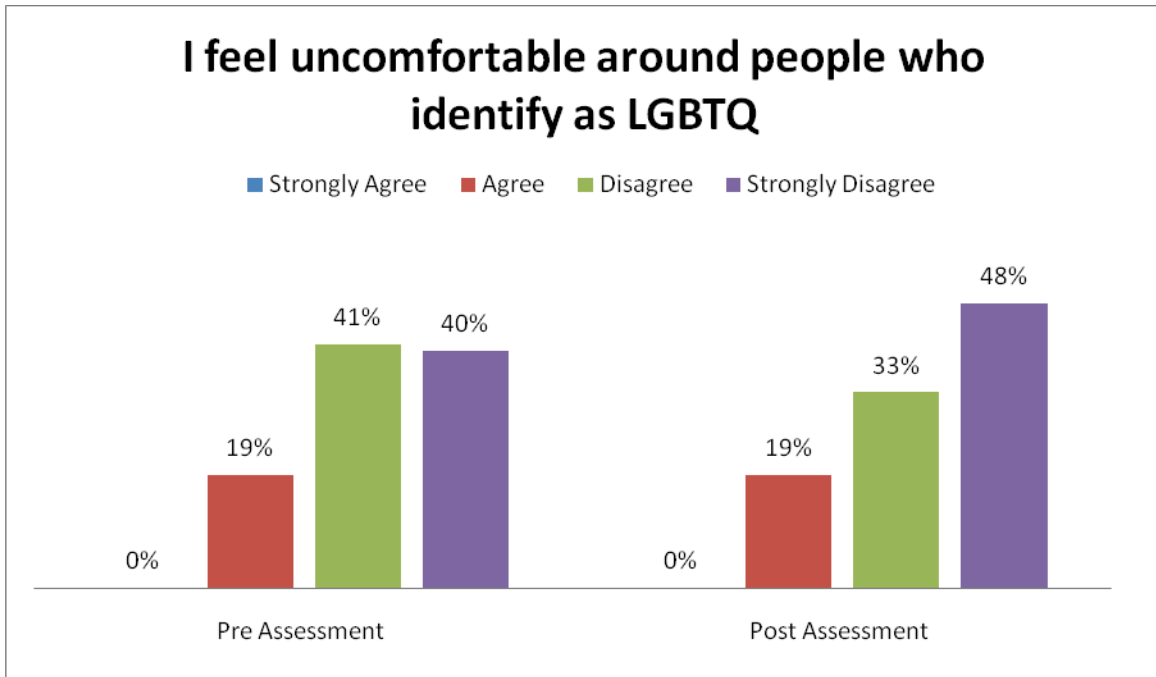


Figure 6. Pre and Post Responses: I feel comfortable around people who identify as LGBTQ

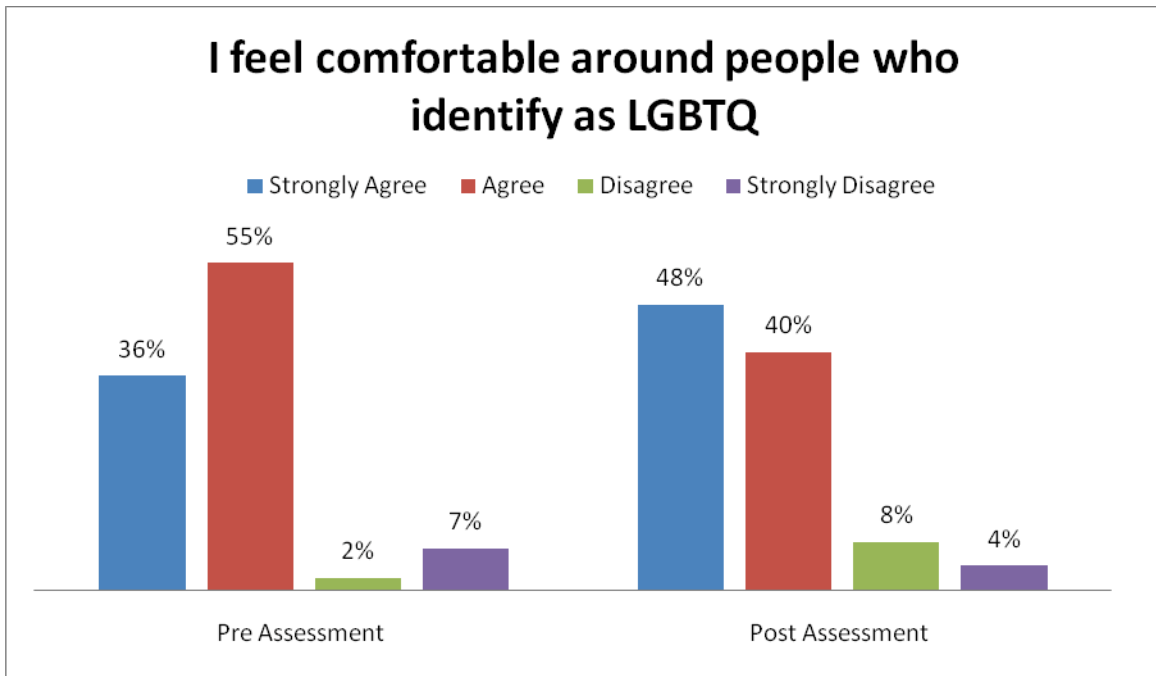


Figure 7. Pre and Post Responses: 6I am aware of LGBTQ issues

