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Joel Lopez

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## **Implementing a Resource Webpage for LGBTQ+**

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### **Author Note**

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### **Abstract**

Many LGBTQ+ students regularly face bullying at their schools due to a lack of staff education and resources to express themselves. The emotional, psychological, and academic effects result in high rates of isolation and suicide and low rates of graduation. This capstone project addressed the need for LGBTQ+ resources and staff involvement in the Salinas Union High School District. The result was an LGBTQ+ resource web page with access to comprehensive learning and social experiences to prepare LGBTQ+ students academically, emotionally, and socially. The importance of having resources for the LGBTQ+ through their education increases the rate of them being successful through their education. Having support in their school can lead individuals to feel more freely about themselves and their preferred gender. The recommendations for the agency are to continue pushing changes for the LGBTQ+ and be more inclusive in the District.

*Keywords:* LGBTQ+, webpage, resources, staff involvement, education

### **Agency and Communities Served**

The Salinas Union High School District works with the population of Salinas, California, through the education system. The agency's mission is guided by educational equity and through innovation, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of each student to ensure achievement of their aspirations. The vision of the SUHSD is to be an exemplary district committed to the advancement of all students. The services provided are social, emotional, behavioral, and academic support for all students to develop into resilient, compassionate, and well-rounded adults (SUHSD, n.d.). Within the population served, the project will address LGBTQ+ students.

### **Problem Description**

#### **Problem Definition**

Social acceptance is becoming more normalized, and students who identify as LGBTQ+ have been challenged to show their true colors in Monterey County. Social change is leading individuals to share who they indeed are. However, as a larger population of students come out, some factions still bully and attack the LGBTQ+ community causing them to be affected emotionally, psychologically, and academically. According to a recent report, transgender youth face fear and abuse on campus. They are three times as likely than their non-transgender peers to report feeling unsafe, and 41% report having been "pushed, shoved, slapped, hit, or kicked by someone one or more times" while on school grounds (DePedro & Elfers, n.d.). The high percentage of abuse at school has drastically affected the students that identify as LGBTQ+.

Students that identify as LGBTQ+ in the SUHSD need support and feel that the school supports their preferred gender. The global pandemic has affected students that are LGBTQ+ due to them not being able to attend and gather with those that represent LGBTQ+. The pandemic

has caused the LGBTQ+ to be living stressful situations and has affected their mental health leaving them with unique challenges (Morning Consult, 2020). The pandemic only increases the health effects on the LGBTQ+, causing them to develop anxiety and depression. The challenges become barriers for the LGBTQ+ to seek services and support, leaving them with more consequences than solutions. Having resources where LGBTQ+ students can seek assistance can lead them to have more success opportunities.

### **Contributing Factors**

#### ***Resources for the LGBTQ+***

One of the main components of the issue is that the Salinas Union High School district does not have a resource web page on their home page where students, parents, or the community can find resources for the LGBTQ+ community in their city. When students seek help, there is no explicit knowledge to know if the district supports them. LGBTQ+ students often promote advocacy and education for the larger student body and provide an outlet for socializing, finding support and encouragement, and talking about the challenges faced on and off-campus (Cohan, 2021). Not having resources for the LGBTQ+ can cause them to feel unsafe in school and drop out. LGBTQ+ students are more likely to drop out due to hostile school climates and challenges outside of school caused by stigma and discrimination (Palmer et al., 2016). Students that drop out are caused by schools not supporting LGBTQ+ students and feeling unsafe in their schools. Mental health can take a turn for the LGBTQ+, especially when looking for resources, and their schools do not provide any.

#### ***Uneducated staff about LGBTQ+ community***

If teachers are not being educated or taking a course on how to support their LGBTQ+ students, it can affect their outcome in society. Promoting teachers to be more diverse and have an open mind can help individuals such as the LGBTQ+ feel safer in the school environment, causing them to engage more freely in school. The challenges that LGBTQ+ students face are the United States' policies for topics related to LGBTQ+. There are still school policies that create a barrier to teaching about LGBTQ+ topics. For example, reporting harassment can often be ignored by the school, with 60.4% saying staff ignored it (Kosciw et al., 2017). In addition, the school's policies and practices do not conduct public displays of affection. Tovar (2021) notes that inclusive language avoids biases and helps reduce discrimination against people of race, gender, sexuality, and axes powers. The districts have to change their policies to educate staff about the importance of LGBTQ+ support services.

## **Consequences**

### ***High rates of suicide***

LGBTQ+ students who are bullied are affected emotionally, psychologically, and academically, resulting in tragic events. If the schools do not have a safe environment for LGBTQ+ students, there can be high levels of suicide. Stigmatization due to gender preference has caused higher rates of suicide, mental health, substance use, and exposure to violence (Garcia et al., 2019). LGBTQ+ students are at greater risk since they are more vulnerable than others. They can experience discrimination at school and at home, which can lead them to take away their life. Two in five LGBTQ+ in the United States have seriously considered taking their life away in the past year (Fitzsimsom, 2020). That is equivalent to 40% of youths considering suicide. Of those LGBTQ+ youths who have been depressed and considered emotional

counseling, 46% are still unable to access health professionals (Trevor, 2020). The primary cause of not being able to get the proper care causes the LGBTQ+ youth to have a higher level of anxiety and depression. LGBTQ+ affected by the major depressive disorder is 55% more than two in three who experience this outcome (The Trevor Project, 2020).

***Isolation or low graduation rate***

If students face events that leave them not wanting to attend school, it can develop LGBTQ+ students to become homeless and isolate themselves from others. Kang and others (2020) note that more than 70% of LGBTQ+ report avoiding school activities due to feeling unsafe. Estimated that at least one LGBTQ+ aged 13-24 attempts suicide every 45 seconds in the U.S (The Trevor Project, 2021). The LGBTQ+ need support from the schools they attend in order for them to be successful through education. More than half, 57.6%, of LGBTQ+ students who complained about not finishing high school were to schools having unsafe climates due to harassment (Palmer et al., 2016). Having a large percentage of LGBTQ+ students being victimized can cause them to have low graduation rates and have an impact on their education.

**Problem Model**

Contributing Factors

Problem

Consequences

Resources for the LGBTQ+	Students who identify as LGBTQ+ are facing larger percentages of bullying and are affected emotionally,	High rates of suicide
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	psychologically, and academically.	
Uneducated staff about the LGBTQ+ community		Isolation or low graduation rate

**Capstone Project Description**

I am creating a webpage for the Salinas Union High School District to increase resources for the LGBTQ+ students and the community. Lacking resources for LGBTQ+ students to have in school can cause them to feel unsafe. Developing a web page where students can seek resources will benefit them from the chance to continue their education. The project will address the problem with LGBTQ+ students facing more significant percentages of bullying and are affected emotionally, psychologically, and academically. There will be a tab on the web page where students can view the different schools in the District and have information regarding LGBTQ+ clubs, times of meeting, staff that coordinates the meeting, and social media accounts the club has. Also, the webpage will have librarian resources where students can search for LGBTQ+ books written by LGBTQ+ authors. A critical key about the web page is a Monterey County resources and hotlines for the LGBTQ+ where students and the community seek additional resources the community has for them. The project's purpose is to create more diversity and inclusiveness in the School district and community.

## **Project Justification**

The methodology is to create more diverse schools and communities with the project that is being implemented. Creating more self space in schools where LGBTQ+ students can feel supported and encouraged can allow them to succeed and pursue higher education. The surveys that staff has done helped us understand if having an LGBTQ+ resource web page in the District impacts the schools and community. The staff opinions on the web page pass through the data collected and are well supported for the District to include LGBTQ+ web page resource. The surveys helped supply the project data and desired outcomes for the project.

## **Project Description & Implementation Process**

### **Project Implementation**

The first step that I had to do was start by creating a logo for the District that represents the LGBTQ+ community to implement the project. After creating and collaborating with Monterey County Behavioral Health and Salinas Union High School District professionals about ideas about the logo and approval, we were able to move on with our project. The logo took a few months to be created and approved as our LGBTQ+ logo for the District. Next, I had to create a survey with questions about if the school has any resources for the LGBTQ+ or clubs. The second step is to contact schools LGBTQ+ club advisors that are offered at schools. Sending surveys about the names of the clubs, times and places for their meeting, names of the advisor, and any social media platforms the clubs might have.

From the data collected, I developed a calendar that had all the names of the schools, LGBTQ+ clubs, time, location and day they met, advisor names, and social media. Gathering all the essentials, I created a calendar with all the different school clubs that have LGBTQ+ safe

spaces. After creating the calendar, the next step was to send surveys to librarians to get more information about if they have any LGBTQ+ books. Once the data was collected, I was able to organize what schools have LGBTQ+ books. Lastly, I research organizations that Monterey County supports schools, LGBTQ+ students, and families. The list also includes hotlines for the crisis to help students and families. Lastly, I drafted a web page and organized the information about LGBTQ+ clubs, LGBTQ+ librarian books, and the Monterey County resources list.

### **Assessment Plan**

Creating a safe environment where LGBTQ+ students share their emotions can be critical for their resolution in their education. Designing a web page where students will have access to information regarding LGBTQ+ clubs and resources in the community can change their perspective on attending school. Surveys will be conducted on April 26, 2022, which will allow the intern to know if staff and students in the District find the webpage resourceful and share their opinions. The surveys will ask questions about the clearness of the webpage, is the information helpful, and is there anything they would like to add or see in the future. The program outcome and desired goals are to accept all students regardless of their preferred gender and support the LGBTQ+ students who are having trouble coming out to their families and others. To measure, our process will have to do it based on how far it advances in the school board and what changes they will make for the LGBTQ+ students.

### **Expected Outcomes**

The expected outcome is to increase awareness for LGBTQ+ students and make a safe environment for them at school. Hopefully, the increased percentage can be positive in other staff and students finding the web page resourceful for the school and them. Having resources for LGBTQ+ and clubs that cannot attend on a resource page in the school district can help many

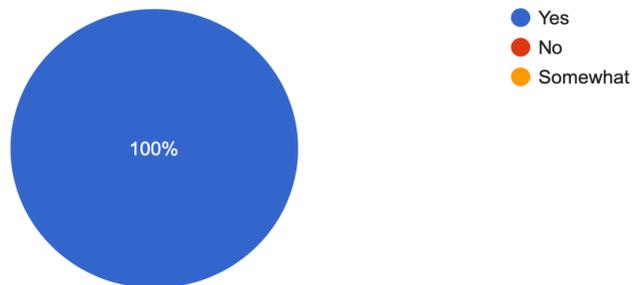
LGBTQ+ students discover who they are. The data collected will be collected through surveys done and calculate the amount of time the website uses. Mid-April should be when the intern would have collected the data. Supporting students who are LGBTQ+ will help the community be more diverse and can lead individuals to higher education in a safe environment.

### Project Results

The results that I was able to get from the project were that staff found the helpful webpage and showed that the District supports inclusivity. I was able to collect the data by sending a survey to staff members of the Salinas Union High School District. Although the number of staff was not in more significant numbers, it was due to the shorter time frame, and there are still more survey answers that will come later. The number of surveys that I received all 100% show that having an LGBTQ+ web page in the School District will benefit the students and parents.

Will students and parent/guardians find the webpage page useful?

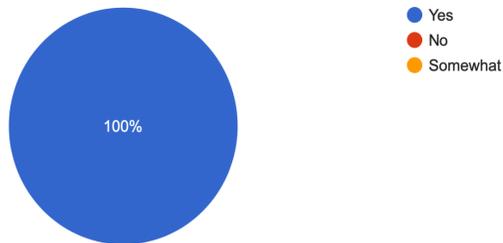
3 responses



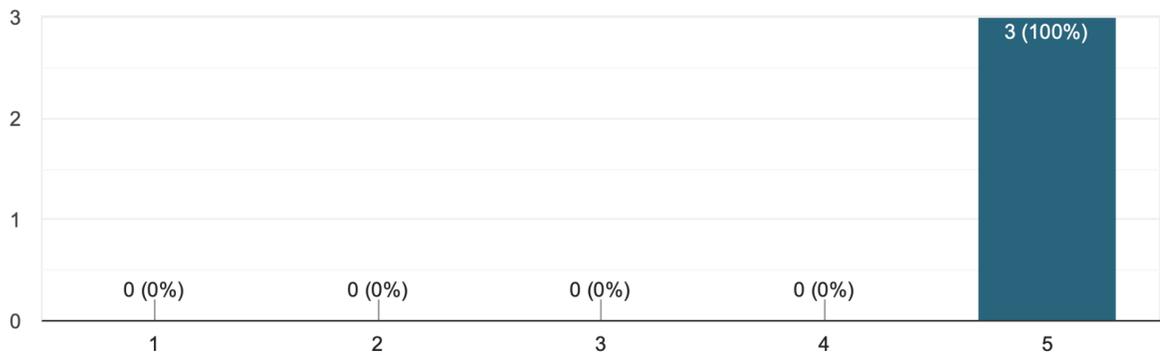
Does the webpage have resourceful information?  
3 responses



Does having this webpage support inclusivity in our District?  
3 responses



Is the webpage clear and easily understood?  
3 responses



As a result, the project will impact the LGBTQ+ students and the community through the survey. Having the Salinas Union High School District be more inclusive can cause change for the LGBTQ+ students and start having more acceptance in other schools around the area.

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

Throughout the project, it has proven that developing a web page for LGBTQ+ resources helps students and families be more successful in education and feel safer in school. The result shows that having more diverse and inclusive schools will help students that are LGBTQ+ be more successful through their education and be more aware of the community resources they provide. Additionally, supporting LGBTQ+ students in the School district will create more diversity in the community and allow students and individuals who are afraid of coming out to be more supported.

Recommendations that I would make would be to make sure that meetings with directors are being done within the time frame it was input. Sending out surveys can take a while for them to all get back, which can cause a conflict for your portioned need to evaluate. Having more training about LGBTQ+ in the schools will help staff members and teachers be more aware of the challenges LGBTQ+ students face. Finally, motivating and inspiring the District staff to be more inclusive will allow acceptance of the students that are LGBTQ+ and will be recommended to have more resources for their students.

### **Personal Reflection**

The overall experience interning in the Salinas Union High School District allowed me to learn new skills and improve my professional development. My passion for working with the school District led me to be more involved and make a change in the District that I attended.

Wanting to make a difference in the District where I attended school motivated me to impact the District and community. Developing a web page to support the LGBTQ+ students and community will impact the District, and knowing that I was part of the actions motivated me to continue working on creating new sources in the school that can implement that support their students.

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**Appendix A**

**Scope of Work**

<b>Table 1. Scope of Work</b>					
<b>Title: Creation LGBTQ+ community resource page on district website</b>					
<b>Goal: Help student feel safe and secure about who they are through resources where individuals can attend for support</b>					
<b>Primary objective of the project: Help students in the LGBTQ+ community to find resources and awareness for the percentages of suicide prevention</b>					
<b>Phases</b>		<b>Activities</b>		<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Timeline/Deadline</b>
1	Select Capstone Project	1.1	Discuss capstone project ideas with mentor	Final capstone project idea approved by mentor/instructor	Sept-Dec 2021
2	Plan Project	2.1	Discuss plans and materials with mentor	Final plan and materials ideas approved by mentor	December 2021
		2.2	Collaborate with LGBTQ+ club advisors that are offered at school	Meet with school mentors to get information on the resources	February 2022
		2.3	Develop list of resources to provide in the website	Submitted to mentor for comments/suggestions	February 2022
		2.4	Develop draft web page with resources provided in schools	Post questionnaire submitted to mentor/instructor for comments/suggestions	February 2022
		2.5	Students share their opinions on a list of resources through a survey	Review survey results and submitted to mentor for comments/suggestions	February 2022
		2.6	Edit final materials (survey)	Materials final approved by mentor	March 2022
3	Implement Project	3.1	Deliver informational website to district	Date/time confirmed/approved	March 2022
		3.2	Share parent informational in districts website for LGBTQ+ community	Date/time confirmed/approved	March 2022
		3.3			March 2022
		3.4	Create website for student to view example	Date/time confirmed/approved	March 2022
		3.5	Implement post survey to students	Preliminary results submitted to mentor for approval	March 2022

4	Assess Project	4.1	Compile and analyze solution to help students in the LGBTQ+ community/complete draft report on findings	Findings report completed/submitted to mentor for approval	April 2022
5	Report on project findings	5.1	Complete reporting requirements	Final agency and capstone reports	April 2022
		5.2	Prepare Capstone	Instructure approval	April 2022
		5.3	Final Preparation for Capstone festival	Final presentation at capstone May 13	May 2022

**SUHSD LGBTQ+ Webpage Feedback Survey**

**SUHSD LGBTQ+ Webpage Feedback Survey**

Hello,  
 You are receiving this survey in order to solicit feedback on the design of the DRAFT LGBTQ+ Resource webpage on the District Website. In order to help our students and community, we have created a webpage where there will be resources for LGBTQ+ students and families about school clubs and community resources. The survey will help us learn about effectiveness of the website.

To access the DRAFT SUHSD LGBTQ+ Resource Page: <https://www.salinasuhsd.org/Page/2976>

Thank you! Please reach out with any questions.

Hayley Newman (hayley.newman@salinasuhsd.org) and  
 SUHSD PPS Intern, Joel Lopez



Does the webpage have resourceful information? \*

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Will students and parent/guardians find the webpage page useful? \*

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

Is there any additional information that should be added to the webpage or changed?

Long answer text

Is the webpage clear and easily understood? \*

1 2 3 4 5

Not clear and hard to understand      Clear and easy to understand

Does having this webpage support inclusivity in our District? \*

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

How does this LGBTQ+ webpage on the District website benefit students and families?

Long answer text