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LGBTQIA+ inclusive library programming goes beyond policies, procedures, and passive collection development to embrace instructional curriculum that honors all voices. Ideally, school libraries should provide "diverse and inclusive resources, programs, and services that meet the needs of all learners; represent various points of view on current and historical issues; and provide support across a wide range of interest areas with opportunities for learners to recognize themselves" (AASL 2018). There is a significant amount of research on the ways educational policies and state laws affect LGBTQIA+ students. However, despite the school library profession's commitment to inclusivity, we do not have as much information on the relationship between curriculum and LGBTQIA+ student well-being. Even so, there are a few important things we do know:

- LGBTQIA+ students have grade point averages ranging between 9 and 15% lower than other student groups (Batchelor, Ramos, and Neiswander 2018)
- When schools and teachers implement an LGBTQIA+-inclusive curriculum, students are more likely to feel safe at school (Szalacha 2003)
- Schools with LGBTQIA+ positive curriculums in place consistently record lower levels of verbal and physical violence against LGBTQIA+ students (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, and Greytak 2013)
- Straight [and cisgender] students who are consistently exposed to LGBTQIA+ positive curriculum, develop a stronger sense of empathy for, and understanding of, LGBTQIA+ history, culture, and individuals (Oltmann 2016).

There are a variety of learning structures and activities that can be designed to increase visibility and awareness of LGBTQIA+ lives, improving student empathy, perception of safety, and sense of belonging. We would like to cover a few of those approaches in this article, adapted from our book, *LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Children's Librarianship: Policies, Programs, and Practices*.

LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Storytimes

Use storytimes to engage students in conversations on the binaries and categories that dominate our thinking about different groups of people. When we think of the categories of boys and girls, we may consciously or unconsciously be bringing all sorts of ideas about what those categories mean and how we decide who is a girl and who is a boy. One way to explore this idea during storytimes is to think about books that contain characters who challenge gender norms and gender stereotypes. For example, the picture book *Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race* by Margot Lee Shetterly and Laura Freeman offers an opportunity to discuss how certain careers and disciplines (like engineering and math) are often associated with certain categories of people (i.e. white men). Looking for these instances provides a jumping off point to guide students into breaking down the categories they have created about gender. Other strategies that can be used to queer storytimes with "straight books":

1. Ask students to identify the pronouns being used in the book and discuss what those pronouns tell them about the characters. What expectations, activities, clothing, expressions might be associated with those pronouns? Then, when reading, you can deliberately change pronouns and engage kids in describing how the pronoun change impacted their reading and understanding of the characters.
2. Look for characters in the text to highlight through questioning and discussion—either with characteristics that are typically associated with a particular gender (rowdy boys, sweet girls) or who challenge gender stereotypes in some way. You can also invite speakers who challenge gender norms, like male nurses, female firefighters, male cosmetologists, etc., to read and participate in storytime.

3. Invite students to discuss and write their own endings to books, giving them an opportunity to incorporate and share their personal experiences.

LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Book Clubs

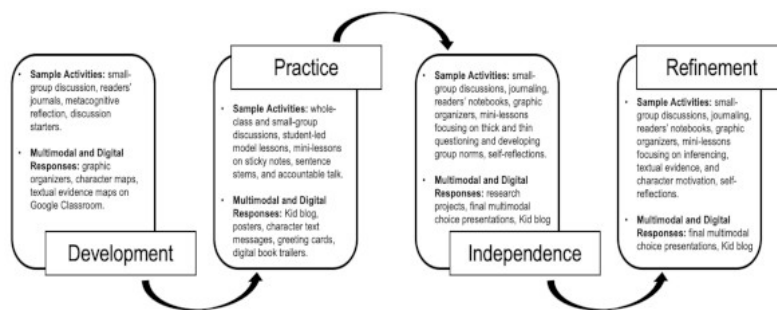
Book clubs are a wonderful venue for breaking down stereotypes by helping students develop a meaningful awareness and understanding of the rich diversity present among LGBTQIA+ individuals. For LGBTQIA+ students, books with LGBTQIA+ characters and themes are a mirror, combating the isolation and marginalization brought on by an academic curriculum that overwhelmingly reflects straight, cisgender, white male individuals. For non-LGBTQIA+ students, these books are a window into the inner and outer lives of people who are different from themselves, a key to helping young people develop understanding, empathy, and compassion for others (Batchelor, Ramos, and Neiswander 2018). Robin Jocius, a literacy education professor, and Samantha Shealy, a third-grade teacher, developed a powerful approach: critical book clubs. These clubs aim to "empower readers and writers to critique the world around them and advocate for social change" through a series of activities that "support students' development as empathetic readers, writers, and human beings" (Jocius and Shealy 2018). Critical book club programs help students investigate societal issues at play in a book, breaking these issues down and discussing them through the lens of students' own experience, as well as the cultural realities present in the text. Critical book clubs emphasize these connections and discussions by extending exposure through social action projects such as digital storytelling presentations, letters to politicians and community leaders, or a volunteering event.



Critical book club programs help students investigate societal issues at play in a book

Critical book clubs are more likely to be successful when they: 1) are scheduled in repeated cycles throughout the year, connected by one particular theme; 2) focus on, and scaffold, a student's growing ability to engage in critique with peers and across multiple books; 3) give students the ability to respond using technology-rich platforms; and 4) connect books read with community-based projects that promote social justice. Over the course of one school year, Jocius and Shealy fine-tuned a process for successfully implementing this book club model with a group of third graders: Development, Practice, Independence, and Refinement. Their model and process are reproduced (with permission) here.

While not all book club programming lends itself to the list of learning activities pictured here, there are several techniques that, if applied, help students engage more meaningfully with what they are reading, enhancing their ability to consider multiple perspectives, identify and question stereotypes, and challenge accepted beliefs. First, consider previewing several books using book trailers, readers theater etc., and allow students to make the final selection. When selecting books to present, beyond typical considerations such as well-developed characters, appropriate and relatable writing voice, and high-quality artwork, it's helpful to work through a few questions (Norton and Vare 2004).



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1. Do the books address topics of interest and/or importance to LGBTQIA+ individuals?
2. Do any of the storylines highlight life-affirming characteristics?
3. If a character faces challenges, are problems solved in a realistic way? Are goals reachable?
4. Are characters well-developed and representative of a diverse range of LGBTQIA+ persons?
5. Are LGBTQIA+ characters shown taking part in everyday life (non-emphatic visibility where a character's gender identity or sexual orientation is not the main idea of the story)?

Second, help students confront their own stereotypes and viewpoints by inviting members of the community who can share their own stories or perspectives related to the book club's theme. Jocius and Shealy invited parents, therapists, and disabled visitors to challenge their students' definition of "normal" and "disabled" when reading their selected novel. Third, use scaffolding prompts and model small and whole-group discussions. Sentence starters such as "I wonder . . .," "Can you explain . . .," and "I agree with ___ because . . ." are awkward at the beginning but, over time, help students develop confidence as well as the habit of supporting their discussion with evidence/quotes from the text. Fourth, if assessment is necessary, allow students to "think and reflect creatively to position themselves as meaning makers and inquirers." (Short, Kauffman and Kahn 2000). The options are endless: drawing, poetry, songwriting, videos, blogs, games, models and so on. Move beyond the book report.

Help students make the connection between their book club discussions, the growth and development of their ideas, and contributing to a more socially just society through community action. Community action projects do not need to be expensive and ambitious, but they must build on and add a realistic weight to the book club's theme. These

can be smaller (e.g., a letter-writing campaign to city council or a special presentation for a community organization) or bigger (e.g., a partnership with students in a lower or higher grade, a volunteering effort through collaboration with a non-profit, or student-authored creative works sold for fundraising purposes).

LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Instructional Partnerships

The biggest doorway school librarians have into curriculum is through our role as instructional partners when we collaborate with classroom teachers to co-teach, infusing information literacy throughout the study of different disciplines. In discussions about collaborative co-teaching, we tend to focus on the act itself: the technology tools, how we divide responsibilities, inquiry models, scheduling; and those things are important. However, establishing a collaborative co-teaching culture that encourages a multiplicity of voices, perspectives, and representation in curriculum means addressing a much more complex system with parts that are interrelated. We also want to acknowledge that collaborative co-teaching can be a difficult issue that warrants a book of its own. We will not be fully breaking it down in this article, but it is helpful to review where the opportunities for fostering LGBTQIA+ inclusivity exist.

There are plenty of opportunities at each point of the instructional partnership continuum (cooperation > coordination > collaboration) to expand the inclusivity of teaching practices through your co-teaching efforts. At the far left of the continuum—cooperation—work to intentionally diversify the authors, characters, and perspectives in fiction and nonfiction resources provided. For example, encourage classroom library purchases from the ALA's Rainbow Book List, an annual annotated bibliography of quality LGBTQIA+ literature organized for readers from birth to age 18. Create discipline and grade-level-specific annotated digital resource lists containing LGBTQIA+ educational sing-alongs, storytimes, mini lessons, and social justice project ideas. Develop digital pathfinders for young students that highlight LGBTQIA+ contributions to the topic they are exploring, whether this means briefly identifying a scientist or inventor as an LGBTQIA+ individual, pushing back against traditional gender norms by highlighting male-presenting persons in careers typically cast as female and vice-versa, or linking to resources that describe a broader variety of family structures.



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In the middle of the continuum—coordination—the classroom teacher counts on the school librarian to adjust library instruction in support or extension of the learning outcomes the teacher is addressing in the classroom. Ways to spur inclusivity at the end of this continuum include diversifying resources as described above. However, because there is more of a formal structure in place, you are also able to promote inclusivity through pedagogy, technology integration, and differentiation of instruction. Model LGBTQIA+ friendly teaching practices such as grouping students by categories other than boys versus girls, voicing your pronouns, and implementing inclusive verbal techniques such as non-gendered language. Check the technology tools being integrated into the lesson or unit: Are these tied to the school's intranet system and automatically populated by official student records? Would a child be accidentally "outed"? Provide technology tools that maintain student privacy or that allow students to create accessible avatars. As always, follow up on the ways the school's Internet filter may adversely affect student access to information, particularly by surfacing websites that cast LGBTQIA+ topics, terms, or individuals as inherently negative.

Spurring inclusivity at the end of the continuum—collaboration—can occur throughout the lesson or unit since at this level, the school librarian's educational goals are on equal footing with the classroom teacher's priorities. In addition to the methods we mentioned above, work to ensure LGBTQIA+ resources, themes, individuals, and topics of relevance are routinely included in culturally relevant ways. Review research topics through an inclusive lens. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are the resources there? Do they exist in my collection whether in print or digitally?
2. Are the resources accessible? Can students easily locate these items? Are they cataloged in discoverable ways? Are search term scaffolds or other curated lists needed to aid with discovery? Are online resources appropriately labeled by the school's Internet filter or are these blocked?
3. Do resources represent LGBTQIA+ voices? What is missing? If funds or resources are not available can these be obtained from the public library or a community organization? Can these perspectives be presented by a guest speaker?

When studying events or individuals, formally identify and highlight LGBTQIA+ people who made contributions, won awards, and broke records or barriers. If students are completing a social studies inquiry project, encourage the use of resources such as the National Park Service's *Telling All Americans' Stories: LGBTQ Heritage* web portal (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/tellingallamericansstories/lgbtqheritage.htm>) or the Digital Public Library of America's primary source sets (<https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/stonewall-and-its-impact-on-the-gay-liberation-movement>) so that students see these topics as important, valued, and worthy of study. Keep in mind that "by restricting LGBTQ informational access, schools at least implicitly condone homophobia... this sets a dangerous expectation that only certain groups should be allowed representation" (Pierson 2017).

LGBTQIA+ Inclusive School Libraries

We would like to end this article with one last recommendation: **Read LGBTQIA+ Books!** Read titles that are included on award lists (e.g. the Stonewall and Lambda Literary youth book awards and ALA's Rainbow Round Table book lists). Likewise, following queer authors and allies on social media can alert you to books that are

coming out and receiving acclaim (and critique). This is especially important for books that show up on banned or challenged lists frequently. If you are worried that a particular title will be the subject of controversy, be proactive and read the book, making note of the book's merits, putting potentially controversial content in context, and being aware of the many possible audiences for the book. We encourage you to explore the works cited list below as you put together your reading list. We wrote *LGBTQIA+ Inclusive Children's Librarianship* to help school librarians welcome, affirm, treasure, and advocate for each child they interact with. The best part is the more awareness we develop, the more we work toward establishing welcoming and affirming programs, the larger the group of people we will inadvertently support. We invite you to join us in this important and life-saving work!

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