Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland

Belong To

Education

Resource

Inclusion Theme

ABC OF INCLUSION

True LGBTQ+ inclusion is about making LGBTQ+ inclusivity part of everyday life in your school, Youthreach or youth service. An inclusive environment, inclusive curriculum and inclusive polices have been shown to be some of the main factors in creating a space where LGBTQ+ young people feel equal, safe, and valued.

A: Inclusive Environment

Think about your environment and creatively consider how you can ensure the environment is visually LGBTQ+ inclusive. Here are a few ideas:

Reflection Questions:

- Think about your school/Youthreach/youth service – would a member of the LGBTQ+ community know that you support them? How might you show that?

- Consider whether LGBTQ+ families, relationships and identities are represented in images around your school /Youthreach/youth service? Is it just in one area or at a certain time?

- Do trans and non-binary young people feel supported in your school /Youthreach/youth service? Are there facilities for trans young people e.g. gender-neutral bathrooms?

- If an LGBTQ+ or questioning young person wanted to talk to someone or join an LGBTQ+ group, are there posters showing who to talk to or where to go?

Creating an Inclusive Environment Visibility: LGBTQ+ Flags and Colours:

You will see lots of flags representing different LGBTQ+ identities. Perhaps these flags and the related identities might be placed around the building to educate, inform and support.

You can use the Pride rainbow flag colours in many ways to represent your support. Here are just some action ideas:

- Create rainbow murals with chalk, paint or collage.

- Make rainbow friendship bracelets.

- Rainbow badges/sashes.

- Wearing jumpers with the different colours of the rainbow.

- Use rainbow face paint.

- Paint rainbow steps (with permission of course!).

- Create rainbow bunting.

- Bake rainbow cakes and biscuits.

Representation:

While promoting the rainbow flag and colours are wonderful ways to show the LGBTQ+ community you care, it is just as important, if not more so, to think about how LGBTQ+ rights, families, identities and relationships are represented in your environment. Here are some action ideas:

- Ensure age-appropriate LGBTQ+ literature is available in the library.

- Whenever a family/relationship/identity is represented in a poster, try to make sure different types of families are represented.

- Create a photo collage/mural or exhibition representing all types of families/relationships or identities.

Classroom/Environment:

Let young people know that your classroom/youth group is an LGBTQ+ safe space with stickers and posters. Staff could also put a sticker on their laptop or back of their diary so if young people see you on the corridor, they know that you are an ally. This small step can make a huge difference in a young person's feeling of safety and belonging.

It's important to follow through and challenge any biphobia/homophobia and transphobia in the classroom or in your presence, to ensure young people know that the space really is safe.

Community Environment:

There are LGBTQ+ youth groups across Ireland offering spaces for LGBTQ+ young people to connect, have fun, and get support.

Connect with your local LGBTQ+ groups/services and create a poster advertising the service. Include the details of a supportive adult in your organisation that young people could go to if they need to talk.

Visit www.belongto.org to find information about LGBTQ+ youth groups nationwide.

B: Inclusive Curriculum

Including LGBTQ+ identities in the curriculum has been shown to result in a more positive school environment, by promoting more positive feelings about LGBTQ+ issues and persons among their peers.[3] Including LGBTQ+ identities in your lesson-plans is a great way to include positive representation of LGBTQ+ identities and help all students learn about diversity.

Findings from our 2019 School Climate Survey[1] showed us that including LGBTQ+ related topics in the curriculum means students are 26% more likely to feel accepted by the student body, 20% more likely to feel like they belong at school and 9% more likely to not to miss days of school due to feeling unsafe.

Reflection Questions:

- Think about what you learn in class/group. When and where are LGBTQ+ families, relationships and identities represented in subjects or programmes?

- How could staff be more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community in classes or programmes?

- Is LGBTQ+ history discussed? Do people understand why Pride is still so important?

Potential Actions:

At BeLonG To, we have reviewed most junior cycle subject curricula to find opportunities to integrate LGBTQ+ related topics, relationships and identities. This resource is available on our website. Why not send the website link to your colleagues and they can find ideas specifically for their subject?

List of subject ideas available:

- English
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Mathematics
- Business Studies
- Science
- History
- Geography
- Home Economics
- Visual Art
- Music
- Classics
- CSPE
- SPHE
- Digital Media Literacy
- Philosophy

Here are some ideas to bring the curriculum to life outside the classroom or group setting:

- Put up posters with LGBTQ+ terminology.

- Hang a world map showing where LGBTQ+ people are still punished and persecuted just for being LGBTQ+. You can use the IGLA world map of sexual orientation laws available in our Toolkit.

- Create a photo collage/mural of famous LGBTQ+ people including historical figures, scientists and musicians.

- Create a presentation on the history of Pride for all classes/groups. You could host a table quiz with fun prizes at the end to test people's knowledge.

C: Inclusive Policies and Practices

Making a specific reference to homophobic and transphobic bullying in your Anti-Bullying Policy or Code of Behaviour sends a powerful message that your organisation does not tolerate such behaviour. Not only does this show your solidarity with LGBTQ+ students, but it also aligns with the mandate of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) 'Anti-Bullying Procedure' to deal explicitly with homophobic and transphobic bullying in your school.

According to DES Circular 0045/2013: "these procedures require that the prevention of bullying must be an integral part of a school's anti-bullying policy. The education and prevention strategies that the school implements must be documented in the anti-bullying policy and must explicitly deal with the issue of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying."

There is strong evidence to show that students who attended schools with visible safe school policies and programmes reported more positive psychological outcomes.

In our School Climate Survey second-level students reported that that while 88% of schools had anti-bullying policies and procedures, only 29% explicitly mentioned sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.[1]

Reflection Questions:

- Does your Anti-Bullying Policy or Code of Behaviour explicitly mention homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying?

- Do all staff and young people know that homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language or actions will not be tolerated?

- Do staff proactively intervene if they hear or observe someone using homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic language?

- Is the expression 'That's so gay' used without challenge?

While the existence of policies and procedures is valuable, they cannot be effective without **proactive intervention by staff** when they hear or observe homophobic, transphobic or biphobic bullying.

Potential Actions:

- Review your Anti-Bullying Policy in line with the DES Action Plan on Bullying (2013) and the Anti-Bullying Procedures, ensuring that:

    - All staff are aware of the policy and their role in implementation, particularly in relation to homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language and name-calling.

    - A 'no tolerance' approach is taken by all staff in relation to homophobic and transphobic language and name-calling.

    - Make explicit reference to the nine grounds of Equality Legislation, including sexual orientation and gender in the policies.

    - Homophobic/transphobic bullying is recorded as such in the DES Anti-Bullying Procedures 'Template for Recording Bullying Behaviour' and monitor related trends.

- Invite all staff to increase their understanding of LGBTQ+ students' experience by completing our 90-minute E-learning Module: Creating LGBTQ+ Inclusive Schools and Youth Services available from training.belongto.org.

- Survey staff and young people to see if they are aware of the organisation's Anti-Bullying Policy or Procedures.