20 ideas

for creating schools that are open **to sexual and gender diversity**

2020 edition

CF**LGBT+**

LGBT+

The acronym LGBT+ designates people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans. The + signs allows us to include people with diverse identities who do not conform to heterocissexist norms of Quebec society.

There are a number of pressing reasons why LGBT+phobia and gender-based harassment need to be addressed in schools.

Students' safety and emotional health

Bullying and verbal harassment are prevalent in schools starting in early elementary school. Before sexual orientation and gender identity even become an issue, children begin to use LGBT+phobic insults to target those who do not conform to the dominant norms of our heterocissexist society.[1] Youth who are assigned male at birth, who are sensitive, artistic, or not athletic, and youth who are assigned female who excel at sports, do not dress in a feminine manner, or who aren't considered attractive, can easily become targets. Youth can feel threatened by gender norms and stereotypes. LGBT+phobias transmitted to youth can have damaging effects on those who are targeted. The fear of being identified as LGBT+, and then being stigmatized because of it, is a major reason behind depression, anxiety, and even suicide.[2]

A Québec researcher noted that numerous studies have concluded that young gay males are 6-16 times more at risk than heterosexual youth for attempting suicide.[3] Young lesbian girls as well have more suicidal thoughts and are five times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts.[4] Trans youth are particularly vulnerable (47% have suicidal ideation, 19% have attempted suicide).[5] Yet studies have shown that a supportive social environment was associated with significantly fewer suicide attempts.[6]

Reagrdless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, bullying of LGBT+ youth can affect their self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. Youth can attempt to escape a hostile environment through unhealthy behaviours such as skipping school, drug and alcohol abuse and high-risk sexual behaviours. LGBT+phobia can also have long-term effects on physical and emotional well-being. Adults who experienced LGBT+phobia during their youth often still feel the effects, even when the bullying goes away.[7] The section **"Homophobia/transphobia and youth: research"** on our website www.famillesLGBT.org/tools gives an overview of the extent and impact of this phenomenon in Québec's schools.

Citizens of the future

Schools are expected to prepare students to become active and engaged citizens in a democratic society. In order to meet the needs of all students, schools have slowly begun to adapt to include the voices, perspectives and experiences of all members of our multicultural society. An example of this is the introduction of the Ethics and Religious Culture program, as well as the inclusion of LGBT+ people in Quebec's new Sexuality Education Program.

It is of prime importance to address issues of sexual and gender diversity and equity in order to ensure that all children have the opportunity to see their lives reflected in the curriculum. To continue to improve our efforts at making schools more inclusive of diverse students and their families, we need to begin to specifically address questions around the plurality of gender identities, sexual orientations and relationships. If we hope to live in a society that values all people, and where every child has an opportunity to succeed, then we need to find ways to teach that include diverse experiences related to gender and sexual diversity, as well.

Academic success

In Québec and Canadian studies,[8] LGBT+phobic acts that were experienced, anticipated or witnessed lead to a variety of negative consequences. As men-tioned above, a great number of victims of LGBT+phobias experience psychological and emotional problems (sadness, withdrawal, depression), anxiety issues and low self-esteem. Some have suicidal thoughts or have even attempted suicide. These problems are directly or indirectly related to the LGBT+phobia that they experience at school. Because of this, many have difficulty maintaining friendships at school, and this adds to the isolation that they experience. To be able to tolerate these problems some students reported using drugs or alcohol.

LGBT+phobias also have an impact on academic success. Because they anticipated LGBT+phobic episodes or were forced to encounter their aggressors on a daily basis, many victims reported feeling uneasy at school and having trouble concentrating in class. Some skipped classes (often Phys. Ed.) or even whole school days, because they felt unsafe in their school setting. To varying degrees, the academic success of these young victims of LGBT+phobia was compromised because of their feeling of being unsafe in school. In some cases, experiencing LGBT+phobia lead to a significant decrease in academic success, while others reported having changed, or wanting to change, schools to free themselves from the bad reputation that followed them. In some cases youth have even quit school or expressed a desire to do so, to escape from LGBT+phobic harassment.

This research confirms what has been found in earlier American studies, that students who are the victims of LGBT+phobic harassment at school are more likely to miss school and less likely to pursue higher education.[9] Therefore if we reduce these barriers, it is logical to conclude that fewer students would miss school and more would continue on to higher education.

What can schools do?

There are several things that teachers, administrators and other professionals who work with youth can do in the classroom, school or community centre to promote understanding and acceptance and to create a safe and supportive environment for LGBT+ students and students with LGBT+ family members, as well as those who do not conform to heterocissexist norms.

Challenge LGBT+phobic language

1 **Challenge students' use of LGBT+phobic language in the same way that one would challenge racial slurs, and identify its use specifically as LGBT+phobia.**

2 **Structure a classroom discussion on LGBT+phobic language and educate students about words that are used in a derogatory manner such as 'fag', 'queer', 'lesbo', 'shemale' or 'tranny' and remarks like 'That's not a real girl/real boy'.**

3 **Don't let the phrases like "That's so gay," etc., go by without immediately acknowledging how they affect students.**

When students use phrases such as "You're such a lezzie!" or "Those shoes are so gay!" it is often dismissed as "harmless teasing" and not thought to be hurtful, especially where the intent is not to comment on someone's actual or perceived sexual orientation. However, regardless of what was intended, these terms associate homosexuality, bisexuality, transitude and non-monogamous relationships to something that's bad, wrong or inferior.

Schools have a duty to safeguard the wellbeing of all young people in their care. Failure to respond to LGBT+phobic language can have an impact on pupils' confidence and self-esteem, as well as on their academic success. In the same way that school staff can challenge racist language, they should feel confident to respond to LGBT+phobic language whenever it happens. LGBT+ students, those who are questionning and those who do not conform to gender norms are more likely to feel that their school is accepting and inclusive if school staff respond to LGBT+phobic incidents, including LGBT+phobic language.

See the module 'Reacting to Children's LGBT+phobic Words and Actions' and the classroom activity 'Understanding What Lies Behind the Words' with its information sheet 'Definitions and Origins of LGBT+phobic Insults'.

Model inclusive language

4 **Show support for LGBT+ youth as well as others who are victims of LGBT+phobia, through modelling inclusive language and behaviour.**

Teachers can show support for LGBT+ youth as well as others who are victims of LGBT+phobia through modelling inclusive language. Use language and examples that include a plurality of genders, sexual orientations and relationship-types, in your class lessons. For example, use 'partner' rather than 'boyfriend/girlfriend'; use the pronoun and first name that trans students identify with (e.g. 'he' if the person identifies as a man); use 'parent' or 'guardian' rather than 'mother and father'. Avoid language that reproduces gender stereotypes and presumptions in class activities (such as asking girls to help clean up or boys to help move heavy things) Avoid saying things like "Boys don't cry," "Act like a man," or "Don't act like a girl."

"I try to use language that is as neutral as possible, especially when I am talking to a student for the first time. For example, when speaking with a boy I will ask, 'Do you have someone in your life?' instead of assuming that he's attracted to girls or that he has a girlfriend. I think my attitude allows LGBT+ students to approach me more easily, because they know I am open to their emotional reality and their love lives. By doing so I'm opening a door so that they can confide in me and share their concerns. From my point of view, it's a small gesture that is simple and free, and it makes all the difference." ● **FRENCH TEACHER IN QUÉBEC CITY**

Create safe space

5 **Create a safe space for students by working with them to set norms and expectations to ensure respect.**

Lead a discussion where students create ground rules for themselves about behaviour and language that are fair inclusive and involve respect for all. Set norms and expectations to ensure respect. Starting the school year by working together with your students to establish classroom norms can help to set the tone for the whole year through. Every student wants to feel safe, respected and valued in your classroom. Inviting them to describe and name these expectations in their own words helps them to take ownership of their classroom culture and community right from the start.

"At the beginning of the school year I always start off by establishing a 'code of conduct' with my students. We dedicate several hours to this, because I use the occasion to speak about notions of respect and discrimination. It might seem a bit long and dry, but I see the positive effects that this produces in the long run. I have a lot less discipline to do the rest of the year. From the outset, the kids know that I don't accept hurtful words, insults or jokes that are sexist, racist or LGBT+phobic. In my class, it's zero tolerance! In the beginning they say I'm too strict, but after a few weeks many of them come and thank me. One of my students even confided that she feels good in my class because, she says, at least there's one class where she can concentrate without worrying someone will call her "fat". Teenagers can be really mean with each other, so I consider that it's my role to put an end to the violence and make sure that my class is a safe space."
● **ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE TEACHER IN CHAUDIÈRE-APPALACHES**

Create safe space [continued]

"In my classroom when one student bullies or harasses another, my rule is that the student that has carried out the bullying must carry out five acts of kindness toward the victim. These acts can take the form of having lunch with the person, inviting them in a game, picking them for a team sport, helping them carry their books, helping them with school work, making them a card, writing an apology letter, giving them their space in line, introducing them to their friends. All of these are examples, and depending on the grade level, other acts of kindness can be utilized. This strategy works best when the acts come spontaneously from the bully and are immediately recognized by the teacher or adult involved in conflict resolution, and positively reinforced. Although at first it may feel forced, by the end of the day these gestures really bring these two students together. And the effects are lasting!" ● **SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER IN MONTREAL**

Ensure accountability

6   **Work with students to create a system of accountability to remind each other when those norms are broken and how to make amends.**

Doing nothing about bullying is unacceptable. If it doesn't already exist, create an anti-bullying code of conduct that clarifies behavioural expectations of your participating students and the consequences for failing to meet those expectations. Involve as many stakeholders in developing this code of conduct as you can. The buy-in of everyone involved ensures that the response to bullying incidents is consistent and fair. These rules create a system of accountability for students who bully as well as those who do not act appropriately when they witness bullying.

A code of conduct against LGBT+phobic acts means very little if it is not applied. To ensure that the code of conduct is respected, clear guidelines for consequences and appropriate educational intervention for students who commit an infraction need to be established. These guidelines must also include an efficient and confidential means for the victims and witnesses of LGBT+phobia to rapidly report all incidents.

See the module 'How to establish inclusive and non-discriminatory policies'.

"In our school we've initiated a mechanism by which students can report situations of harassment and bullying without being identified or being seen as a 'snitch'. Every Wednesday, students have to write a small anonymous text on a proposed subject. There's also a space on the sheet for them to write about difficulties they are personally experiencing, or problems they've witnessed. They put their papers in a box that the teachers give me at the break. The activity is a pretext to offer students the opportunity to be heard, without worrying about being judged, harassed or rejected. Because it's not the teacher who is reading their texts, students feel more at ease about writing things, without having to censor themselves. Of course, some of the messages I receive aren't pertinent, but some are really cries for help from students who otherwise wouldn't come to my office to speak to me." ● **SPECIAL-NEEDS EDUCATOR IN LAC-SAINT-JEAN**

Enhance curriculum

7   **Set aside classroom time every week, as little as 20 minutes, to have students participate in a group discussion or activity where trust, empathy and acceptance are fostered.**

Activities, lesson plans, books and films can be used to foster discussion and promote inclusion and fairness. Include age-appropriate discussion that educates students on what words such as 'gay' mean. Chasnoff's film, It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School (1996) provides examples of teachers doing so with students as early as kindergarten. Teaching about family diversity, inclusive of families with LGBT+ parents and multiparent families, is an effective way to introduce the subject of diversity.

For older youth, including LGBT+ leaders, writers and historical figures as examples in your teaching creates greater awareness and acceptance and establishes an environment of inclusiveness.

For a full list of classroom activities, and books on sexual and gender diversity, see the sections 'Classroom activities: pre-school-elementary', 'Classroom activities: high school' and 'Books and videos'. (www.famillesLGBT.org/tools)

"I invite my students to write their questions on little pieces of paper that they put into my 'discussion hat'. The themes we speak about change regularly, allowing us to cover a wide variety of topics that young people are thinking about. At any given moment, I'll pick a question out of the hat and animate a discussion with the class. Exchange, discussion, debate...students love that! It stimulates them. Sometimes it even becomes a reward with some classes; they ask for it again and again. I love to see their surprise when I speak about LGBT+ realities and tell them that this actor is gay or trans or that public personality is bisexual. It's my way of fighting prejudice: one question at a time."
● **ETHICS AND RELIGIOUS CULTURE TEACHER IN MAURICIE**

"I adored the video that goes along with the SAM project (educational toy conceived to help children, as well as the adults in their entourage understand what a transgender child might experience). The video is so realistic and touching. It really touches on the social reality of these kids. It's a great introduction to the topic. Each school should have their own SAM." ● **TEACHER IN MONTREAL**

For more information: https://gendercreativekids.ca

Express caring

 Be a caring and supportive adult for young people.

One of the most important factors for students' success, now and later, is the number of caring adults in their life. Adults can play an important role in supporting and encouraging students who do not conform to restrictive gender stereotypes and norms, and because of this, so often, become the victims of LGBT+phobic bullying. Students should know which staff members they can turn to. Hanging rainbow flags, inclusive posters or placing 'safe zone' stickers on doors are good ways to help identify where supportive staff members are located. A group of open and accepting adults, empowered to deal with LGBT+phobia, can be an incredible resource for youth who are experiencing bullying.

> *"In my office, I've put up the Fondation Émergence poster: "(?)he deserves love. No matter the gender,". I love it! Even if that poster came out a while ago, it's an excellent way to sensitize youth, and even my colleagues, to the impacts of LGBT+phobia. When they come to see me, some of the students make comments about the poster. Some will say 'Wow cool!' and others will be a bit uncomfortable. Whatever the reaction, it's a great tool to initiate a discussion. And also it allows me, in a clear and easy way, to say that I'm open to sexual and gender diversity."*
> ● **SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER IN OUTAOUAIS**

For more information: www.fondationemergence.org/campagnes

Build a coalition

 Identify and build relationships with key allies in your school and community.

Si vous faites partie du personnel enseignant, et particulièrement si vous amorcez votre carrière, il est très important d'identifier des collègues et au moins une personne de l'administration qui soutiendront vos efforts. En créant un réseau fort d'individus et d'organisations qui partagent votre vision et vos objectifs, non seulement vous profitez de leurs connaissances et de leurs expériences, mais vous posez aussi les fondations pour des changements durables et à long terme. Fonder une coalition est une étape importante qui peut vous fournir un soutien personnel et professionnel tout le long du processus vers l'inclusion sociale.

> *"I am a member of an 'Allies Network' that was put together by an organization in my region. This affiliation has allowed me to know what resources are available in my community, and to participate in workshops and conventions about homosexuality, bisexuality and gender identity. It also means that I've personally committed to fighting LGBT+phobia in my milieu. The network brings together dozens of professionals in education, health and social services and in community organizations. This really helps to coordinate actions. I can refer youth to other organizations, whether institutional or community-based, and I know that each young person will be well followed. No one falls through the cracks. So it's very motivating and enriching to participate because I have the feeling that we are making a real change in our region."*
> ● **SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST IN ABITIBI-TÉMISCAMINGUE**

For an example: www.grischap.org/lgbt-association (French only)

Encourage an inclusive environment

10   **Set a positive example and encourage a violence-free environment.**

The power that administrators/school principals have to shape and influence their school environments has been widely documented.10 They have an important role to play in supporting teachers and school initiatives that work against LGBT+phobia. They can also encourage and enable staff training against LGBT+phobia. The openness/leadership of school administrators to work against LGBT+phobia has been shown to be one of the most significant factors that can affect a school's progress toward inclusion.

> *« We have a unique way of welcoming each student. It's case by case. For instance, we avoid any dress code rules that target a specific gender. Rather than writing 'girls shouldn't wear short skirts' it's better to say something like 'Short skirts are not allowed'."* ● **DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN QUEBEC CITY**

Develop policy

11   **Develop policies that make specific mention of LGBT+phobia and gender-based harassment.**

In discussions about best practices to create inclusive environments, many educators expressed concern that they would lack support or even risk losing their jobs, if they spoke about subjects related to sexual, gender and relationship diversity. Yet, every student has the right, both legally and ethically, to an equal opportunity to learn and flourish in a safe environment. As a result, many of our laws, charters and court cases, as well as important civil society groups, like unions and professional orders, support proactive anti-LGBT+phobia work. Schools have both the mandate and society's backing to support social change.

One formal tool that school leaders have to reshape school cultures is revising and actively implementing school policies. School policies that address discrimination in a generalized manner, however, often result in a collective unawareness about discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation. Schools' anti-discrimination policies must therefore explicitly include protection against harassment and discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation. By doing so, a school climate can be created where teachers feel at ease and supported when they use inclusive curriculum. School policy can be developed and revised in collaboration with school staff. Students, who constitute the majority of the school population, can also be consulted when drafting and implementing policy.

Consult www.famillesLGBT.org/tools (safe and inclusive environments section).

Take advantage of services and training offered by community-based organizations

12 Connect with resources from community-based organizations in your region for information, training, support and materials.

13 Take advantage of services offered by community-based organizations to help LGBT+ and questionning youth.

Advocate with your principal or administrator for professional development training on school LGBT+ issues including training to recognize and effectively address LGBT+phobic bullying. Staff and teachers should be trained to appropriately address LGBT+-phobia. School boards should work with community organizations to build and implement such training.

Pre-service teachers should also be trained in the prevention and management of LGBT+phobia and gender-based violence though courses on equity and social justice offered in Education programs.

Community-based organizations often also offer services for youth. For instance, many schools include the telephone help-line numbers of Interligne in their student handbooks.

For a full list of organizations to invite to your workplace (for students and/or school staff) see the module on **'Organizations to invite'** in the **'Safe and inclusive environments'** section (www.famillesLGBT.org/tools). For a list of community resources for youth see the module **'community organizations'** in the section **'LGBTQ youth and their parents'**.

> *"Over the past few years, I've collaborated with GRIS, a community organization in my region, to sensitize my students to LGBT+ realities. Their volunteers come to my class and respond to my students' questions. Their testimonies help students to deconstruct certain myths and prejudices, and also they offer positive role models of LGBT+ people. Students like hearing their anecdotes, because the examples they give are from real-life experiences. Even though each group is different, certain questions come back each year: "How did you find out you were gay?" "How did your family and friends react when you told them you were trans?"* ● **SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER IN QUEBEC CITY**

> *"We did an excellent workshop with Gender Creative Kids Canada about trans realities for youth and in the school context."* ● **TEACHER IN MONTREAL**

For more information:

www.familleslgbt.org (LGBT+ Family Coalition)

www.enfantstransgenres.ca (Gender Creative Kids Canada)

www.gris.ca (GRIS–Montréal)

www.grisquebec.org (GRIS–Québec)

www.grisestrie.org (GRIS–Estrie)

www.grismcdq.org (GRIS–Mauricie Centre-du-Québec)

www.grischap.org (GRIS–Chaudière-Appalache)

Share

14   **Share information and resources.**

Encourage other staff members to model LGBT+ support in classrooms and throughout the school to ensure student safety, emotional well-being and academic success. Pass these resources along to a colleague!

Provide counselling

15   **Offer psychological support to students.**

Identify at least one trained staff member to serve as a resource for LGBT+ students, those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity, those with non-conforming gender expressions, those with LGBT+ family members, and those in general who are affected by LGBT+phobic bullying. In many cases this would be the school psychologist or counsellor, but a teacher or other staff member may be a more effective resource. Students should have a choice if possible. Having a non-mental health professional act as a resource for students can help normalize issues pertaining to sexual and gender diversity and prevent them from being viewed as a 'mental health issue'. The staff member should be trained to be knowledgeable about effective strategies for working with LGBT+ students, familiar with the best practices for implementing anti-bias programs in schools and knowledgeable about the resources available in the community.

> *"Because my training is multi-disciplinary, I can offer support to my students at a number of different levels, in collaboration with other professionals at my school. The problem of LGBT+phobia amongst students remains a constant preoccupation in our milieu. So I participated in a training session offered by the Institut national de santé publique du Québec in order to be better equipped to implement initiatives to end LGBT+phobic violence. My newly acquired knowledge has made me a resource person at my school. I'm not a specialist or an expert on the subject, but I'm much better equipped to intervene."*   ●   **SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY ANIMATOR IN EASTERN TOWNSHIPS**

For more information:

INSPQ : Sex, gender and sexual orientation – understanding diversity (Level 1) (available in English)

www.inspq.qc.ca/formation/institut/sexes-genres-et-orientations-sexuelles-comprendre-la-diversite-niveau-1

INSPQ : Adapting our interventions to the realities of sexual and gender minority individuals, their partners and their families (Level 2) (available in English)

www.inspq.qc.ca/formation/institut/adapter-nos-interventions-aux-realites-des-personnes-de-la-diversite-sexuelle-leur-couple-et-leur-famille-niveau-2

Organize inclusive school events

16   **Ensure that school events and celebrations are inclusive of LGBT+ students and families.**

Celebrating LGBT+ events can help LGBT+ students and those with LGBT+ family members feel included in the school. Promote LGBT+ events throughout the school as you would any other cultural celebration. Celebrate the Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia in May or LGBT Pride Month in June, by displaying signs, alerting students and recognizing the struggles, contributions and victories of the LGBT+ community. Support students' measures to address LGBT+ issues, such as a Gender–Sexuality Alliance (see below). Work with students to celebrate the Day of Pink and No Name-Calling Week. Encourage LGBT inclusion in other school events such as prom or Valentine's Day celebrations.

For suggestions about events and activities aimed at inspiring dialogue about ways to eliminate name-calling and bullying, promoting acceptance and celebrating diversity, see the sections **'Classroom activities: preschool-elementary'** and **'Classroom activities: high school'** at www.famillesLGBT.org/tools.

> *"One day a student came to speak to me about LGBT+phobic insults that she was constantly hearing in the hallways. Feeling empathy for her best friend who was gay, she wanted to organize a sensitization activity. Because I had spoken about homosexuality in class through a literary work, she saw me as a potential ally to help her carry out her project. We decided that the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia would be the best moment to carry it out. I accompanied and supported her when she asked permission from the school's administration. On May 17th, with the help of three friends, she set up a booth in the cafeteria. A map illustrating the rights of sexual and gender minorities around the world was installed at the entrance of the room, and posters were hung throughout the school. Finally, a clip about LGBT+phobia in high school was heard on our school radio station. Two weeks later, I helped the student prepare her candidature for the GRIS Simple Plan Foundation Prize. Even though the project didn't win first prize, her project made visible an issue that is rarely spoken about at school – it helped to denounce LGBT+phobia."*
> ● **FRENCH TEACHER IN SAGUENAY**

For more information: www.gris.ca/prix

Sponsor a gender and sexuality alliance (GSA)

17 **Sponsor a Gender-Sexuality Alliance (GSA) and act as a mentor and resource for participants.**

Gender–Sexuality Student Alliances (GSAs) are student-run and teacher-supported school-based groups that work to create safe, caring and inclusive spaces for LGBT+ students and their allies in schools. Typically, GSAs are designed to provide a safe space for students to meet, socialize and support one another as they discuss their feelings and experiences related to sexual orientation and gender identity issues. In schools with GSAs students report feeling safer, less likely to be harassed for their differences, and more supported by the adults around them. These factors are recipes for academic success.

Interligne is an organization that offers an excellent starter kit To help you create an Gender, identity and sexuality alliance (GISA) in your school : www.agis.interligne.co/en/kit

> *"I participated in creating a committee for LGBT+ students, heterosexual and cisgender peer allies, as well as teachers and other school staff. First, we put up posters to let students know about the existence of the group. We used the artistic talents of some of the students to create a logo and a banner – that gave our committee some visibility. Then we organized some extracurricular activities. Even though these activities were quite modest, they helped a number of students break away from their isolation. Some youth were questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity; others were there simply to support their LGBT+ friends. The presence and support of adults helped give the project some stability in the beginning and also served to help the youth gain confidence. I think it has really been felt in terms of the school climate. In the beginning, my involvement as a straight teacher really surprised some people. Many asked me if I was gay. Those questions were a good opportunity to sensitize people to the fact that LGBT+-phobia concerns everyone."* ● **SCIENCE TEACHER IN BAS-SAINT-LAURENT**

Acquire and use inclusive materials

18 **Ensure that the school library and publications include resources that cover LGBT+ people and issues.**

Ask your school librarian to create a display of books and resources on sexual and gender diversity, body differences and relationship diversity. If your school doesn't already carry books that are inclusive of LGBT++ individuals, you might want to make some suggestions for books that can be purchased. Put up posters and brochures in your classroom that celebrate accomplishments by diverse people (women, LGBT+ people, people of colour, indigenous people, etc.).

For links to books and films, see **'Classroom activities: preschool-elementary'**, **'Classroom activities: high school'**, and the module **'Books about Sexual and Gender diversity'** on www.famillesLGBT.org/tools.

Encourage families

19 **Reach out to families with LGBT+ parents to let them know that their input and involvement are welcome.**

20 **Reach out to the parents of LGBT+ youth (if the youth allow you to) to help youth with self-acceptance and coming-out.**

The school should welcome families with LGBT+ parents in the same way as other families are included. Schools can encourage LGBT+ parents to participate in the governing board, in parents' committees, and for volunteer opportunities that welcome parent involvement. Schools can also show support by displaying posters that include diverse families and by updating all forms and documents to include words like 'Parent' or 'Guardian' instead of 'Mother' and 'Father'. Whenever possible, include examples of diverse families, including families with LGBT+ parents, when referencing families in the classroom or at school assemblies. Providing these examples can help LGBT+ students and students with LGBT+ family members to feel included in the school community.

When LGBT+ students or those who are questioning reach out to you, their experiences must, of course, be kept confidential. When it is possible, however, cooperation with parents should be encouraged. Youth must always give their authorization before you can approach parents. When schools accept and reach out to LGBT+ youth and those who are questionning, doors are opened to provide a continuum of acceptance at home. Schools become resources for parents who are trying to understand and adjust to their LGBT+ children. It may take family members much discussion and counselling before being able to accept their sexual orientation or gender identity of their child. The school can be a valuable resource to parents struggling with the necessary adjustments.

For community and health resources for youth and their families see the sections **'LGBTQ youth and their parents'** and **'Families with LGBTQ parents'** on www.famillesLGBT.org/tools.

> *"Last year a student told me that she was gay. I was the first person to know. At 15 years old she was afraid of her parents' reaction. I supported her throughout the whole acceptance process. When she told her parents, I was there to accompany them as well. I helped them to express their emotions and overcome the shock. Even though family relations were quite strained, I was still able to follow the young girl and her parents over the months. Because school is so central to youth, I had to include her family in what was going on at school as well."* ● **PSYCHOEDUCATOR IN LAVAL**

For more information:

Scientific Research: Deconstructing Myths about Homoparental Families
www.familleslgbt.org/documents/pdf/CFH_MELS_Module_Mythes_ENG.pdf

Scientific Research to Deconstruct Myths about Trans Parent Families
www.familleslgbt.org/documents/pdf/CF-LGBT_Mythes_Familles_Transparentales_ENG.pdf

Coming Out for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth
www.familleslgbt.org/documents/pdf/CF_LGBT_ComingOut_GuideENG.pdf

Measures for openness to and support for trans and non-binary students
www.familleslgbt.org/documents/pdf/TableNationale_mesures_ENG.pdf

This module contains a wide variety of potential actions. In an ideal world, all of these suggestions could be implemented. If not, or if only limited interventions are possible, it is important to remember that even a small action can have a big impact. It is also possible to create an intervention plan with several steps.

End notes

1   Dijkstra, Lindenberg & Veenstra, 2007; Meyer, 2006, 2009.

2   California Safe Schools Coalition, 2004.

3   Dorais, 2001.

4   Saewyc, 2007.

5   Bauer *et al.*, 2013

6   Hatzenbuehler, 2011.

7   Kosciw *et al.*, 2008; van Wormer et McKinney, 2003; Dorais, 2001; *Conseil permanent de la jeunesse*, 2007; Veale *et al.*, 2015 .

8   Chamberland *et al.*, 2010.

9   Kosciw *et al.*, 2010; Russel *et al.*, 2006.

10 Carr, 1997; Dinham, Cairney, Craigie et Wilson, 1995; Fullan, 2000; Riehl, 2000.

Bibliography

Bauer, G.,Pyne, J., Francino, M.C. et Hammond, R. (2013). Suicidality among trans people in Ontario: Implications for social work and social justice. *Service social*, 59 (1), 35-62.

California Safe Schools Coalition & 4-H Centre for Youth Development. (2004). *Consequences of Harassment Based on Actual or Perceived Sexual Orientation and Gender Non-Conformity and Steps for Making Schools Safer*, Davis, CA: University of California. Retrieved from www.casafeschools.org/Safeplacetolearnlow.pdf

Canadian Teachers' Federation (2006). *Gay-Straight Student Alliance Handbook: A Comprehensive Resource for Canadian K-12 Teachers, Administrators and School Counsellors.* (Available for purchase from the Canadian Teachers' Feder- ation website: http://www.ctf-fce.ca/en

Carr, P. (1997). Stuck in the Middle? A case study of how principals manage equity-related change in education. *Education Canada*, 37(1), 1-5.

Chamberland, L., Émond, G., Julien, D., Otis, J. et Ryan, W. (2010). *L'impact de l'homophobie et de la violence homophobe sur la persévérance et la réussite scolaires* (Research report, Pro- gramme Actions concertées : ministère de l'Éduca- tion, du Loisir et du Sport et Fonds Québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture). Montréal, Canada: Université du Québec à Montréal.

Chasnoff, D. & Cohen, H. (Producers). (1996). *It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School* (Documentary film). (Available from Ground Spark website, http://groundspark.org)

Conseil permanent de la Jeunesse. (2007). *Sortons l'homophobie du placard…et de nos écoles secondaires* (Recher- che-avis). Québec, Canada : Conseil permanent de la Jeunesse. Retrieved from www.familleslgbt.org/documents/pdf/Sortons.pdf

Dijkstra, J. K., Lindenberg, S., and Veenstra, R. (2007). Same-gender and cross-gender peer acceptance and peer rejection and their relation to bullying and helping among preadolescents: Comparing predictions from gender-homophily and goal-framing approaches. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1377-1389.

Dinham, S., Cairney, T., Craigie, D., & Wilson, S. (1995). School climate and leadership: Research into three secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 33(4), 36-58.

Dorais, M. (2001). *Mort ou Fif: La Face Cachée du Suicide Chez les Garçons.* Québec, Canada: VLB.

Fullan, M. (2000). The role of the principal in school reform. Adapted from M. Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 3rd Edition. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2011). The social environment and suicide attempts in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Pediatrics*, 127(5), 896-903.

Kosciw, J. G, Greytak, E. A., Diaz, E.M., & Bartkiewicz, M. J. (2010). *The 2009 National School Climate Survey: The Ex- periences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in our Nation's Schools.* New York, NY: Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network. Retrieved from www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/2624.html

Meyer, E. (2006). Gendered harassment in North America. In Mitchell, C. and Leach, F. (Eds.), *Combating Gender Violence In and Around Schools* (pp. 43-50). Stoke-on-Trent, UK: Trentham Books.

Meyer, E. (2009). *Gender, Bullying, and Harassment: Strategies to End Sexism and Homophobia in Schools.* New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.

Meyer, E. (2010). Gender and Sexual Diversity in Schools (Explorations of Educational Purpose). New York, NY: Springer Editions. Riehl, C. J. (2000). The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: A review of normative, empirical, and critical literature on the practice of educational administration. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 55-81.

Russell, S. T., McGuire, J. K., Laub, C., Manke, E., O'Shaughnessy, M., Heck, K., & Calhoun, C. (2006). Harassment in School Based on Actual or Perceived Sexual Orientation: Prevalence and Consequences. (California Safe Schools Coali- tion Research Brief No. 2). San Francisco, CA: California Safe Schools Coalition. Retrieved from Saewyc, E. & the McCreary Centre Society. (2007). *Not Yet Equal: The Health of Lesbian, Gay, & Bisexual Youth in BC.* Vancouver, Canada: The McCreary Centre Society. Retrieved from www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/not_yet_equal_web.pdf

Van Wormer, K. & McKinney, R. (2003). What schools can do to help gay/ lesbian/ bisexual youth: A harm reduction approach. *Adolescence*, 38(151), 409-420.

Veale J.., Saewyc E, Frohard-Dourlent H., Dobson S., Clark B. & the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey Research Group (2015). *Being Safe, Being Me: Results of the Canadian Trans Youth Health Survey.* Vancouver, BC: Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia.

Coalition des Familles LGBT+
LGBT+ Family Coalition

Québec