

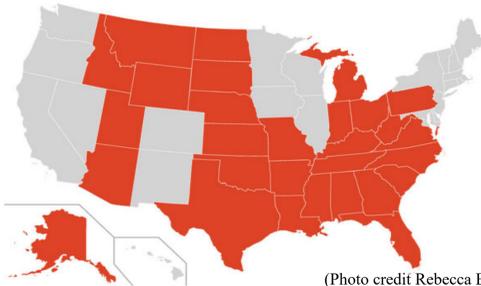
What is the Problem?

There is a severe **lack of queer representation** in the public-school system. Students who are queer and questioning are often provided with **little to no exposure** to queer culture, and **do not see themselves** reflected in the material. They may grow up **feeling unimportant** or thinking there is something **wrong** with them.

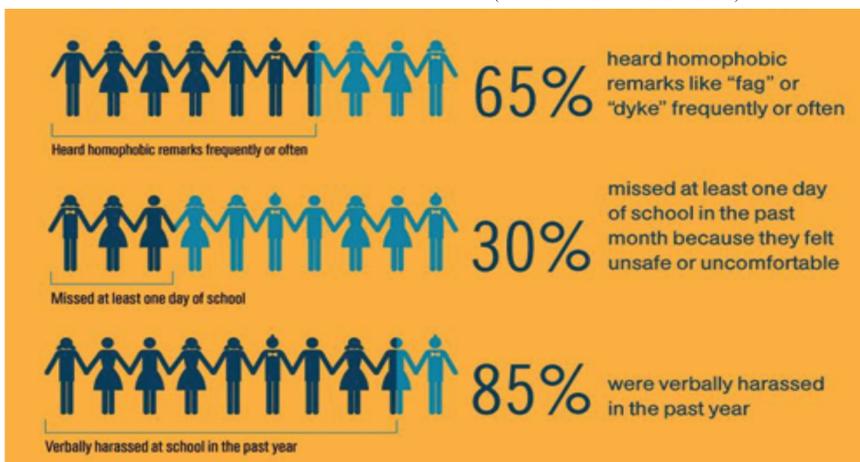
Statistics

- ❖ GLAAD estimates that up to **20%** of students may identify as LGBTQ+
- ❖ East Longmeadow High School has **ONE openly queer teacher out of around 75** administrators, teachers, and counselors (**less than 2%**)
- ❖ Queer kids are **3X** more likely to experience **depression** than their straight cisgender peers
- ❖ **2 in 10** experience physical homophobic abuse
- ❖ **80%** of homophobic bullying occurs at school

■ STATES WHERE YOU CAN BE FIRED FOR BEING GAY



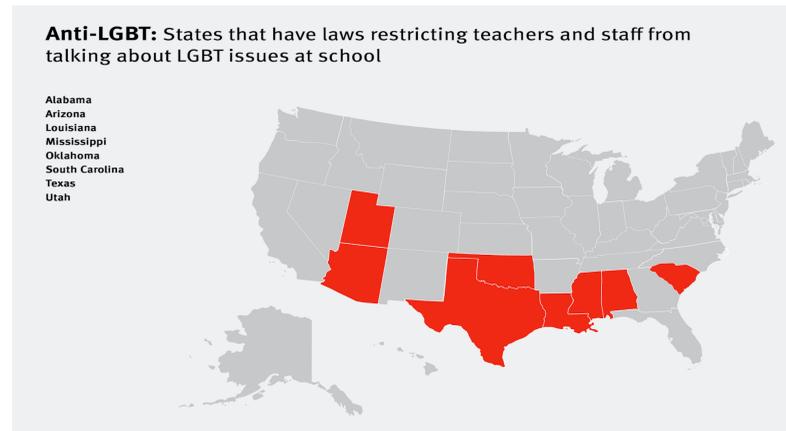
(Photo credit Rebecca Baird-Remba)



(Photo credit GLSEN)

Overall Objectives

- ❖ **Expand** the curriculum of the public schools, particularly the high school, to **include queer literature and history**
- ❖ **Diversify** the staff to include more queer teachers and **at least one** queer counselor



(Photo credit Kate Stoltzfus)

Genre

For this project, I am writing an **advocacy letter** to the **Superintendent of Schools** in my hometown, East Longmeadow. This letter will **urge** him to consider pushing for these **improvements to the curriculum**. The following are some excerpts from my letter:

“There isn’t even a queer counselor to talk to. And I believe that it would be **extremely beneficial** to these **students’ mental health** to have one.”

“An **exposure** to this material and an **adequate discussion** of it in class would expand queer culture in the school, allowing **relationships** and understanding to be built that has been **severely lacking.**”

“If these students are exposed to the queer experience **in the context of their own lives** beforehand, and understand the many **nuances** of it, they may be **significantly more considerate** of others’ feelings in the classroom environment.”

“If we’re going to say **“Honor Diversity”** in our slogan every morning, then **let’s start doing it.**”

Positive Impacts

- ❖ Curriculum would **accurately reflect the diversity** of the students
- ❖ **Counseling services** would be available for LGBTQ+ students who are going through the **coming out** process, or having **trouble at home**
- ❖ Encourages **genuine connections** between queer students and teachers
- ❖ Builds a **safe environment** for LGBTQ+ students that **fosters positivity and embraces queer culture**



(Photo credit Nicole Russell)



The Pathways GSA at Carteret High School, New Jersey.

(Photo credit Anna Pepe)

Sources

- Australian Human Rights Commission. (2015, February 25). Face the facts: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People. Retrieved November 2, 2019, from <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/face-facts-lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-and-intersex-people>.
- Baird-Remba, R. (2013, April 24). There Are Still 29 US States Where You Can Be Fired For Being Gay. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.com/states-where-you-can-be-fired-for-being-gay-2013-4>.
- Damante, R. (2016, September 30). Can Education Reduce Prejudice against LGBT People? Retrieved from <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/can-education-reduce-prejudice-lgbt-people/?agreed=1>.
- GLAAD. (2017, March 30). New GLAAD study reveals twenty percent of millennials identify as LGBTQ. Retrieved from <https://www.glaad.org/blog/new-glaad-study-reveals-twenty-percent-millennials-identify-lgbtq>.
- Human Rights Watch. (2017, December 7). “Like Walking Through a Hailstorm”: Discrimination Against LGBT Youth in US Schools. Retrieved November 2, 2019, from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/12/07/walking-through-hailstorm/discrimination-against-lgbt-youth-us-schools>.
- Pepe, A. (2019, April 30). The Evolution & Happenings of the Pathways GSA at Carteret High School. Retrieved from <https://wellspringprevention.org/blogs/pathways-blog/entry/pathways-blog/2019/04/30/the-evolution-happenings-of-the-pathways-gsa-at-carteret-high-school>.
- Russell, N. (2019, July 1). Here’s a Possible Reason Young People Are Less LGBT-Accepting. Retrieved from <https://www.dailysignal.com/2019/06/28/lgbt-activists-could-be-to-blame-for-falling-lgbt-acceptance/>.
- Stoltzfus, K. (2016, December 15). Many Teachers Can’t Talk About LGBT Issues in the Classroom, Report Finds. Retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2016/12/teachers_cant_talk_about_lgbt_issues.html.