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Creating Safe Spaces: LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Schools

Stephanie C. Talavera

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Abstract

This capstone's focus is primarily on the Salinas Valley Education System. This project stresses

the importance of inclusivity regarding the LGBTQ+ community in early education. Important

factors emerged from an analysis of interviews and literature that shows how controversy, lack

of exposure to LGBTQ+ identities, and time, all contribute to the lack of inclusivity for the

LGBTQ+ community. As a result of the lack of inclusivity, many children are bullied on school

grounds based on their identity. Teachers and stakeholders, who were previously enrolled in the

K-12 system and identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, were interviewed. As a result three

themes were presented as part of how the issue could be addressed. After analyzing the research

collected, an action option was chosen to address the lack of inclusivity of the LGBTQ+

community in early education.

Setting The Stage

The significance of this topic within education is that I was once a part of an education system that did not include the LGBTQ+ community in their curriculum. This created a negative experience for me and made me feel out of place. Being a part of the LGBTQ+ community myself, I can say that my education has definitely played a major role in my life. As a student in elementary school this topic was not up for discussion up until I was an undergraduate student. I felt confused and alone throughout my whole education because I didn't feel like I fit in with everyone else. It was a time where I didn't understand what was happening to me, or why I felt like there was this huge gap between everyone else and I. Due to my parents not being supportive of my sexuality, I could've used some guidance. I wanted someone to tell me that there was nothing wrong with me, and that I was safe in the place where I spent most of my time in.

When it comes to the educational field it almost felt like we were being silenced, or we were told to hide behind the shadows. This community was something that made people uncomfortable, therefore it was never brought up. It wasn't that we were hiding, because the reality is that there were many people who were just like me. We were being silenced and ignored as human beings.

As children we spend most of our time at school. That is the place we spent our time as we are growing up to be adults. This is the place that shapes us into who we become. I always thought to myself, school is supposed to be a safe place for me, yet I don't see any support for who I am. All throughout high school my peers would think of me as weird and as the outsider. They would look to people that were part of the LGBTQ+ community as "disgusting." Students would use the term "Gay" as a form of insult. There were never any serious consequences for

students who took part in bullying others for their identities. This made me feel like who I was did not matter to the educational system. The reality is that I didn't matter, because if I did my experience growing up would have been very different.

By the time that I entered community college in the Salinas valley I was very aware of my own identity. I verbally identified myself as bisexual by the time that I was nineteen years old. I could have done it way sooner but with the pressure from my surroundings up until the end of high school, this was something that seemed nearly impossible. Once I came out at the age of nineteen my whole experience with myself, and my peers became very different. Although I had no support at home from my traditional mexican parents who are very stuck on their traditional beliefs, I became more outspoken, and never let anyone make me be quiet. Professors actually spoke out loud, and had a curriculum specifically regarding the LGBTQ+ community. They highlighted the importance and made it known that we are a minority. It is hard to realize that I was a part of the education system for twelve years, and not one of them did I feel like I was safe, and that I belonged.

This was a very emotional time for me because I realized that although there has been some improvement to acknowledge the LGBTQ+ community, the reality is that nothing has changed to create inclusivity within schools. There are so many children who identify themselves at a very young age. The educational system continues to fail this community, and will continue to ignore that we exist, and that we matter enough to create action that will make us feel accepted just like everyone else in a classroom setting.

The school administration has so much power, and they continue to choose not to use it. Once you introduce a topic to a child they become aware and understanding of it, and their surroundings. As you can see being a member of the LBGTQ+ community has been extremely

harder than it should be. The way that I was treated based on my sexuality, you may now comprehend why it has had a significant impact on how my community and myself view the educational field. I believe that it is not treating children equally, and that there must be something that is done to create a change for future students who might be in a similar situation.

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Literature Synthesis & Integration

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This capstone project revolves around the lack of inclusivity of the LGBTQ+ community in early education. There are two terms that are important to comprehend, starting with the term LGBTQ+ which stands for: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, among other identities that fall under this umbrella term. The term inclusivity refers to the inclusion and allowance of equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those having physical or mental disabilities or belonging to other minority groups. Due to the LGBTQ+ community being part of a minority group who are often overlooked, it is important to dive deeper into the concept of inclusion. More specifically inclusion in K-12 curriculum and education in the classroom. This paper dives into the high rate of exclusivity from teachers and other personnel in the K-12 system and what this does for these students and our society as a whole on a larger spectrum.

What is the Issue?

LGBTQ+ youth has been affected throughout our history in various ways. For starters, the act of coming out for many of these children is an overall hard thing to do. This is because for many families, there is not much exposure and the little that there is, is usually negative such as news about LGTBQ+ members being assaulted for their sexual preference and identity, or propaganda from conservative points of views of why these members should "go to hell". This lack of exposure is a huge problem in our society as it implies that what they are doing is wrong,

making it a taboo subject, and allowing for those who do not have the information to either make up their own ideas, or believe the common stereotypical ideas that are floating around among ourselves.

One place where we see this lack of exposure is in the K-12 curriculum in schools. In schools, students often feel excluded from what they are learning due to their identity being not something commonly talked about. This is because many teachers feel as though it is not their place to teach students these kinds of things. This however, is a form of bias in the education system as we can read in the article " LGBTQ+ Visibility in the K-12 Curriculum". This article states that the avoidance or exclusion of individuals representing certain groups, including LGBTQ+ people, is the most basic form of bias in school curriculum" (Moorhead, 2018.) This means that schools are actively following a biased agenda against identities of the LGBTQ+ community. As we can see, this is a great issue affecting our children and students today. This is an issue that is more common than we think, with 9 out of 10 Americans knowing someone who is part of the LGBTQ+ community (Moorhead, 2018). This research works to uncover the reason and the effects for the exclusion of this community in the K-12 system.

Why is it an Issue?

This exclusion is a problem for many reasons. To begin, exclusion of an identity affects a total group of people who fall under this category. In this case, we are talking about the LGBTQ+ folk. For example, these groups in schools can have high rates of bullying, or violent confrontations from those around them because they are being singled out and portrayed as out of the norm. "Safe Schools Policy For LGBTQ+ Students" talks about the murder of 15-year-old Lawrence King who was murdered at school by a boy to whom he had given a valentine (Kosciw, 2010). In an article titled: "LGBTQ Bullying: a qualitative investigation of student and

school health professional perspectives," we obtain information about data research conducted

which states that there is a high percentage of students who experience bullying that also identify

as part of the LGBTQ+ community, a total of 85% reported offenses (Earnshaw, 2015). On the

other hand however, allowing for an expression and exposure of this community to other

students can allow them to become allies. This means that the members of the community who

identify as queer would be able to create alliances and friends in their schools both helping their

mental health, and allowing for less bullying rates in their school. In fact, according to Robert

Marx, LGBTQ+ identifying students who form alliances with other heterosexual students, have

shown less victimization rates (Marx, Kettrey, 2016).

Another issue that comes out of this exclusion is the mental health of students who are

affected by it. Mental health is a growing worry regarding students and their everyday lives and

futures. Through research, we see that there are multiple ways that poor mental health and being

an LGBTQ+ student in the K-12 system are connected. According to Nicole Stargell, children

who feel as if they don't belong due to their sexual identity and who feel alone due to lack of

alliances develop mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety (Stargell et al, 2020).

Finally, the creation of stereotypes and the continuous support of these is another side

effect of the bias that is not allowing LGTBQ+ students to express themselves and not including

them in these class lessons. These stereotypes are created when the information is not gathered

straight from the sources. When queer students do not have a voice for themselves, this allows

room for stereotypes to be created and believed from other negative or not productive or realistic

sources. A related example is in the article "*Too Gay for Facebook"* where we read about the

importance of being able to tell one's own story. Telling one's own story allows for clarification

of topics and ideas that may otherwise be stigmatized. (Devito et al, 2018) Therefore, to allow

for the destruction of these stereotypes that are more damaging than good, we must be able to understand teachers have a say in the children's life and education and their impact is of great magnitude, therefore it must be used to destigmatize these communities in the classroom to allow for safe spaces for everyone.

What should be done?

It is clear that something should be done regarding this exclusion and discrimination of students in the classroom, but is there anything that schools can do to truly change this? The article "LGBTQ+ visibility in the K-12 curriculum" states that "practitioners decide and act on social issues important to them"(Moorhead, 2018.) This quote is so powerful because if an issue is important to an educator, or an overall school system they are going to act upon it and create change. What this means is that, currently the LGBTQ+ community is not a topic that is up for discussion, the education system has made it clear that they don't see the importance or the strategies that have taken place as a result of not creating inclusivity of the LGBTQ+ community. There is a lot of controversy regarding this topic. With that being said an educator, or any staff in general, if they find importance in being welcoming to all students, then there should be more of an effort for all students to be included.

Recently San Francisco decided to include LGBTQ+ history in their social studies classes. Because the LGBTQ+ movement began in the 1970's this feels as though it has been a long time coming, but so far this is the only school that has implemented this policy. Although this is a start, there is also more to be done. One way that seems the most promising would be teacher training. An article that talks more about this is *"Training Secondary Teachers to Support LGBTQ+ Students."* In this article, Summer Pennel talks about the theory of training teachers to leave the topic of diversity aside and focus more on talking to students about "the oppression of

LBGTQ+ students through heteronormativity and sexism". (Pennel, 2017) This approach would be something similar to teaching students about the Civil Rights movement and the events surrounding its mobilization. In other words, teaching kids about LGBTQ+ as a history lesson rather than the details of LGBTQ+ identities specifically. Such techniques that would be taught in this teacher training would include those such as "seizing teachable moments, organizing faculty, using LGBTQ-inclusive texts, running a Gay-Straight Alliance, changing district policy to protect LGBTQ teachers and students, dealing with resistant students, and preparing preservice teachers to do antihomophobia work" (Blackburn et al, 2009.)

Another option to connecting gay and straight communties in schools is to host programs that are informative and fun as well. These programs add a positive note to the issue of exclusion and oppression of LGBTQ+ communities. One example is the Colorful Flag Program which in 2010 "assisted 130,000 K-12 students in over 17 districts in Los Angeles" (Reese, 2010). This event was fun because it allowed for adults to go and teach children about bridging the different communities together. They did this by teaching them about the language that was used in the different situations and the way that they treated others, or their actions made others feel. This is effective because it is not required for anyone to come out, as the teachings are in general about the community and it can even touch points that members of the LGBTQ+ community may want to know about themselves. Along with this type of programs, others can include events for pride month, such as putting up a pride flag, having a week of pride where they talk about events that happened in history, similar to Black History Month.

Lastly, if all fails at a micro-level, we must move to a macro level and talk about the way that our government and state can create mandates to force schools to be more inclusive. According to Ashley McGovern, the phenomenon of "no-promo-homo" is very real and it allows

for schools to choose whether they want to talk about this community or not (McGovern, 2012).
To be able to change the lenient policies regarding this, there must be a movement from the
public mobilized by the amount of suicides and victimization going on due to this lack of
inclusion.

Conclusion

As we can see, LGBTQ+ exclusion is a program that affects many students in the United
States. This issue causes things from mental health issues to physical assaults and violence. This
issue is important to battle because it is causing suicide and other life problems in children and
teenagers in our school. Overall, this problem is something that we should all worry about
because these students are our future and if we want to create a future that is more inclusive we
must start by our education system, the main source for acquisition of knowledge for these
students. Finding a way to allow inclusivity of these communities in our schools allows for a
more easy going and co-existing world for us all.

Method

For this capstone project, I, the Researcher investigated whether or not Elementary
Schools within the Salinas valley are creating a sense of inclusivity for the LGBTQ+ community.
Depending on the response I created a set of questions to address why this is an issue, and what
is being done to address the lack of inclusivity for this community that is a minority.

Context

The educators and students that were interviewed belong to the Salinas valley which is
one of the most agriculturally dominant valleys in California. It is surrounded by mountains, and

due to its rich soil, most of the jobs offered are workers who cultivate and package fruits and vegetables. The largest ethic group in the Salinas valley currently stands at 78.7% being hispanics.("Data USA," n.d). According to the school's SARC report, out of four hundred eighteen students enrolled, three hundred eighty eight identify as Hispanic/ or Latino. This leaves only thirty students remaining of other ethnicities. (Laguna Rich Elementary School, 2019). At another local elementary school, Hispanics are at a 94% enrollment rate only leaving 5% remaining that identify as other ethnicities. (Rancho Hills Elementary School, 2019).

Participants and Participant Selection

The participants in this study include teachers who follow school curriculums, as well as do hands on work with students in K-6. Other participants were students in the education system who are part of or identify as one of the identities in the LGBTQ+ community. More specifically, within this group of participants is my girlfriend, and personal acquaintances. These participants were also at one point students in multiple unidentified schools and districts. The ages of the participants ranged from twenty two years old to thirty eight years old. Some of these participants are continuing their education pursuing higher degrees and are using these experiences to compare to their previous experiences in the K-6 educational system.

Charity Fox. A second grade educator at a low income elementary school. She has been teaching for 15 years.

Linda Ross. A Preschool teacher at a low income elementary school. She has been teaching for three years.

Cynthia Carx. Vice Principal at a low income elementary school. She has been teaching 15 years and has been in the administration position for 6 years.

Aalyah Lopez. Undergraduate student, a member of the LGBTQ+ community with experience with the K-12 educational system.

Benjamin James. Member of the LGBTQ+ community, and has past experience with the K-12 education system holding a graduate degree.

Olivia Anderson. Member of the LGBTQ+ community, and has past experience with the K-12 education system.

Ava Jenson. Undergraduate student, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, and has past experience in the K-12 education system.

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Researcher

The main reason this topic interests me and moves me to want to do more research on the inclusivity of children in schools, is because I myself am part of the LGTBQ+ community. In recent years, inclusivity has been a huge topic and something that universities and other higher education institutions strive to achieve to allow room for many different identities. Being an aspiring educator, the curiosity about why this inclusivity has not been included in curriculums since the beginning of our education made it easy for me to want to dive deeper into this topic. Personally, it is important to understand this because I aspire to create an all inclusive and safe space for students of all backgrounds and identities. Allowing open conversations about this type of inclusivity and acceptance in school systems, and the lack thereof, allows for stimulation of new curriculums and the conversation as to how to begin a movement for the future generations.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

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Prior and/or Current Student interview

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1. Tell me about your experiences as an LGBTQ+ student. During your education path,

how many times were you taught about the history of LGBTQ+?

2. Why do you think schools choose to not teach students about these diverse communities?

3. What do you think are the consequences of not having these types of lesson plans or curriculums available for teaching?

4. What do you think are the challenges of teaching these types of diverse lessons to children of younger ages?

5. Why is it important to teach students about these diverse communities, specifically the LGBTQ+ community?

6. Is there anything else you'd like to say about being an LGBTQ+ student or how to improve the educational experiences of LGBTQ+ students?

"Educators" Interview

1. What do you know about LGBTQ+ inclusivity in classrooms? What do you see as the challenges with teaching about LGBTQ+ history; or What are you most concerned about when it comes to teaching children about diverse communities?

2. What is currently being done to create a safe space for students - by whom - and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?

3. What do you think should be done about the lack of effort in reforming the curriculum to include these types of LGBTQ+ lessons?

4. What do you think are the challenges to doing something about reforming this curriculum?

5. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the efforts you have seen in schools regarding LGBTQ+ communities and/or the improvement of including lesson plans welcoming to all identities?

Procedure

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all research was conducted online and virtually. The educators interviewed were reached through Zoom meetings. One of the educators is a teacher in a nearby school while the other interviewee, who is a vice principal, resides within the same school district. These two participants were interviewed through Zoom meetings and they were asked pre-written questions about different curriculums and rules and regulations regarding conversations about LGBTQ+ communities in the classroom. The questions were asked first hand by me, live. They were then given open ended time to answer. There was no limit to the time that they had to answer and they were not in any way persuaded to answer in a certain direction or another. The researcher recorded these meetings for further analysis after the meeting. The rest of the participants were either interviewed via zoom, but chose to not be recorded. In this case I took notes on their responses to later analyze.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for common points and differences between the students and the teachers. These answers were then used and analyzed through different lenses from the point of view of an educator as well as a student.

Results

For this Capstone Project, two educators, a vice principal, and four LGBTQ+ students were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve the lack of inclusivity of the LGBTQ+ community within early education. This is important because the LGBTQ+ community is a minority, and there are so many students who start questioning their own sexuality at a very young age. Schools are the main place that students spend most of their time and there should be a feeling of inclusion, and acceptance for who these students are. Based on

an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged (see Table 1).

Evidence-based decision making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the

following criteria: Time,Reach,and Effectiveness. Time is a factor that is already very limiting to

educators/administrators, therefore it's important to consider how much time would affect the

effectiveness of this issue. Controversy is an important factor to consider because there is always

the possibility that there will be individuals who are opposed to these actions for improvement

on this issue. Lastly, effectiveness is another major factor because it outweighs all of the bad if

any. It goes to show what the outcome would be, as well as how successful it would be to push

this action into play. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be

recommended and justified.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

	Time	Controversy	Effectiveness
Training Teachers to incorporate LGBTQ+ material in their curriculum	High	Medium	High
LGBTQ+ Events in school	Medium	High	High
Law Mandates	Medium	Medium	High

LGBTQ+ curriculum

As a result of analyzing interview data, and literature research, an option that I have

presented would involve **training educators to incorporate LGBTQ+ material within their

curriculum.** Teacher trainings are already mandatory, although this would take up more of these

educators' time, the effectiveness of this issue outweighs the time that is needed to put this into

practice. It will be beneficial for teachers to become familiar with the LGBTQ+ community, as well as how to create a safe space within a classroom for a student who might be questioning their sexuality. This would mainly be beneficial to the students who are a part of this community. Showing acceptance and understanding is very important to show that every student is the same, and that everyone should be treated equally no matter who they are. A Vice Principal shared her input on where the curriculum stand. "The current curriculum in classes, and the direction that our staff members follow is to talk about kindness, and making sure to include everyone feels included." (C.Carx, Zoom Interview, April 20, 2021).While time is something that can be managed, Most interviewees including both educators and students have shared that bringing up the topic about the LGBTQ+ community brings a lot of **controversy**. This can be seen through multiple experiences shared by interviewees. (C.Fox, April 12, 2021), A current educator shared the following to be one of her findings from previous conversations with her co-workers. "The community that we live in is not as accepting as we would like them to be. There is that fear of stepping on toes, Again this is based on previous conversations that I've had with my colleagues." As I was concluding one of my interviews (A.Lopez, February 17, 2021), had a very powerful statement "if we are able to talk about the genocides and the killings of presidents, then we can talk about identities that are present in our world today." It was made clear that there should be no excuses for not talking about the LGBTQ+ community.

Hosting LGBTQ+ Events

Celebrating days such as national coming out day was a topic of discussion in my interviews. The reason behind hosting LGBTQ+ events in schools was brought up to create a safe space for students who identify as part of the community. (L.Ross, April 26, 2021), mentioned the following: "I didn't feel safe to come out because the LGBTQ+ community was

not being represented." If there was an environment where students can freely express

themselves then more students would step forward. (B.James, April 26, 2021), states "Something

that can be done is give students a space where they can feel that their identity is okay." Another

interviewee agreed by stating that there must be a way for students to feel represented, and that

they matter. (O.Anderson, May 12, 2021), explains that "students need to be more aware of us,

and that our community is all about love, something that the world needs more of." What this

showed me was that when together as a community, you see the love and acceptance between

those around you. Therefore, by hosting LGBTQ+ events students will feel accepted by all of

their classmates.

Law mandates

Law mandates were also a topic of discussion throughout the interviews. (C.Carx, April

20, 2021). Shares that in order for schools to bring upon inclusivity of the LGBTQ+ community

it has to come from the state. "It needs to come from a higher up, at a state level in order for

there to be more of a push on schools to take action." It was brought to my attention that this

issue is not a priority in schools, and that without pressure from an outside party action will not

be considered. What this means is that students will be left feeling like they aren't important.

(A.Jenson, April 23, 2021), stated the following: "students may feel unwanted and possibly

unsafe in an environment that's supposed to be welcoming to all."

Conclusion

In order to create inclusivity for the LGBTQ+ community, I recommend hosting

LGBTQ+ events in schools. It's important to acknowledge other holidays where these identities

could be celebrated. Many of the people interviewed explain that they are afraid of backlash or

they feel as though they are going to be "stepping on toes". Giving students the ability to be open

about their sexualities or ideas and questions at schools allows for more ability to educate rather

than oppress in the classroom. This could be changed and it would allow for students to have an open safe space for themselves.

Concessions.

Apart from choosing having school events as the best recommended choice of action, the other two options: Training teachers to incorporate LGBTQ+ material in their curriculum, and Law mandates were also very important and beneficial to this issue. They both have good outcomes to push for change. Training teachers to incorporate LGBTQ+ material within their curriculum, would face the issue first hand being that teachers are who spend the most time with the children. They would initially start the process of creating a sense of acceptance within the classroom. Now, law mandates would potentially create the best outlook, due to how there would be an immense push for action, and change. Schools would no longer have the choice of incorporating this as a topic up for discussion, but would make it mandatory for them to do so. Therefore, inclusivity of the LGBTQ+ community would be a part of all schools.

Limitations

While my recommended choice of action was to have LGBTQ+ events in school, there are still some limitations that must be acknowledged. As stated before time is something that schools are very limited in. Therefore, planning events that take away time from their "School time" would make this action nearly impossible. Apart from that, There would be a lot of backlash from parents/community members that would set this action back from taking place. There could be scenarios where children's parents don't allow children to attend such events. This would create a halt, and therefore would not work.

Potential negative outcomes.

There are some potential negative outcomes that come from having LGBTQ+ events in school. Some of these negative outcomes have been previously mentioned by educators. The

community that we reside in is not very welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community, therefore

holding events as such at an elementary level might cause some parents, or the community in

general to become upset. Feedback from the interviewees tell me that parents would view this

topic as something that adults would discuss, and that this is not a topic that children should be

aware of because of their age.

Conclusion

Of all the three actions, I recommend that educators/ administrators be pragmatic when it

comes to making decisions about their students, or for their students. Based on literature, and

data that was collected, I am confident that this is the best solution as of right now to better

support the LGBTQ+ community as far as inclusivity within the education system. Having a

student feel like they are safe, and that they matter should be a school's priority. This action is the

most effective and will pave the way for schools to be full of pride.

Action Documentation & Reflection

For my capstone project I chose to focus on the lack of inclusivity of the LGBTQ+

community in early education. My research data was collected throughout interviews of

individuals who consider themselves part of the LGBTQ+ community and are prior students in

the K-6 System. I also interviewed two educators within the Salinas valley, as well as a Vice

Principal. My action options were the following: Conducting training for teachers regarding the

LGBTQ+ community, Hosting LGBTQ+ events in schools, and Law Mandates. The action

option that I implemented was Hosting LGBTQ+ events in schools. I implemented this action

because although there is a lot of controversy that comes with this action, the outcome outweighs

this measure. If more schools start hosting LGBTQ+ events, such as celebrating National

Coming Out Day by hosting a parade, or having guest speakers, all of this will make students

who consider themselves part of the community feel like they are being heard, and they are not alone in the place where they consider their second home.

Action Research Project Documentation and Reflection

In order to implement my action option, I, the researcher, have been having close communication with (C.Carx.) I sent her a flyer via email for her to look at as reference if she ever came to the decision of hosting an LGBTQ+ event within her school campus. What was surprising to me about this project was that after conducting an interview with (C.Carx), she personally reached out to me seeking guidance on how to create inclusivity within the school system. I mentioned my idea of hosting an LGBTQ+ event with guest speakers. She thought the idea was great, although there are various steps in order for this to take place which she mentioned to me. Although I did not have to make any modifications to my action option, the overall outcome so far is that there is currently a discussion taking place with colleagues to be able to set it into action. One thing that I do wish I would have known from the start is that it

only takes one person to create a big difference for a whole community. I learned that I am making a difference for a lot of children by simply speaking my truth and sharing my knowledge with others.

Synthesis and Integration

My experience as an undergraduate in the Liberal Studies program was one that was both challenging but very rewarding. The Liberal Studies requirements, and MLos, as well as this action project have had great influence in my professional development, and how I am one step closer to becoming the best educator I can be. Addressing MLO 1: Developing Educator, I have become a very confident person after being in the Liberal Studies program, not only did it help me find my voice, but it also enhanced my writing skills, and my data research skills. MLO 2: Diversity and Multicultural Scholar: Being a minority it was easy for me to acknowledge that this is a very big issue within the education system, and within this program it helped me gather knowledge as far as how to help different communities, as well as different identities. MLO 3: Innovative Technology Practitioner: Technology is very present within the education system, and we learned what effective instruction is, as well as how to find ways to create exciting learning experiences for students all while using technology. MLO 4: Social Justice Collaborator: Within this program, courses such as my service learning and capstone both pushed me to reach out to different resources in order to gain both experience and knowledge all while having an inside look at someone who is a part of the education system. I was put in situations where I had to adapt very quickly and this only helped me grow as an educator. MLO 5: Subject Matter Generalist: Throughout my time in the Liberal Studies department, I have completed all course requirements in which I have excelled in. I plan to continue to use my acquired knowledge as I

continue my path to becoming an educator and implement these practices in California Public

Education. In order for me to become the professional that I envision I would first have to

graduate from a masters program as well as receive my credential. Next, I would apply to a

school district within The Salinas valley which is my hometown. Once I receive a job position as

an educator, I plan to make my classroom welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. I want my

students to feel welcome, and never be scared to voice themselves because of the backlash that

comes with being part of a minority.

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