Dear OCR,

My name is Cody Freeman, and I am the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Global Center for LGBTI+ Freedom and Education.

We recently conducted an exploratory survey of 174 teachers in 12 countries, among them 67 in-service teachers in the United States, to examine the current issues, challenges, and barriers to including LGBTI+ content or supporting LGBTI+ students. Please include this resource [attached], containing both quantitative and qualitative data, in your evidence base for the Title IX hearing.

From this, we created the Teacher Resource Pack - United States to provide teachers with free, practical tools for their classrooms (soon to be released in Spanish and Thai).

From this extensive work, we recommend five things:

1. Enact legal protections: There are numerous laws previously introduced (for example: Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act) that should be swiftly passed to proactively protect students from bullying and harassment in educational settings.

2. Curriculum reform: Our resources include lessons plans based on UNESCO’s International Technical Guidelines
on Sexuality Education. California, Colorado, and New Jersey serve as good case studies on passing legislation to teach LGBTI+ topics.

3. **Teacher training:** One of the largest barriers teachers face is a lack of knowledge and comfort as a result of a lack of training. Pre-service teachers should be federally mandated to enroll in and pass at least one semester of a course that specifically trains teachers on supporting LGBTI+ students. All classified staff, including in-service teachers, should be federally required to attend at least 4 hours of training every two years on LGBTI+ topics as part of their ongoing credential licensing.

4. **Create funding incentives:** Teachers, administrators, school district officials, and schools should be financially incentivized to offer grants as incentives to schools to contract non-profits and other local community groups and members to train teachers and administrators to implement school-wide plans including policy change, inclusive bathrooms, and more - assessed through clear indicators.

5. **Use our resources:** We offer trainings, assistance with writing school-level anti-bullying policies and action plans, and support mechanisms for educators. We recommend meeting with our organization to establish a connection that can support our combined mission through research and practice.

Should you have questions, please reply directly to this email. We would be happy to set up a meeting for further consultation.

Best,

Cody Freeman
Founder & Chief Executive Officer
All pronouns
Findings from the Classroom

What do teachers need to support LGBTI+ students?
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Suggested Citation

About the Global Center
The Global Center is a non-governmental organization who transforms the world for LGBTI+ youth through education. We work through accountability, sustainability, and transformation to end oppression. The Global Center provides education, advocacy, research, and support for key stakeholders globally. Our all-EARS approach allows us to lead through listening, balancing global and local impacts. We facilitate workshops, conduct research, create curriculum, host lectures, and advocate through media for queer voices globally. Join our community today!

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Contributors

Cody Freeman (Founder & Chief Executive Officer) is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Learning Sciences & Education, Thammasat University. He received an MA in International Educational Development, specializing in Peace & Human Rights Education, from Teachers College, Columbia University. He specializes in gender & sexuality studies, comparative & international education, democratic education, social movements, and sociology of education.

Jorge Herrera Valderrábano (Director of Research) is a young human rights advocate. He studied International Relations at the Tecnológico de Monterrey, and is finalizing a Social Work degree at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He has collaborated with civil society organizations for the last 6 years, and is the co-founder and current president of DILO Escuelas Incluyentes (dilomexico.org), a Mexican organization promoting inclusive policies at schools.

Cai Thomas (Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer) is a program officer at IREX, based in DC, managing a gender equality and youth development program. They received an MA in Comparative & International Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. A question that guides Cai’s work is: “How do we create a truly just, equal, and inclusive culture for LGBTI+ youth globally?” They specialize in gender & sexuality studies, youth empowerment & leadership, human rights education, and spirituality and holistic spaces.
Greetings from the Global Center

Thank you for reading the Global Center’s first research report. It’s been an exciting journey listening to the diverse experiences of teachers across the world, and we can’t wait to share these voices with you.

Research has power. It has the power to tell stories, propel policy change, and foster attitudinal shifts. It has the power to elevate issues that are often taboo or kept silent. Some of what we found is sobering, some is enlightening, but all voices within have power.

Advancing inclusion of LGBTI+ topics within education is a new and growing field, and with that comes the responsibility to ensure the data speaks to the impact we work to create: freedom. We hope this research is used to create safe and welcoming schools for LGBTI+ youth. Teachers are key to that process.

We listened to teachers across 12 countries and four languages. We heard about their greatest barriers, the materials they needed, and how we could support them by developing practical resources. Our findings reaffirm that every piece of our work must be embedded in justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. We’re thankful to all of these teachers who took the time to share their experiences.

We encourage you to learn, as we did, from this data. Research is a continuous, living process and we hope you use this information. Bring it into your workplace, writing, classrooms, and homes, and discover ways you can share this knowledge with others.

If you are interested in contributing your time, effort, or finances to the Global Center, we would sincerely appreciate your contribution by sharing this resource and donating to our organization. You are the reason we continue to work, and we thank you for your passion.

(b)(6)

Cody Freeman
Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Acknowledgements

We believe that freedom is created through unity. The collaboration of many people made this endeavour possible.

We would like to thank all of the teachers that shared their experiences with us and who continue to fight every day for justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion. We hope we did right by you in this report.

We are in profound debt to individuals both within and outside the Global Center who were willing to offer their time and skills to translating the survey instrument and responses. We would like to particularly thank Sataphat Silsawang, Pasawat (Tae) Sakulpanich, and Fresh Pisuttisarun for translating, and Narut Supawantanakul and Timo Ojanen for proofreading the Thai survey. We would also like to thank Grace Chung, Erika Kessler, and Frankie Lewis for providing advice on statistical coding, analysis, and data visualization. Your commitment to freedom for LGBTI+ people inspires us.

We are grateful to the many people who helped distribute this survey. With your help, we were able listen to the experiences of a wide variety of teachers in different countries. For that, we are deeply grateful. We also want to recognize the entire Global Center team, particularly Alexandre Savigny, Yasemin Rodriguez Corzo, and Xavier Corzo, for their ongoing commitment to this project.

Thank you everyone for making this initiative successful!
Executive Summary

Introduction
The Global Center envisions a world where LGBTI+ youth are free. Teachers play a key role in fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion for all learners. We conducted the Findings from the Classroom: What do teachers need to support LGBTI+ students survey to examine what barriers existed and what supports may help teachers in supporting LGBTI+ students in their classrooms and schools.

Key Findings
174 teachers across 12 countries elicited these key findings:

- Less than one in four (22.1%) teachers stated that they had training on LGBTI+ topics. However, teachers who were trained on LGBTI+ topics were nearly four times more likely to rate their knowledge of gender identity topics as excellent, when compared to teachers who had not received training.

- There is a lack of tools from a legitimate source to facilitate the planning and delivery of contents, despite huge interest and urgency.

- There were five main barriers that teachers discussed: people, social & cultural, practical, knowledge and skills for implementation, and policies & curriculum.

- Whether through general or specific means, the majority of teachers in this survey did include LGBTI+ topics when teaching about bullying and harassment. The most common way was through the broad themes of diversity and respect for all people.

- Only one in four (28.6%) teachers have an anti-discrimination policy at their school level that specifically covers LGBTI+ students.

- Teachers discussed the need for affinity spaces or clubs that reassured students that it is okay to be authentic.

From these findings, we can conclude that many teachers in our survey were trying to address LGBTI+ topics in their classrooms and schools, albeit in different ways, and that slowly but surely the level of awareness has improved in schools.
Executive Summary

Recommendations
We know the power of teachers. Every day teachers are working in classrooms around the world to grow our children into the society we envision. Therefore, we have three specific recommendations for teachers, administrators, district officials, and policymakers.

1 - Provide comprehensive training to support students
2 - Utilize Global Center Teacher Resource Pack
3 - Draft an action plan

The Global Center will continue to serve as a center for the community on LGBTI+ education, and to address barriers and questions ahead. Engage with us and share what it was like to use this research. Through this dialogue, we can create a global network of teachers who are moving for a future where all students are free and equal. Freedom starts with you, it starts with us, it starts now.
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PART 1
INTRODUCTION
The Global Center envisions a world where LGBTI+ youth are free: free to live safely from discrimination, free to live healthy lives, and the freedom to flourish. This starts in schools, where young people spend a large majority of their time during their formative years. However, research across North America, Europe, Latin America, and Asia and the Pacific shows that LGBTI+ students continue to experience high rates of bullying, harassment, and victimization (Avila, 2018; Kosciw & Zongrone, 2019; Kosciw et al., 2018; Kosciw & Pizmony-Levy, 2016; United Nations, 2015; UNESCO, 2016). How can we prevent violence in schools when educators across the world face barriers - mainly fear of backlash, teacher identity, and lack of knowledge and comfort (Lewinger, Thomas, & Freeman, forthcoming) - in addressing LGBTI+ topics in their classrooms?

In order to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030 (UNESCO, 2020), educators must address sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) topics in their classrooms to ensure all students, in particular LGBTI+ students, have safe, healthy, and flourishing lives.

We hope these Findings from the Classroom help further the conversation on the barriers teachers face when implementing LGBTI+ topics in their classrooms, and what resources (e.g., teacher training, school policies) may help teachers overcome those barriers to create more inclusive and welcoming environments where LGBTI+ youth can be safe, healthy, and flourishing.

What is the purpose of this survey?

We had two main purposes for conducting this research:

1. Examine the current issues, challenges, and barriers to including LGBTI+ content or supporting LGBTI+ students in classrooms or schools globally, and
2. Discover what current and desired supports, resources, or tools may help teachers in supporting LGBTI+ students in their classroom or school.

The intent was also to have a truly global reach using our networks. With the resources and capacity available, the Global Center conducted the survey in English, Mandarin, Spanish, and Thai in the summer of 2020. Overall, 174 teachers responded from 12 different countries.

What were some notable findings?

Three out of four teachers (75.6%) responded that they have not received teacher training or professional development on LGBTI+ topics. However, those who had been trained on these topics were three times more likely to have a policy at their school that prohibited discriminatory behavior based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression. Further, teachers who had training were also three times more likely to teach in a school that had inclusive bathrooms. These results alone show that the more trained educators are, the more likely they are to contribute to creating an inclusive environment for LGBTI+ students.

---

1. The acronym LGBTI+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex as well as other identities including queer, questioning, two spirit, and asexual to name a few.
What is the goal of this publication?

The Global Center envisions a world where LGBTI+ youth are free. In order to create freedom, educators, administrators, district officials, and policymakers must have a clearer understanding of what facilitates LGBTI+ inclusive schools and what barriers prevent inclusion. It’s our hope with these findings that our readers understand the need to act now to create more inclusive curriculums and practices.

This Findings from the Classroom: What do teachers need to support LGBTI+ students report will highlight that educators across the world are facing similar challenges in creating LGBTI+ inclusive curriculums, classrooms, and schools. It will also show how important it is to be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and drive to create a more inclusive and equitable future for our LGBTI+ youth.

Educators: You can use these findings to understand that you are not alone in facing challenges. Further, these findings can be a source of motivation to center marginalized voices, in particular LGBTI+ students. Please take advantage of the tools and guidance in the Global Center’s Teacher Resource Pack and email info.globalcenter@gmail.com if you need support.

Administrators & District Officials: You can use these findings to better understand teachers’ experiences. We found that administrators play a large role in the perceived or actual fear of implementing LGBTI+ topics. Therefore, you can use these findings as a catalyst for active support of teachers in your school and initiate school-level cultural and policy change. Please contact info.globalcenter@gmail.com if you need support.

Policymakers: You can use these findings to fuel your drive for a world without discrimination against LGBTI+ youth. LGBTI+ youth need your support now more than ever! Local, national, regional, and international policies enforcing schools to make inclusive environments makes a statement that LGBTI+ rights are human rights. For example, a policy mandating gender-inclusive bathrooms in all schools would make a profound impact on LGBTI+ youth. Please contact info.globalcenter@gmail.com if you need guidance on what type of policies and supports are needed in schools.

Remember, this conversation does not stop with this report! We sincerely hope you use these findings to drive change and create truly equitable and inclusive spaces for all youth.
Findings from the Classroom – Theory of Change

01 You are provided with Findings from the Classroom

02 You are equipped with the knowledge to understand the comprehensive situation of LGBTI+ youth and teachers’ experience

03 You use the Findings from the Classroom and Teacher Resource Pack to implement comprehensive LGBTI+ content in your classroom, devise policies that address those needs, and develop strategies for inclusion

04 LGBTI+ youth are provided with knowledge, skills, and action

05 Improved student outcomes
   • Greater sense of belonging
   • Increased mental health
   • Enhanced student empowerment

06 Create safe, healthy, and flourishing lives

07 More free individuals, schools, and societies
PART 2
METHODODOLOGY
This section outlines our methodology. We first discuss how we created the survey instrument as well as the translation process. Then, we talk about how we collected and analyzed the data. We conclude by presenting the demographic characteristics of our sample.

**Survey Instrument**

The survey instrument was created by the Global Center’s Research Unit and Education Unit. We first established our research objectives and designed the survey in English with a clear intention to create an instrument that would be anonymous, relevant, and meaningful across various contexts. It was then translated into Mandarin, Spanish, and Thai by the Global Center’s staff and volunteers, and proofread by an external evaluator for each language to ensure each translation’s accuracy.

The final survey consisted of 33 questions divided into four key areas: demographics, self-perceptions, teachers & school environment, and supports, resources & tools. The survey was hosted on the Qualtrics survey platform and took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

**Data Collection**

We developed a comprehensive distribution schedule that elicited a snowball sampling data collection technique. With the help of many friends, colleagues, and organizations, the survey was shared on the Global Center’s website and social media accounts as well across our team’s personal and professional networks.

The survey was open from June 2-July 18, 2020. During this time, we made a conscious effort to monitor the demographic distribution of respondents in order to adjust our advocacy tactics to increase uptake in underrepresented identities and contexts.

**Data Analysis**

Once we closed the survey, we eliminated any results that did not consent to the survey or were not from teachers. This left us with 174 respondents. Next, all open-ended comments in Mandarin, Spanish, and Thai were translated to English so that we could analyze the dataset in one piece.

To that end, we used a team of two to translate and proofread, as we did for the initial survey translations. Once all the text was in English, we uploaded the excel file to the STATA statistical software to analyze the descriptive and inferential statistics. Notably, only tests that were statistically significant are presented in this report. Lastly, we created charts and worked with a graphic designer to present the data in a more visually-appealing way.

For the qualitative data, we created an excel file with tabs for each question and listed all of the open-ended responses on the left hand column. Next, the first and second author independently analyzed the data through a double-blind inductive coding process looking at the various themes present in the responses. Once both researchers developed themes for each question, all three authors met to discuss the emerging themes, and settled on a codebook.
Then, the first author went back to the dataset to recode based on those themes with the second author supervising that all codes were recoded correctly. The first and second author then discussed key quotes they wanted to highlight in the report as representative of the emerging themes discussed in the data. You can find the results of this process below.

Sample

Only teachers were eligible to participate and the final sample consisted of 174 teachers. Please note that the only required questions that participants needed to answer were (1) if they consented to taking this survey and (2) if they were a teacher. Therefore, you may see throughout this report there were not 174 responses for every question. In these cases, we listed the total number of responses for each particular question to present the data as accurately as possible. Table 1 presents participants’ demographic characteristics.

Our sample consisted of teachers aged 22-66 years old, with an average age of 33.8 years old. The majority of sample identified their sexual orientation as straight/heterosexual (57.4%), with others identifying as gay (14.2%), queer\(^2\) (10.1%), lesbian (9.5%), bisexual (6.8%), or other (3.4%). Most of our participants were female (68.9%), one in four were male (27.0%), while others identified as genderqueer, gender nonconforming, or non-binary (5.4%), transgender\(^3\) (4.1%), or other (2.7%).

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Our sample had teachers from 12 countries: United States, Thailand, China, Estonia, Ireland, Mexico, England, Philippines, Sweden, Malaysia, New Zealand, and India. The majority currently lived in an urban area or city (52.7%), nearly one third (30.4%) lived in a suburban area or near a city, and about one in six (16.9%) lived in a small town or rural area.

There was a broad range in the amount of years that participants have been teaching ranging from 0-40 years, with an average of 8.8 years. The main content areas taught were of their national language (36.1%), social sciences (28.6%), science (25.2%), math (24.5%), humanities (16.3%), visual & performing arts (12.9%), and world languages (12.9%). Notably, many teachers within our sample taught across multiple content areas.

Participants represented a wide variety of religious affiliation with the largest percentages identifying as nonreligious (40.5%), Christian (25.7%), and Buddhist (21.6%). Half of the participants (56.1%) agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement, “Faith is very important to me”, whereas the other half either somewhat disagreed or disagreed.

---

2. Queer is a reclaimed word that can be used as an umbrella term for a range of sexual and gender identities including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender or gender questioning. It is also used by some people who don’t want to label themselves. This term is seen by some as offensive.

3. Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression differs from the sex assigned at birth. Transgender identity is not dependent on medical procedures. Sometimes abbreviated to “trans”
Table 1. Characteristics of Survey Participants (n=174*)

**Age (n=148)**
- Average = 33.8 years
- Range = 22 to 66 years

**Years Teaching (n=144)**
- Average = 8.8 years
- Range = 0 to 40 years

**Sexual Orientation (n=148)**
- Heterosexual: 57.4%
- Gay: 14.2%
- Queer: 10.1%
- Lesbian: 9.5%
- Bisexual: 8.8%
- Other: 3.4%

**Country (n=148)**
- United States: 45.3%
- Ireland: 27.7%
- China: 7.4%
- Estonia: 6.8%
- Other: 6.0%
- Thailand: 6.0%

**Gender Identity (n=148)**
- Female: 68.9%
- Male: 27.0%
- Genderqueer, gender non-conforming, nonbinary, and/or transgender: 9.5%

**Location (n=148)**
- Urban area or city: 52.7%
- Suburban area or near city: 30.4%
- Small town or rural area: 16.9%

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.
## Table 1. Characteristics of Survey Participants (n=174*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>(n=147)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother Tongue Language</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual &amp; Performing Arts</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Languages</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Physical Education</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Technology</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Religious Affiliation (n=148)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith is important to me</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonreligious</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.
Knowing someone who is LGBTI+ in your school

We first asked teachers if they knew someone in their school who identified as LGBTI+. As shown in Figure 1, the vast majority of teachers (84.5%) stated they did know an LGBTI+ person in their school. However, around one in seven teachers (15.5%) in our survey stated that they did not.

Relationship with that LGBTI+ person

We then asked teachers to describe their relationship with that person(s). The most common type of relationship included teachers’ colleagues (33 mentions), students (29 mentions), or friends and acquaintances (26 mentions). As one teacher stated.

“There are multiple students of mine in class who identify as LGBT+, as well as students in the club I sponsor.”

-United States, 25 years old

Participants also described their relationship as other teachers (14 mentions), themselves (6 mentions), family members (4 mentions), and their supervisors (3 mentions) such as their administrator or employer.

We also found three distinct ways teachers described their emotional relation to the LGBTI+ person(s) they knew in their school. The first category (34 mentions) was the most popular and described their relationship in a positive sense (e.g., supportive, warm, close, good). Some teachers in this category described themselves as the “safe person” LGBTI+ students can go to:

“[We] feel at ease with each other talking about news or our lives being part of the community.”

-Mexico, 26 years old

The second category (10 mentions) described a more neutral approach to their relationship (e.g., normal, professional). The third category (2 mentions) revealed a more conflicting or distant relation.

Knowledge of sexual orientation

Teachers rated their current knowledge about sexual orientation topics using a five-point likert scale. Their perceptions were quite high as one in four (27.1%) rated their knowledge as excellent, nearly half (49.3%) as good, and one in five (23.6%) as fair. Notably, no teachers rated their knowledge of sexual orientation topics as poor or very poor.
Knowledge of gender identity

Teachers rated their current knowledge about gender identity topics using the same scale as the previous question. We found that while teachers knew less about gender identity than sexual orientation, one in seven (15.7%) rated their knowledge as excellent, nearly half (48.6%) as good, and one in three (33.6%) as fair. Additionally, a few teachers rated their knowledge as poor (2.1%). Teachers who were trained on LGBTI+ topics were nearly four times more likely (39.3% vs. 10.4%) to rate their knowledge of gender identity topics as excellent, when compared to teachers who had not received training.4

LGBTI+ rights are human rights

We asked teachers to state how much they agree with the following statement: “LGBTI+ rights are human rights.” Three out of four (77.1%) strongly agreed and one in six (17.9%) agreed, for a total of 95.0% across those two categories. However, there were some teachers who were either neutral (4.3%) or strongly disagreed (0.7%). Teachers who knew someone in their school who identified as LGBTI+ were more likely (80.0% vs. 60%) to strongly agree with the statement “LGBTI+ rights are human rights.”

Teachers must discuss and include LGBTI+ topics

We then asked teachers to rate how much they agreed with the statement “Teachers must discuss and include LGBTI+ topics in the classroom.” Responses declined from the previous statement as nearly half (48.6%) stated they strongly agreed, one in three (35.7%) agreed, but one in seven (12.9%) were neutral or disagreed (2.9%). Teachers who were very comfortable teaching LGBTI+ topics were four times more likely (81.3% vs. 16.7%) to strongly agree that LGBTI+ topics must be taught.

4. A chi-square test presented a statistically significant association between knowledge of gender identity and teacher training (\( \chi^2(6) = 14.85, p<0.05 \)).

5. A chi-square test presented a statistically significant association between knowing someone who identified as LGBTI+ in their school and strongly agreeing with the statement “LGBTI+ rights are human rights” (\( \chi^2(3) = 14.56, p<0.01 \)).

6. A chi-square test presented a statistically significant association between their level of agreement with the statement that teachers must discuss and include LGBTI+ topics in the classroom and their rating of how comfortable they were teaching LGBTI+ topics in their classroom (\( \chi^2(12) = 48.0, p<0.01 \)).
Comfort levels with teaching LGBTI+ topics

We asked teachers how comfortable they were in teaching LGBTI+ topics in their classroom. Teachers’ responses were overall positive, but had a wide variance. Two thirds of teachers stated that they were very comfortable (34.5%) or comfortable (30.2%) with teaching LGBTI+ topics. Nearly one in five (19.4%) were fairly comfortable. However, one in ten (11.5%) were only slightly comfortable. Notably, six teachers (4.3%) were not comfortable in teaching LGBTI+ topics in their classroom.

Barriers to teaching LGBTI+ topics

We asked teachers if there were any barriers in the way of them addressing LGBTI+ topics in their classrooms. There were five main barriers that teachers discussed: people, social & cultural, practical, knowledge and skills for implementation, and policies & curriculum.

People

The largest barrier getting in the way of teaching LGBTI+ topics was people (33 mentions). Teachers spoke of the perceived and real backlash they’ve received from parents, other teachers, administrators, and even students. Many participants spoke of the concern of parent criticism, concern, censorship, and even fighting to take students out of their classroom (23 mentions). As one teacher stated:

“Being openly gay myself, I worry about accusations from unsupportive or homophobic parents that teaching about LGBT topics would be inappropriate or “imposing my lifestyle” on students.”

-United States, 23 years old

Some teachers feared that parents’ reaction and backlash could threaten their career. As one teacher recalled their previous teaching experience in America, they expressed that being out in a conservative area can lead to harassment from parents:

“I was the first openly transgender teacher and I was stopped from discussing LGBTQ+ subjects because so many parents wanted to fire me, pull their students from my class, and they sent me months of hate mail attacking my gender identity and physical appearances.”

-China, 24 years old
Parents can have a strong impact on the barriers put in place around discussing LGBTI+ topics in their classrooms. Even in countries where religion may not be the main reason for conservative parents’ position, like Estonia, prevailing norms around traditional families can shape the classroom’s content:

“There might be feedback from homes that in parents’ opinion it shouldn’t be done because this topic is sensitive...people are fond of “traditional” family which include mother, father, and children. Our LGBTI+ students sometimes really hide desperately who they are because of that.”

– Estonia, 31 years old

We can extrapolate from this that parents help to reinforce the traditional norms and values embedded in the cultural context and when parents feel they are not complied with, like when teaching about LGBTI+ topics, they make their voices heard.

Students were also stated as a barrier for teaching LGBTI+ topics (8 mentions). Teachers discussed how some students, particularly from conservative, were uneducated on LGBTI+ topics, didn’t believe they should be discussed, were inappropriate, not supportive, felt as though LGBTI+ topics were a distant problem, and that they show disrespectful behavior towards people outside the traditional men-women binary.

Administration and local education authorities were also listed as a barrier for inclusion (7 mentions). Some supervisors felt that teaching LGBTI+ topics might be controversial to some parents and asked the teachers not to teach these topics. For other teachers though, their supervisors were silent about how to approach these topics which caused teachers to self-regulate as they were unsure how they should address LGBTI+ topics in the classroom:

“There is nothing in our curriculum that tells us to specifically teach about any LGBTI+ topics. I think if we were told by our admin that it was “okay” to teach about it I would JUMP on the opportunity!”

– United States, 32 years old

Other teachers can also be seen as a barrier to inclusion (3 mentions). As one teacher stated:

“If there is another teacher listening or supervising the presentation, [I] will feel under pressure and stressed because we do not know their attitude towards this issue.”

– Thailand, 52 years old

People presented the largest barrier to inclusion for addressing LGBTI+ content in the classroom. Many teachers discussed that they overcame the real or perceived backlash that people in their school community would have by framing LGBTI+ topics in a way that would not precipitate a reaction.
Further, conservative parents played a large role for how teachers discussed these topics with all of the children in their class and often complied with a curriculum that would not be “too sensitive or controversial” in order to prevent negative repercussions.

Social & Cultural

Social and cultural barriers were the second most common barrier to addressing LGBTI+ topics in classrooms (22 mentions). Teachers listed three key areas where this barrier manifested: community norms & values, stigma & discrimination, and religion.

The first key areas discussed was how the contextual norms, traditions, and values fostered misconceptions on these topics and often labelled them as too sensitive for the school to discuss (10 mentions). Teachers shared that the social norms and values of people around them oppresses LGBTI+ people. Teachers discussed how schools are not open minded about diversity and that the culture makes them uncomfortable to be open about their orientation. As one teacher shared:

“Mexican culture and machismo are not the best allies when trying to teach LGBTQ+ topics to high school students. They still see them as taboo and as ‘that can happen/is important to a friend of a friend, but not to me’.”

-Mexico, 26 years old

Other teachers discussed how being homophobic or transphobic and even hostile to LGBTI+ people is socially accepted in their environment.

Teachers also shared how creating a safe environment was important, but how the existing stigma and discrimination can lead to further prejudice or even jeopardize their safety:

“In some contexts certain aspects are sensitive. For example, the belief that talking about sexual/gender minority issues equals trying to convert minors to that certain lifestyle....Also, in the past, talking about these issues with very homophobic students felt like a risk to my credibility.”

-Thailand, 41 years old

Others discussed how when they first tried to discuss LGBTI+ topics they were teased and how, for some, bullying may lead to mental hardship in the future. In these cases, teachers shared that they have to be very careful of “enforcing viewpoints on LGBTQI issues towards students who are homophobic.”

Religious reasons were also cited as a social and cultural barrier for addressing LGBTI+ topics (4 mentions). As one teacher stated:

“The schools I teach in are religious schools where topics of sexual orientation and gender identity must be discussed within a broader context.”
While I consistently remind my students to treat every human with kindness, I refrain from discussing the religious ramifications of LGBTI+ topics.”
- United States, 32 years old

The social norms and values around diversity and inclusion play a large role in how teachers address these concepts in the classroom. Traditional ideas are often policed either through covert means, like making these topics feel sensitive or uncomfortable, or overt means, like accepting the use of bullying and harassment towards teachers.

**Practical**

Another key barrier discussed by teachers was that they feel the kids in their classroom were too young and that it was not appropriate to teach these topics at their age level, time constraints, and content areas (13 mentions). Many teachers in this category discussed how they are unclear of how to incorporate LGBTI+ topics into the subject area content and lacked the time to think of how to do so. For example, one teacher stated:

"Not sure how to incorporate them into my subject areas. I don’t want it to feel shoehorned in like some sort of inorganic propaganda to check boxes."
- United States, 28 years old

Others specifically mentioned that math and vocational education did not have many scenarios or concepts that would involve LGBTI+ conversations and thus were unclear how to address them. Teachers also spoke of the need for more materials and lesson plans on these topics from a legitimate source would help them in their planning.

**Knowledge and skills for implementation**

Teachers also shared that they lacked the knowledge and skills needed to successfully implement LGBTI+ topics in their classrooms (9 mentions). Many discussed the fear that they may not be knowledgeable enough to teach about these topics because of limited resources and lack of training. As one teacher stated:

"There are not many teaching materials/lessons that are objective/or otherwise appropriate for use in an academic setting. Teaching about potentially sensitive or controversial matters requires careful thoughtful lesson design, and many teachers do not have enough prep time to even keep up with grading. Even with quality lesson plans, since it is a sensitive topic, the lessons could be challenged. In this case being able to say the lessons were not something the teacher came up with on their own, but from or adapted from a credible source, would be helpful."
- United States, 41 years old

Others discussed that because there was no training on how to discuss these topics that they would not be able to guide the lesson effectively, are afraid of inadvertently saying something wrong, and thought that it may cause chaos in the classroom.
Policies & Curriculum

Official school policies, having to abide by a district-approved curriculum, absence of these topics within the curriculum and state standards, and teaching in a no promo homo state where laws exist to ban teachers from these discussions were also listed as barriers for addressing LGBTI+ topics (8 mentions). One teacher stated the absence of a school policy on this issue allowed the school to avoid problems with concerned, conservative parents. Further, teachers felt unprepared in how to address these topics because of the deliberate lack of structure in the curriculum.

Teacher training

We asked teachers if they had received teacher training or professional development on LGBTI+ topics. Less than one in four (22.1%) teachers stated that they had training on these topics while three fourths (75.6%) of teachers had not. Teachers who were trained on these topics were three times more likely (46.9% vs. 14.6%) to work in a school that had inclusive bathrooms.

Concepts in which LGBTI+ topics are taught

Drawing from the International Technical Guidelines on Sexuality Education (UNESCO, 2018), we asked teachers in which of the following concepts they have included LGBTI+ topics when teaching. Teachers stated that the most common concept where LGBTI+ topics were included was teaching about relationships (70.4%), which included discussions around families, friendships, inclusion, and commitments.

The second most common concept was conversations around values, rights, culture, and sexuality (64.3%) which included discussions around human rights, society, and sexuality. The third most common concept was understanding gender (52.2%) which discussed how gender norms are socially constructed, stereotypes, and equality. While teachers included in those concept areas, the numbers fell drastically as only one in three teachers included LGBTI+ topics when discussing skills for health and well-being (32.2%) (i.e., peer influence, decision-making, communication, & finding help and support). Only in one in five teachers included LGBTI+ topics when discussing sexuality and sexual behavior (22.6%) including sex, the sexual life cycle, behavior, and response, the human body and development (20.0%) including reproductive anatomy, puberty, and body image, and violence and staying safe (19.1%) including violence, consent, privacy, and safe use of information and communication technologies. Teachers were least likely to include LGBTI+ topics (15.7%) when discussing sexual and reproductive health including sex, sexual life cycle, behavior, and response.

7. A chi-square test presented a statistically significant association between teacher training and inclusive bathrooms ($\chi^2(4) = 17.29, p<0.01$).
This tragically tells us that while LGBTI+ topics may be included in some areas, there are gaps in how teachers do not discuss all of the necessary knowledge needed by LGBTI+ youth that are inclusive of their identity and reality.

**LGBTI+ students’ issues**

We asked teachers what issues, challenges, or barriers they saw in their classroom or school environment for LGBTI+ students. Teachers had numerous responses as to what the issues are not in teaching but from the student’s perspective.

- **Bullying & Misgendering**

  The most common theme discussed by teachers was describing the bullying and misgendering LGBTI+ students faced (21 mentions). Teachers discussed that they were embedded in school environments where non-LGBTI+ students make fun of, laugh at, or bully LGBTI+ students. Much of the time this is through verbal harassment where slurs and pejoratives are commonly used and even accepted. Some teachers described how kids mocked sexual orientation and used gendered language to bully LGBTI+ students. As one teacher shared:

  "I work in a behavioral setting and it is common for kids to use slurs (such as faggot) when they are angry even if they don’t understand the meaning of them.”
  -United States, 27 years old

  Other teachers discussed slurs like “that’s so gay” and the inability for other students to recognize the difference between joking and being hurtful towards LGBTI+ students. Therefore, many teachers try to correct this by making sure their classroom is a safe space for all students.

- **Lack of understanding and representation**

  The second most popular theme mentioned was that there was a lack of understanding and representation with the school environment (18 mentions). Teachers shared that there was an overall lack of awareness because there was a lack of representation in education materials, school events, accessible resources, diverse staff, and role models hired by the school. This lack of understanding can lead to peer ignorance where they make fun of and laugh at their LGBTI+ friends. Other teachers discuss the lack of knowledge even within professional development for teachers:

  "The school doesn’t take them into consideration when having conferences or workshops (sexual education, addictions, mental health) all of those topics are very mild and focusing on straight relationships and the “average high school student”, LGBTQ+ people are not addressed at all.”
  -Mexico, 26 years old

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8. Misgender means to use the wrong pronouns or other gender-specific words when referring to or speaking to someone, especially a transgender person; can be intentional or unintentional.
Teachers go on to describe how many adults around them in schools are straight and cisgender; therefore, they do not have the basis of knowledge and experience to help LGBTI+ students. This can lead to students not feeling accepted to come out freely or may not even know or be able to explain how they feel.

**School**

Alongside the lack of understanding and representation, the school itself can also be an institutional barrier (17 mentions). Many teachers described how schools typically lack a policy and often are regulated by social norms. For example, one teacher shared a policy regarding school uniforms:

> "Our transgender students... have to dress in men’s uniform & cut their hair for the graduation ceremony. Otherwise they will not be allowed to join the group photo."
> - Thailand, 44 years old

Teachers also described how the lack of a policy or ambiguity around it can cause misgendering and greater difficulty for teachers to be inclusive:

> "Official school policies such as having to see the students legal name instead of their name. When you do attendance you see "Abigail" whereas he prefers "Jared." It makes it hard to easily use proper pronouns when you're reminded everyday."
> - United States, 49 years old

There were also many teachers who discussed how the way the school was constructed actually prevented full inclusion of transgender and gender non-conforming students in the school environment. Bathrooms were a major source of discussion among teachers:

> "Bathrooms are gendered, teacher language is very gendered, developmentally students at ages 9-10 tend to be socially split by gender."
> - United States, 27 years old

The institutionalized aggressions towards transgender students specifically led to lots of confusion and inertia about how to “proactively deal with historically gender-segregated parts of school (locker rooms, athletics teams, overnight trips, etc.)."

**Cultural Context**

Teachers also described how the larger community and society reflected and embedded certain values and practices within their school, largely tied to religious factors (16 mentions). Numerous teachers described the school itself as having religious ethos that were seen as opposition to LGBTI+ people and that it was considered wrong or inappropriate to teach students about these topics.
As one teacher described:

"Many of the problems I see LGBTI+ students facing in school reflect biases and challenges stemming from the larger community/society more than the schools. The school environment provides contrast to "real life" because rules exist and it is expected they will be enforced."

- United States, 41 years old

Teachers shared how the stigma within the school is reinforced at home and among broader society and that teachers have to actively challenge the attitudes of some who bring negative opinions and attitudes from home making it very difficult to discuss these topics when children already come in with a negative mindset they learned from their parents.

Acceptance

The theme of acceptance (15 mentions) was also mentioned by teachers. This included acceptance of themselves, their peers, parents, teachers, and the school community. Some teachers discussed how LGBTI+ students are tokenized rather than supported and seen for who they are or labelled as too expressive of their identity and gender expression. Others discussed the importance of self-acceptance and giving the same freedom to all students equally.

Other emerging themes

The issue of unaccepting parents or those in denial was also brought up again and how students do not get the support and acceptance needed from their home environments (12 mentions). As one teacher shared:

"In my classroom...the challenge [is] the attitude of other students which comes from home. There are a lot of negative opinion[s] and attitude[s] from parents and they transfer it to their kids. So it is very hard to discuss the topic in the classroom sometimes, because there are many students who are negatively minded about that topic."

- Estonia, 31 years old

This lack of acceptance created fear, shame, rejection, and depression within LGBTI+ students (6 mentions). Teachers spoke of the developmental trauma acquired earlier in life may be causing depression among their students. Teachers described how all of these external factors often caused LGBTI+ kids to be ashamed of who they are and police themselves and their expression out of fear or rejection from students and teachers.
As one teacher stated:

"Since it doesn't seem to be a normality for the students, I can imagine it is difficult for LGBTI+ students to feel as if they can express themselves freely, out of fear of being rejected by everyone."

-Estonia, 25 years old

This internalized shame and fear relates to the environment they are embedded within that fosters homophobia and transphobia (6 mentions). Teachers shared how their school tended to be neutral or negative on this topic, the level of ignorance and stereotypes LGBTI+ people face, how some teachers actually contribute to this, and even how "open hostility is mostly (silently) accepted."

Lastly, lack of support was a prevailing theme throughout teachers’ responses (11 mentions). Teachers discussed how there were varying levels of teacher support and knowledge in addition to practical difficulties including large class sizes and virtual learning that makes one-on-one support more difficult particularly when LGBTI+ students are stuck at home. On the bright side, some teachers discussed how they were a source of support for students and provided a safe space where they could confide in them without fear of judgement.

**Including LGBTI+ topics when teaching about bullying and harassment**

We asked teachers if they included LGBTI+ topics (i.e. sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and diversity issues) when teaching about bullying and harassment. Out of the 94 teachers who responded to this question, three out of four teachers (77.7%, 73 mentions) did include LGBTI+ topics while one in four did not. Teachers approached these discussions in two main ways: either (1) discussing LGBTI+ in within the general themes of diversity and respect, or (2) through specific approaches focusing on LGBTI+ issues often using unique methodologies for students to engage with the material.

**General**

The most common way teachers discussed bullying in relation to LGBTI+ topics was through the broad themes of diversity and respect for all people (33 mentions). Teachers shared how they raised LGBTI+ related issues to increase students' awareness of diversity among humans, explaining that we are all different and unique, and that acceptance of all types of people is an important value on matter a person’s opinions, choices, preferences, and identities. Some teachers reported doing this proactively while others only included LGBTI+ topics when students brought them up or only in passing.
As one teacher shared:

"I explain how LGBTI+ is a natural phenomenon and that everyone has an inherent dignity and right to be respected. I point out that everyone is different and that diversity is something to celebrate and embrace and that bullying and harassment make people unhappy but accepting people as they are makes society stronger.”
- Ireland, 53 years old

Other teachers described that everyone has equal rights and freedoms and that qualities that make us unique should not be used as a source of bullying or attack against others.

**Specific**

Other teachers expressed that they introduced LGBTI+ topics using a specific approach with the use of diverse methodologies like drama, videos, picture books, case studies, and discussions (28 mentions). Some teachers discussed these topics through a framing of human rights, gender-based violence, historical discrimination, and social skills. Language is a key proponent in the content covered which included the use of offensive language, the meanings behind commonly used terms, inclusive language, examples of how simple words can be used to hurt people, and respecting pronouns. As one teacher stated:

"I firstly explain about how to respect others in many dimensions one of which is related to gender and sexuality. Then I explain how many gender and sexual identities are out there, how we can categorize them, and emphasize how to provide space for everyone and how to empathize with others.”
- Thailand, 63 years old

Other teachers discussed the importance of creating a culture of belonging, empathy, respect, and trust. Some did this by displaying welcome signs in their classrooms, including books in their classroom library with LGBTQ main characters, and showing videos content featuring diverse relationships in the attempt to normalize gender and sexual diversity.

"Yes, because it is a part of the conversation and a topic that needs to be included when educating students (and faculty) about bullying and harassment. The more people are exposed to such topics, the more it becomes normalized and respected.”
- United States, 32 years old.

Whether through general or specific means, the majority of teachers in this survey did include LGBTI+ topics when teaching about bullying and harassment.
Did not include

However, one in four teachers did not address LGBTI+ topics when teaching about bullying (20 mentions). One reason some did not do this is because they felt these it was irrelevant, was not in the standards they were given to teach, were limited by time, thought it may lead to LGBTI+ students getting more bullied by their classmates, or believed they already had a great school culture so there was not a need to touch on bullying. Another reason was that the school did not allow these topics, the religious ethos or conservative nature of the school, or had been specifically told to avoid LGBTI+ topics.

Bullying intervention

We asked how likely school personnel (i.e., teachers and staff) were to intervene if students were insulted or humiliated, based on their real or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation. Two out of three teachers were either very likely (29.4%) or likely (33.3%) to intervene. One in four (25.4%) participants stated they were fairly likely. However, around one in ten teachers stated that they were only slightly likely (7.9%) or not likely (4.0%) to intervene.

School bullying policy

We asked teachers if their school has a policy or clause that sanctions discriminatory behavior based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. We found that only one in four (28.6%) teachers have a policy at their school level that specifically covers LGBTI+ students. About one in three teachers (34.9%) did not have a school-level, while a little over one in three (36.5%) teachers stated that they did not know.

Inclusive bathrooms

We asked teachers if their school had inclusive bathrooms available to transgender and gender variant students. While one in four teachers (25.4%) did teach in schools with inclusive bathrooms, the overwhelming majority (65.1%) did not have inclusive bathrooms in their school. Notably, nearly one in ten teachers (9.5%) did not know if their school had inclusive bathrooms.
Perceptions of school environment

We asked teachers to select the phrase that best describes their school environment. Thankfully, only a few teachers (1.6%) perceived that they taught in environments where LGBTI+ students were not welcome. Over one in four teachers (28.2%) worked in schools where LGBTI+ students are welcome, but offensive comments may be heard. One in five (21.0%) teachers shared that LGBTI+ students are welcome in their school, but are not allowed to show affection or dress as they please. Nearly half of teachers stated that LGBTI+ students were either as welcome as any other student (41.1%) or welcome and attention is paid to their specific needs (7.3%).

Existing supports

We asked teachers about the existing supports, resources, or tools they currently used in their classrooms and asked them to name specific tools or organizations if they knew them. While there were numerous materials used, teachers mainly utilized non-governmental organizations (19 mentions) or online resources including videos and news (12 mentions) as their main supports. As one teacher stated:

"I help support our GSA club on campus and host meetings in my room. I also have a relationship with the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity and I have referred students there for support."

-United States, 36 years old

Teachers also stated that they use student clubs (6 mentions) in their schools. These clubs had various names across contexts, including SPECTRUM, GSA (formally gay-straight alliances), or I AM ME after school clubs. Teachers also discussed that they were advised by school counselors (5 mentions), other teachers or friends (5 mentions), and trainings or courses (2 mentions). Notably, many teachers stated that they do not use any particular resources (12 mentions). For some, this was because they do not teach LGBTI+ topics at all, while others approach these topics by letting the students know that they are supported and will advocate in any situation.
Students’ needed supports

We asked teachers what supports, resources, or tools they think LGBTI+ students need most. There were four main supports teachers shared in their responses: knowledge & skills, supportive people & spaces, acceptance & affirmation, and anti-bullying.

**Supportive people & spaces**

The most frequently mentioned support that arose was the need for supportive people & spaces (32 mentions). Participants discussed the need for teachers who acted as a safe space for LGBTI+ students to feel understood, get advice, and provide understanding. As one teacher shared:

“They need to know (if they don’t already) where they can go if they don’t feel comfortable or need to sort through something that happened.”

-United States, 49 years old

Others discussed the need for supportive, kind, and caring adults who serve as role models for LGBTI+ youth to reassure them that they are in a safe, inclusive environment. Numerous teachers mentioned the importance of a teacher whom they can fully trust and who can listen to their needs and problems as the most important resource for LGBTI+ youth. Teachers also discussed the need for affinity spaces or clubs that reassured students that it is okay to be authentic.

**Knowledge & skills**

Another support that arose was the need for more knowledge and skills in the forms of practical, personalized resources that school could offer (31 mentions). These included training, community outreach, public speakers, inclusive education materials, tools for self-advocacy, and all-gender bathrooms. As one teacher stated:

“Books with queer and trans characters at easy access, guidance counselors who are well versed and queer/trans identities, school pride celebrations, norms around sharing pronouns whenever introductions are made, teachers who are trained in respecting pronouns.”

-United States, 24 years old

Many teachers also stated the need to access counselors and mental health resources to provide socioemotional support as it was crucial in finding acceptance within themselves and how to build confidence in who they are so they don’t feel alone.

**Acceptance & affirmation**

Another main theme discussed regarded the overall values of acceptance, affirmation, empathy, and visibility (19 mentions). Teachers discussed the importance of creating a culture where LGBTI+ students feel accepted, are treated equally, are safe, and where representation of LGBTI+ people are normalized.
They went on to speak of the need for a school culture that embraces diversity and empathy, as well as in their families, so that they feel seen.

**Anti-Bullying**

Teachers also discussed the need for anti-bullying (5 mentions) measures that were tied to these themes such as zero-tolerance bullying policies and more support from the school when students are bullied. As one teacher stated:

"They need adults on campus to call them by their proper pronouns. They need systematic response teams when they are harassed/bullied or are dealing with trauma. They need allies."

-United States, 38 years old

Other teachers spoke of the psychological support needed in attending to insults and demands by teachers who are violent to LGBTI+ students.

**Teachers’ needed supports**

We asked teachers what supports, resources, or tools would help them most as a teacher. Of the 70 teachers who answered this question, we found three key themes emerge: learning materials, supportive stakeholders, and training.

**Learning Materials**

The most frequently mentioned support was the need for more learning materials (32 mentions) on LGBTI+ topics. This included videos, teaching plans, textbooks, FAQ sheets, picture books, articles, podcasts, a vetted curriculum, lesson materials, creative educational activities like role play and dialogue, websites, books, flags, stickers, and posters. Some teachers stated the need for more information and strategies on how to answer students’ questions, how to interact with LGBTI+ persons, and how to refer students who may need further guidance. Many teachers discussed not only needing inclusive tools, but also how to implement them successfully. As one teacher expressed:

"How to incorporate LGBTI+ topics in the classroom. How to do so accurately and without bias. I’m scared of a parent coming at me trying to accuse me of pushing an agenda or lifestyle on their child."

-United States, 28 years old

Teachers also shared the desire for comprehensive tools to incorporate LGBTI+ topics within their math, history, and biology lessons in a way that does not feel forced.

**Supportive Stakeholders**

Teachers also described the need for supportive stakeholders (21 mentions) which included teachers, parents, administration, and the broader society. Many teachers discussed the need for support from other teachers administrators that welcome these topics instead of asking them to hide them.
Some mentioned the need for more openly queer staff at their school which would elicit more opportunities to teach students about different identities. Teachers also described the assurance needed from administration that they can be out and not fear for their jobs if homophobic or transphobic parents or school staff complained about them. As one teacher stated:

"Honestly I wish adults were supportive. I don’t always know if the kids need as many tools as I have been using. It is the adults that need more training and to feel comfortable. We had someone come in to train our staff and they brought the gender unicorn and people joked about it for weeks following."

-United States, 42 years old

Many spoke of the need for executive managers to be more open and supportive of teachers who have a positive attitude towards LGBTI+ topics. Some even asked for ways to work with the school board to change district policies.

**Professional Development**

Teachers also spoke of the need for ongoing professional development and training on how to teach and include LGBTI+ topics in their classroom (16 mentions). Many discussed the need for a whole school approach on how to speak to students about gender and sexuality in an appropriate and accurate way to ensure a shared vocabulary and understanding among adults in the community. As one teacher stated:

"I think it would be helpful if there would be some kind of trainings for teachers to help teachers to understand the importance of the topic...especially about needs and expectations of LGBTI+ students."

-Estonia, 31 years old

Some spoke of the need for this to be obligatory and how outside organizations can play a role in arranging activities to help students discover their full identities and live their life with happiness.

**Further Advising**

We asked teachers if there were specific LGBTI+ topics they feel they needed further advising on. The most common response was that teachers needed more knowledge for implementing these topics into their classrooms and supporting LGBTI+ students (19 mentions). Teachers shared that the complexity of this issue can cause tension. As one teacher said:

"Since I work with teenagers, they are often just barely discovering and exploring their identities (I realize this is a life-long process). I think many people in education don’t understand the fluidity of this process and want kids to have clear labels.

10. The gender unicorn is a tool that breaks down the differences between gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and physical & emotional attraction. You can find this resource here www.transstudent.org/gender."
This can be frustrating and add stress for students and educators.”
-United States, 36 years old

Teachers requested more knowledge about gender identity (e.g., transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary people) and how LGBTI+ topics relate to various racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. However, some teachers wanted to know how to address these topics at a young age with scientifically and context-specific validated information with effective methodologies that lead to effective attitudinal changes and skill building.

Teachers also mentioned the need for anti-bullying campaigns and resources, opportunities for staff and teacher training on how to create safe spaces, and engaging supports. Finally, teachers needed advice on how to encourage familial and educational institutions to accept LGBTI+ students.

Final comments
Our survey concluded with an open-ended space that allowed participants to share any final thoughts. Some teachers discussed the negative community environments they lived in with various unsupportive stakeholders and fear of backlash. As one teacher stated:

“I believe where I live is just behind the times. People in my county are uncomfortable with me sharing my family because it’s a two-mom family. I don’t think I can be supportive when I, myself, [am] advised to “not broadcast” my life by my principal.”
-United States, 30 years old

One teacher discussed the hate crimes endured by students as one teacher stated that students finger painted a homophobic slur on their car as a result of having magnets and safe space posters in their room. Another teacher stated the acceptance in their environment, which was at a very low-income school where teachers are more liberal, but worried about kids in more conservative areas.

Alongside these cases, many teachers discussed the importance of an LGBTI+ inclusive education. They shared the great work they’ve been doing in their classrooms to foster a class community of diversity and respect. As one teacher shared:

“When one student says something vaguely homophobic/transphobic, the other students (usually allies) generally intervene before I need to. Afterwards, we all debrief together. I see this as a positive sign because it shows that students are willing to protect each other. This is not some outside topic I have to teach from scratch. Most students already have a baseline of knowledge.”
-United States, 27 years old
Other teachers discussed the importance of being a role model, giving the right information to students, displaying rainbows, connecting their GSA to the local pride parade, and providing peer support for out transgender students to help them through the emotional and administrative transitioning process. The overall sentiment was that the level of awareness has improved in schools. Further, providing students with a foundation for acceptance and contributed in creating classrooms and a world where LGBTI+ youth are free.

Transitioning is the process some transgender people undergo to live as the gender with which they identify, rather than their assigned sex at birth. This can, but does not have to, include personal, medical and legal steps.
This report shows the challenges and opportunities for teachers to create a more inclusive curriculum and environment for LGBTI+ students. There is a lack of tools to facilitate the delivery of contents regarding LGBTI+ topics in classrooms, as evidenced in this document despite huge interest and urgency.

From these findings, we can conclude that many teachers in our survey were trying to address LGBTI+ topics in their classrooms and schools, albeit in different ways. However, many faced considerable barriers in their school environments specifically when discussing bullying, hate crimes, a lack of acceptance, and misgendering by key stakeholders around teachers including students, colleagues, parents, and administration. There were many different approaches on how to address these topics, contingent on the school's context and teacher's personal agency.

We can also see that a lack of training and supports created a lack of knowledge and understanding about LGBTI+ topics. Thus, the overall environment of the school varied widely between welcoming and restrictive for LGBTI+ students. There was a deep desire for more resources on gender identity to support transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming students. There were also specific requests for resources and tools to enhance knowledge on these subjects.

**Recommendation 1 – Provide comprehensive training to support students**

Both students and teachers need support to understand and embrace LGBTI+ topics, in order to become allies of other stakeholders that may address these issues and promote better and safer environments for everyone. The school community and the various actors that comprise it can and must invest efforts to guarantee that no one is left behind. At the Global Center we offer training courses and other interventions directed to the school community for impact.

**Recommendation 2 – Utilize Global Center Teacher Resource Pack**

With the findings from our survey and over months of discussions with key stakeholders across numerous contexts, we developed a set of classroom materials on LGBTI+ topics. Our Teachers Resource Pack is directly resulting from the voices and needs of teachers as they aim to create welcoming schools for LGBTI+ students. You can find these materials on our website.

**Recommendation 3 – Draft an action plan**

This report gives insight on the most pressing necessities of educators regarding LGBTI+ topics. These findings, alongside other data, must be used by decision makers in schools, districts, and government institutions as a base to understand and present the numerous barriers and opportunities in creating LGBTI+ inclusive curriculum, classrooms, and schools, as well as to draft action plans and subsequent implementation protocols.
To begin drafting an action plan, we recommend collaborating with a group of stakeholders in your school (e.g., students, parents, other teachers, staff, administrators) who are interested in advancing LGBTI+ topics to begin the discussion. After your group has met and defined the problem, you can create a simple bullet point list together with key objectives you want to meet over the next year. These clear goals with a brief explanation of how you will go about solving them, who you need to work with, and areas you need support will begin to build the movement through a school community-based approach. If you would like support in drafting an action plan, please email info.theglobalcenter@gmail.com. You are never alone in this work—we look forward to creating action with you.
Conclusion

Thank you very much for reading the Global Center’s Findings from the Classroom. Our goals were to share teachers’ current issues, challenges, and barriers to including LGBTI+ content and present the current and desired supports, resources, or tools that may help teachers in supporting LGBTI+ students in their classroom or school. We hope this research will be used for impact, as a tool to create freedom for LGBTI+ youth.

We know the power of teachers. Everyday teachers are working in classrooms around the world to grow our children into the society we envision. We’re honored to have the ability to share these voices. While there may be barriers and questions ahead, the Global Center will be here to serve as a center for the community on LGBTI+ education.

Engage with us and share what it was like to use this research. If you implemented the materials from our Teachers Resource Pack, write to us and let us know what you liked, what’s not working, and how we can better serve you. Through this dialogue, we can create a global network of teachers who are moving for a future where all students are free and equal.

Freedom starts with you, it starts with us, it starts now!
We are the Global Center.


Lewinger, S., Thomas, C., & Freeman, C. (Forthcoming). Teachers’ perspectives on addressing LGBT+ topics in primary and secondary education: A systematic literature review.


Engage with us

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