Fostering Inclusion for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Queer Students (LGBTQ)

By

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A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Teaching
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Inclusion Strategies for LGBTQ Students

Abstract

Inclusion and integration for students has always been an essential tool when teaching students. As teachers, we want to guide and support our students to build acceptance for everyone as we are teaching the whole holistic child. Fostering inclusion of students identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) has traditionally been a controversial issue due to the lack of knowledge and resources for teachers to implement in their own classroom and utilize literature that would be reflective of LGBTQ students. Through this study, data collected through semi-structured interviews examined how teachers are implementing inclusion strategies while using the Ontario curriculum as a guide for discussion. In addition to the research, the findings and implications presented in the study found that more resources such as professional development are needed to further enhance the inclusion of LGBTQ students in the classroom.

Keywords: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender[ed], Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ), curriculum, support, inclusion, advocacy
Acknowledgements

The successful completion of my research would not be possible without the encouragement and support from the following people in my life. I wish to acknowledge my mother, father and brother for their unconditional love and support they have provided me. Thank you for teaching me about acceptance for all and fueled my fire, my passion to create an inclusive environment for all. I would like to thank my wonderful partner Chester for the perseverance and strength he has provided me to achieve my goals in life. My dear Caroline and Nomazwe, thank you for being my biggest supporters during my most challenging times. Many thanks to my research participants who were committed to this study and help me convey the message and importance of fostering inclusion for LGBTQ students. Furthermore, I would love to thank my PJ 261 family for providing unconditional laughter, support and love during our years together.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

Canada is one of the most multicultural countries in the world, and Ontario is the most diverse Canadian province. Diversity, though, means more than ethno-cultural or religious diversity. It also encompasses gender and sexuality. In this context, fostering inclusion in Ontario classrooms means teaching about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or questioning/queer identity, and supporting students who identify as such. However, research reports that as many as 64% of Canadian students who identify as LGBTQ feel unsafe at school (Taylor & Peter, 2011). Moreover, students have recently reported as to not feeling safe in their own schools, let alone their own classroom to safely identify and be comfortable in the place of a supposed safe learning environment. According to a recent survey conducted by Egale Canada and the University of Winnipeg in 2009, 64% of students who identified as LGBTQ felt unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation/gender (Egale, 2011). These findings underscore the importance of fostering greater inclusion for LGBTQ student’s inclusion techniques for all students to feel safe in their learning environment, in order for them to excel as a student personally and professionally.

Throughout my practises in schools, I have noticed a lack of inclusion strategies for students whom identify as LGBTQ, while using the Ontario curriculum as a guide for discourse around LGBTQ topics. Given the newly updated Health and Physical Education curriculum (2015), inclusion strategies for fostering inclusion should be less challenging now as it will be regulated to be learnt in classrooms. The term inclusion strategies will be used as a foundation for interpreting skills that teachers could use in their classrooms such as advocacy, adapting a new attitude, celebrating LGBTQ public figures and lastly creating safe spaces. In my personal and professional experience within the classroom, I wanted to explore how the Toronto District
School Board (TDSB) celebrates LGTBQ students by supporting and providing resources for teachers to implement daily inclusion strategies for students identifying as LGBTQ. The TDSB currently participates in the annual Toronto Pride Parade as an initiative to continue learning beyond the classrooms. In 2011, a student survey conducted by the TDSB reported that 68% of students who identified as LGTBQ actually completed and graduated high school, compared to the 78% of those whom identified as heterosexual. Those statistics are alarming and relatively high as it reflects our students not graduating due to the stigmatize culture of being LGBTQ. More than half the student population did not feel safe according to other statistics documents; that 47 per cent of LGBTQ students said they have experienced name-calling, compared with 31 per cent of straight students; 27 per cent have received threats of being hurt, compared with 13 per cent of straight students; and 19 per cent have been cyber-bullied, compared with 8 per cent of straight students. (TDSB, 2011). These outstanding statistics outline that students, specifically in Toronto, Ontario are being ignored and are clearly a minority population, that are starving for support from teachers and administrative staff to aid in their success as a student professionally and personally.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) delivers a Triangle Program (Canada’s only LGBTQ High School) geared towards youth and adolescents and they have plentiful information online for youth and adolescents, however, there seems to be a disconnect with resources for elementary students as there is little to no resources available immediately on their website. The elementary years are a crucial time to begin learning about LGBTQ identity, and to understand why it is regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender or religious beliefs.
1.1 Purpose of the Study

In my personal and professional experience within the classroom during my practicums, I wanted to explore how the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) celebrates LGBTQ students by supporting and providing resources for teachers to implement daily inclusion strategies for students identifying as LGBTQ. The TDSB currently participates in the annual Toronto Pride Parade as an initiative to continue learning beyond the classrooms.

Many researchers have argued that educators should include LGBTQ issues in the curriculum to increase the visibility and accomplishments of the population (Jeltova & Fish, 2005; McFarland, 2001 and Peters, 2003). Helen Kennedy, director of Egale Canada (the only charity in Canada to promote LGBTQ issues through research, education and community engagement) outlines teacher training, lesson plans and overall school atmosphere as the change that needs to happen for LGBTQ students to feel comfortable and succeed at the rate of others in school. A quote by Freire (1990) resonates perfectly with this research paper as he notes, “What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves.” Teachers are key to confronting the stigma surrounding LGBTQ identity, and in order for “students to truly become who they are,” this work must begin with fostering inclusion.

1.2 Research Question

This research is meant to investigate what strategies teachers use to foster inclusion of students who identify as lesbian, gay, transgendered, bisexual and questioning (LGBTQ). The main question guiding this research study was: How is a small sample of elementary teachers fostering inclusion of students who identify as LGBTQ? My question that I asked my participants was “How do teachers create opportunities for inclusion by normalizing LGBTQ identity in schools and society?” I wanted to use the newly updated Health and Physical
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Education curriculum 2015 as the foundation for creating discourse within the classroom in primary grades of the Toronto District School Board. Through this research, I hoped to understand how the TDSB has prepared teachers though the years of discussing LGBTQ topics in classrooms by interviewing 4 teachers with various teaching background and different teaching experiences (a newly hired teacher, a teacher who has been teacher for 10-15 years and a teacher whom is near retirement or possibly two). I have chosen that type of criteria for my sampling as I was curious to see if the TDSB has given opportunities throughout the various years to update teachers on how to become an inclusive educator. I intended to explore the resources available for educators such as workshops, administrative support and community involvement support. Through the research I hoped to understand how the newly updated Health and Physical Education curriculum (2015) will guide teachers to create intentional lesson plans to include LGBTQ topics and how the school’s atmosphere will eventually change to include inclusivity for students identifying LGBTQ.

1.3 Background on the Researcher

As someone who grew up in a heterosexual learning environment, I never really knew what LGBTQ was until I started learning about sexual preferences, gender orientation and other developmental factors important to students identifying as LGBTQ in post-secondary education. I started to become fascinated with the topic because of a few friends I had who identified as LGBTQ and wondered why we did not learn about their types of relationships or ‘love’ in schools at the primary school age. Themes in school were very heteronormative and did not explore other situations, until I entered high school. I believe researching inclusion strategies on how to become an inclusive educator is a step in the right direction to committing change and support for students whom identify as LGTBQ.
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Since becoming a Child and Youth Practitioner, I have always felt passionately that it is important to advocate for students who were unable to advocate for themselves. I feel that it is essential for students to be who they want to be, free from judgement from anyone. In addition to my Child and Youth Practitioner background, I do have friends and family who identify as LGBTQ and have been witnessed to the hardships in schools as they were not accepted by educators, family or friends because of their sexual orientation or identity. I watched them struggle in school because of not having adequate support or feeling unsafe to be who they truly felt like being. As a new practicing teacher, I always want to create an inclusive classroom that normalizes a range of identities. I would want my future students to be able feel safe and comfortable in an environment that will let them reach their full potential while learning. In addition, I have undertaken this research project to become more attentive on how to become a more inclusive instructor and to learn current strategies used in classrooms that have been successful in regards to inclusion methods for the LGBTQ student population.

Personally, I feel alarmed and shocked that this many students feel unsafe in a place where it is supposed to feel like a second home. Educators are supposed to adhere to the guidelines set by the Ontario Teachers College, which detail standards of practice for teachers to implement daily while committing to the profession. In addition to adhering to the standards of practice, teachers should be following the ethical standards for teaching which entails; care, respect, trust and integrity for all students. I feel that there needs to be a discussion and action plan on how to provide teachers with support to enable students identifying as LGBTQ to become more successful in class, feel included and accepted overall by peers and educators.

Lastly, I believe that it is critical to start introducing primary students to topics including LGBTQ because it creates learning opportunities for students to discuss and understand what and
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how to incorporate social justice daily, work with their discomfort to challenge their thinking and finally to become more aware of other issues not surrounding heterosexual people (i.e., blended family, love, relationships etc.) LGBTQ issues are an important aspect to fostering inclusive classrooms and an inclusive society because they help to bridge the gap between learning what social justice is and realizing that ideal in practice (Schmidt, 2009).

I believe that it is time for teachers to start using resources available to them to help support students whom identify as LGBTQ as it will soon become mandatory to teach and learn about these topics. I feel that teachers who are struggling with the approach to include inclusive strategies within their classroom for LGBTQ students should seek support from administrative staff. I believe that adapting a new attitude, imbedding LGBTQ topics within the curriculum (lesson plans) and creating safe spaces would most benefit students who identify as LGBTQ as they would become successful students.

1.4 Overview of study

In the process of responding to the research questions listed above, this study will first present a in-depth look of the current literature surrounding approaches to using LGBTQ inclusion strategies and the importance of using curriculum related to students identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer/question in Chapter 2: Literature review. Chapter 3: Research Methodology will provide a comprehensive look into the use of semi-structured interviews data collection, a brief synopsis of the participants of this study, and lastly the overall qualitative research design. Findings, implications and recommendations for future research will be discussed in Chapter 4: Research Findings and Chapter 5: Discussions.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The literature that I have analyzed, shared the common themes of curriculum, protective factors and the adoption of a new attitude in perspectives to fostering inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and queer/questioning students. For the purpose of my MTRP (Master of Teaching Research Project), I have reviewed literature that encourages the integration of a curriculum for LGBTQ students. In addition, protective factors include acknowledging safe school environments and advocacy training for both teachers and staff, which would adequately support students in becoming comfortable within their own identity. Finally, adopting a new attitude would be crucial to the inclusion of LGBTQ students within a classroom because it would stimulate school staff and administrative personnel to openly discuss topics relating to homosexual and heterosexual topics. Through the articles I have referenced, I have found that these authors all share a collective theme of promoting LGBTQ issues within schools and the benefits associated with the inclusion of all students, regardless of their sexual orientation.

2.1 Curriculum:

As guided by the Ministry of Education in Ontario, the newly updated curriculum and assessment annual report partially acknowledge changes that include LGBTQ inclusion/discussion within the curriculum (Results-based Plan Briefing Organization, 2013). The Ontario curriculum is ever changing in order to incorporate new inventions and technologies that further the education of students. However, with such advances in the curriculum, rarely has it changed to include issues about the LGBTQ population. Rather than focusing on daily issues affecting children and youth, the curriculum is updated to include more statistical math, language
programming and subjects that are mandatory as stated in the education legislation, which are not as prevalent as the recent changes in society, i.e. children and youth identifying as lesbian, gay, transgender or bisexual. Many texts written for the curriculum are taught in a gender biased objective. There is no in-depth conversation about other preferences that may be present in modern day society. By altering the curriculum to discuss LGBTQ issues, peers of LGBTQ students could better understand the perspectives of LGBTQ students.

2.1.1 The Integration of LGBTQ Materials, Advocacy Training for Staff and Students

Various authors have suggested that “first educators should include LGBTQ issues in the curriculum to increase the visibility and accomplishments of the population” (Jeltova & Fish, 2005; McFarland, 2001 and Peters, 2003). First educators are noted as teachers whom are in daily contact with students. It is important for teachers to include reflective material on LGBTQ students to introduce the changing notion of identities, which students identify with. Other authors suggests, that “due to negative and discouraging behaviours of teachers, it is challenging to incorporate LGBTQ issues into the curriculum” (Mudrey et. al., 2006; p. 72). This negative attitude is attributed to ignorance, lack of understanding students in regards to LGBTQ people. Teachers are entitled to their own opinions about personal issues, however, it is important to have an unbiased views in a diverse educational environment to effectively educate students and themselves. Teachers are responsible for teaching new material to students, as they are constantly thrive for new knowledge. By having teachers learn concepts outside of their comfort zone and working with that discomfort, it would encourage students to learn outside their own comfort zone. As well, since it would utilize the bonding experience of children, youth and teachers learning new things together. If teachers were able to minimize their negative and discouraging behaviour, a curriculum about LGBTQ issues would be easier to install, and
provide a therapeutic relationship between teachers and students. Students would be able to
confide in teachers whom are willing to learn and teach about the LGBTQ community.

When teachers fail to include or integrate LGBTQ issues into a planned curriculum, it
sends the message that students identifying as LGBTQ are not valued, important to discuss or
recognized within the institution of school. Loutzenheirser (1996) researched and concluded that
there is harm around not incorporating transgendered curriculum in a school because of not
feeling welcomed, supported and cared for by staff members in the school. Loutzenheiser’s
research provides an in-depth look at statistics relating to schools reporting issues regarding the
LGBTQ student population. “Alarming statistic proves that a school’s inability to talk about or
incorporate gay issues literally robs some teens of the high school experience” (Loutzenheiser,
1996, p. 61). Loutzenheiser’s point is a valid statement because other issues are discussed about
children and youth identifying as heterosexual is relatively ‘normal.’ However, when issues of
homosexuality are mentioned, schools often reject the idea of discussion due to the idea of
homosexuality being offensive or inappropriate to discuss at school. It’s a double standard when
discussion of gender preferences and sexual orientation as heterosexuality in curriculum is
widely accepted and welcomed, unlike homosexuality, which is frowned upon. Not many first
educators are willing to discuss homosexuality due to binding opposition of administration and
other bureaucracies that are not willing to change policies to include LGBTQ issues in
curriculum.

In lieu of not addressing issues about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered children
and youth in the school environment, it creates conflict and challenges that affect children and
youth identifying as LGBTQ, in my personal opinion. If children and youth do not learn about
LGBTQ issues in a safe environment, such as schools, it places them in the high risk category
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since they do not know how to address issues they may be facing personally with people that support and care for them. Stieglitz research outlines the possible challenges of not addressing issues associated with transgendered youth in a school community. “Ineffective management of intense challenges over time without adequate social support places youth at risk for a number of unhealthy behaviors, including risk behaviors…” (Stieglitz, 2009, p. 192). Youth are at risk since they may not learn what appropriate and safe sexual behaviours are. On the other hand, heterosexual youth would know appropriate and safe sexual practice behaviour because they will have learned what is safe in school through the curriculum. Heterosexual curriculum involving safe sex practice in health class is taught, however LGBTQ safe sex is not taught in health class, which could lead to risky behaviour and health risks.

Other research has concluded that Sex Education should not be the only place to integrate LGBTQ issues (McGarry, 2013). Rather, the issues regarding the LGBTQ student community need to be embedded throughout other subjects so students can appreciate and make connections to other contexts in life about LGBTQ issues. In addition to included LGBTQ curriculum throughout different subjects, using inclusive curriculum relates to student experience as LGBTQ students feeling less hostile in the school environment/experience and express feelings of connectedness to the school community with further enhances the school culture and LGBTQ students enjoying and learning more where they feel like they belong (GLSEN). Also, having the ‘mirror to window’ approach to viewing curriculum allows students who do not identify as LGBTQ to understand LGBTQ issue by observing and provide opportunities to understand the experiences and perspectives of the LGBTQ community (Style, 1996). Overall, using curriculum to deliver messaged about LGBTQ issue or fostering LGBTQ inclusion in classrooms is manageable by introducing and embedding LGBTQ issues throughout multiple subjects.
Advocacy training for staff and students about LGBTQ issues would not only assist the school population, but the environment they interact with afterwards. Advocacy training introduced in the curriculum would support teachers and other staff members because they would be able to grow with confidence and gain knowledge about LGBTQ issues, thus feeling comfortable when discussing such a topic with students. Children and youth need advocacy training because it is a useful skill that should be practiced when the opportunity arises. Children and youth identifying as LGBTQ would benefit highly from advocacy training because it is an essential life skill to know how to advocate for oneself. Researchers support this conclusion for LGBTQ children and youth who take advocacy training within their school curriculum would be at an advantage because they would know how to stand up for themselves and have a voice within their community. Many researchers suggest, advocacy strategy training in curriculum would benefit LGBT students because they would learn how to advocate for themselves and build resiliency skills (Bauman & Sachs-Kapp, 1998; Peters, 2003). These authors reflect the important message of teaching all students the significance of learning how to be successful advocates.

2.1.2 Anti-homophobia Education

Brisken reports that teachers and schools should adopt ‘anti-homophobia education,’ in order to promote inclusion for everyone in the school. Anti-homophobia education “shifts the focus from the realm of morality (I am not...) to the realm of political practice (what can I do about [it])” (Brisken, 1994, p. 21). Brisken’s point of view reflects that teachers adopting a new formula of ‘anti-homophobia,’ would encourage LGBTQ students to trust and engage with their teachers. Ryan & Futterman (1998) summarize an important quote that states that if teachers acknowledge the homophobic slurs in their schools and adapted the curriculum, students would
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feel comfortable discussing their issues with teachers instead of using harmful coping mechanisms, such as attempting suicide for relief (Ryan & Futterman, 1998). These journalists make an exceptional connection in that eliminating homophobia in schools would certainly create a healthier learning environment for students, merely because the elimination of homophobia would create a safer environment to integrate LGBTQ issues in the curriculum.

There are different ways to include literature in the guided curriculum to introduce themes of homosexuality and heterosexuality. In the article titled “Language Arts Teachers’ Resistance to Teaching LGBTQ Literature and Issues,” the authors examines a feasible and brilliant ideas of using LGBT-theme literature would be the best way into easing students into a new type of gender/sexuality culture, while remaining politically correct. In the same article, Clarke and Blackburn (2009) note “English language arts classrooms can be significant sites for combating homophobia and heterosexism in schools” (Clark and Blackburn, 2009, p.25). Clark and Blackburn’s argument strengthens the need of incorporating LGBTQ inclusion curriculum to help defeat the stigma about this current population and to show students that LGBTQ issues are no different than heterosexual issues in school. The literature needs to be reflective of students in order for students to feel validated, while learning about identities they might be struggling to process or what to know more about. Fostering LGTBQ inclusion strategies should include LGTBQ literacy as there are many important children’s books available for resources.

Lastly, students learning about other sexual orientations other than heterosexuality, provides students with a base of exploration to challenge the status quo. Most children only learn about heterosexuality seeing as it being integrated in everything they see, watch, and hear outside and inside of school. By having students learn about LGBTQ issues, it broadens their willingness to learn new things. Lipkin (1999) argues that “students need to learn about gays and lesbians as
part of American Patchwork” (p. 97). Lipkin meant that when students learn about different sexual identities, they open their minds to explore meeting new people and learning about them (Lipkin, 1999, p. 328). To reiterate the notion of using literacy as a stepping stone to introduce other sexual identities is one of the most successful ways to learn about the different types of people we have in our ever changing society.

2.2 Protective Factors:

Protective factors can be described as elements that contribute to healthy living and help individuals cope with stressful events (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Protective factors are important to acknowledge in a school environment because children and youth who identify as LGBTQ are more vulnerable to being subjected to bullying, harassment and feeling isolated by peers, staff and the community. Protective factors correlate to the safety of all students whether they are heterosexual or homosexual due to the concerns that all children within the school environment have the right to feel safe in their educational institution.

The argument of having staff effectively trained in advocacy for students whom identify as LGBTQ would most benefit the student population according to the article titled “Safer sexual diversity climates: Lessons learned from an evaluation of Massachusetts Safe Schools Program,” because the faculty would be better equipped to support students and decrease bullying (Szalacha, 2003, Whitman, Horn, Boyd, 2007). As previously mentioned, learning advocacy skills not only enhances curriculums but also creates a safe environment. In addition, training in advocacy for students who identify as LGBTQ would serve as a protective factor. Advocacy training for students of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or question sexual orientation would lead to a decrease in harassment and create advocacy skills within the students. Those skills would assist students in learning how to be sufficient, resilient and assertive in regards to
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their sexual identity. The research completed by Szalacha (2003) and Whiteman et. al., (2007) further details that advocacy training later benefits students of LGBTQ orientation because they can pass on the skills of advocacy to other students, who lack the ability to advocate since they have education about advocacy.

2.2.1 The Interrelationship between LGBTQ Support and School Success

Another protective factor is the relationship of LGBTQ students share with their teachers. Students who feel secure and supported by their teachers, are shown to have a stronger bond, which allows an open-door communication between one another. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and youth who are able to find a positive role model within the school environment are more likely to succeed and create a better future for themselves. This positivity is attributed to the strong relationships with the staff and finding a role model that they can aspire to be like. McDonough et. al. (2007) found that building relationships would enhance potential for future growth within students who identify as LGBT. Few writers collectively found through their research that “in order to develop realistic and valuable conception of possible queer futures, children would need detailed and rich examples of queer role models” (McDonough et. al., 2007, p.805).

The journalists analyzed the protective factors, and did an excellent job reporting how protective factors affect children and youth identifying as LGBTQ. The articles reviewed mention techniques to address protective factors and how to include them within schools. Overall, writing on protective factors was interesting to analyze because it provided insight as to what LGBTQ students need within their schools and what has supported them, and how it should be continued.
2.3 Adopting a New Attitude:

Adopting a new attitude towards LGBTQ issues not only stems for teachers and other staff, it relates to other students within the school to learn that everyone is unique and different. This view creates a sense of accepting a person for who they are, since it is part of the human instinct need to feel and be accepted. In Abraham Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Needs*, the third portion of the pyramid is titled ‘love/belonging’ (Green, 2000). The sense of wanting to belong is important for adopting a new attitude towards LGBTQ students in school because those students want to be supported, acknowledged and accepted as any other peers with heterosexual orientations.

Adopting a new attitude towards inclusivity strategies for students identifying as LGTBQ would not be as challenging as one would think because of the new policy the TDSB has mandated. Therefore, inclusion techniques for LGTBQ students would not be the teacher’s choice, rather enforced by the TDSB to ensure every student is included. Under the policy P071, *Gender-Based Violence* policy, the TDSB is committed to eliminating gender-base violence in its schools. The policy states gender-violence as, “any aggressive action that threatens safety, causes physical, social or emotional harm and denigrates a person because of his or her gender identity, perceived gender, sexual identity, biological sex or sexual behaviour” (Toronto District School Board, 2010, p.1). In recognition to the policy, discrimination such as homophobia and transphobia operates on a “societal imbalance of power and control based on social construction of sexual identity, sexual orientation, gender, perceived gender and sexual behaviour” (Toronto District School Board, 2010, p.1). The policy further entails preventative approaches to support teachers in combating gender-base violence within the student population; such as, workshop training, peer education, annual support and responding to gender-base violence occurrences in a
timely manner (Toronto District School Board, 2010, p.2). The board also announced that reinforcing subjects to include LGTBQ topics would help students understand the value of including everyone regardless of sexual orientation.

In addition to adopting a new attitude, Wright (2010) suggests prohibiting homophobic language in schools would reduce the chances of LGBTQ students being bullied. Homophobic language causes students to retract from showing their true identity and participating in initiatives that support their identity. The research connects students feeling isolated due to lack of schools banning homophobic language by not teaching students why the language is offensive, but rather just telling the student to “stop saying those words,” instead of explaining why the language is homophobic and grappling with the context of why homophobic language is offensive in any climate, especially in a school environment. (Carbad 2000, Mohr 2004, Tulin 2006).

2.3.1 LGBTQ Support in Schools or Suggestions for Promoting LGBTQ Inclusion Amongst Educators and Students

Creating a safe environment is not only relevant, but an essential aspect in adopting a new attitude. Macgillivray (2004) mentions that provides insight into creating a safe environment for our transgendered youth by presenting a “coalition used to navigate effectively community resistance and achieve the implementation and enforcement of school policies that ensured the rights of LGBTQ youth”. The implementation of a safe environment would allow LGBTQ students to admit issues that they may be struggling with. This could require guidance outside of the home environment since it may be an uncomfortable situation to ‘come out of the closet,’ and have family members accept their true identity. Lock and Steiner (1999) also agree that a safe space would be crucial in a school setting for LGBTQ youth. Protection and assistance often
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take the form of offering LGBT youth “safe spaces,” such as guidance counselling, provision of role models, and support groups.

Loutzenheiser (1996) summarizes the effects of being silent when discussing LGBTQ child and youth: “It is the silence surrounding the issue that is most damaging: what schools fail to realize, however, that by not confronting homophobia, they are likely condoning it” (p. 59). Reiterating Loutzenheiser’s point, creating a safe space would allow the child or youth to express themselves. By keeping silent, children and youth also experience harmful behaviours. They are not able to express their feelings towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues that they may be facing at school due to bullying or an inadequate support system from staff. When staff and other children/youth remain quiet and conform to the norms of society, it does extensive damage to the individual being subjected to homophobia due to their sexual orientation. This limit on one’s sexual orientation hinders the schools growth to adopting policies that includes an open educational curriculum and support for LGBTQ children and youth. Of course, schools do not want to have a negative connotation attached to their name, and by supressing an LGBTQ curriculum support system for LGBTQ students, it creates an unwilling image to adopt new practices to include LGBTQ topics.

A common school is defined by McLaughlin (2003) as a school that welcomes all students regardless of identity characteristics. Creating a common school would be helpful for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and youth because it allows “school[s] which [are] open to, and intended for, all students within a given society regardless of their” specific differentiating characteristics (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 122). McLaughlin’s (2003) rejuvenating idea, would be an amazing notion and foundation for adopting a new attitude. The common school would solve many issues that erupt because of social inequality due to ignorance about
issues that differ from society’s norm. McLaughlin’s (2003) idea, is one of the most intelligible theories to date on how to change curriculums, support staff, adopt a new attitude and combat bullying all within one solution, which is the common school.

Coleman’s article *Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, details that celebrating LGBTQ children is a crucial step in schools to promote inclusion of different sexual orientation. Coleman (1996) writes, “Celebrating LGBTQ children and youth would help them feel genuinely accepted in school” (p. 243). By posting up fliers, resources and showing solidarity and support within the school setting would allow LGBTQ children and youth to feel appreciated in their school environment. Celebrating LGBTQ children and youth is a part of adopting a new attitude in terms of recognizing the population and celebrating their accomplishments. As it relates to a sense of belonging (Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs) celebrating accomplishments within the LGBTQ community at school demonstrates that schools are open to the idea of incorporating LGBTQ curriculum and willing to train staff on how to address challenges facing LGBTQ students.

2.4 Support from Staff in the School Environment on LGBT Issues

In order to include the LGBTQ population in the school environment, teachers and other staff ought to be supportive of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and youth. Teachers, educational assistants and administrative staff are integral to addressing issues facing the LGBT community. Teachers have the ability to create discussions and incorporate literature about LGBT topics, and turn them into lesson plans. Although some teachers may be personally reluctant to discuss the topic of LGBT people due to discrimination and bias opinions. Teachers should be encouraged by administration staff towards guidance in regards to the LGBT community within an educational environment. Support staff would be able to find literature and
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programs of inclusions from other school boards and districts that they could incorporate into
their school domain to increase student acceptance. All these ideas would not be possible without
the approval of administration staff, thus all team members of the school would be required to be
on board with the expansion of the curriculum to include issues about LGBTQ students.

2.4.1 Implementing Support Learnt

Once teachers have received support from administrative staff, the next step would be to
build therapeutic relationships with children and youth identifying as lesbian, gay, transgender,
and or bisexual. Shilling (1991), McGregor (2003) and Paechter (2004) suggest that staff need to
build empathetic relationships with their students that includes sharing personal details to build a
foundation of trust with students, mentioning stories about famous iconic figures, etc. It is
important to build therapeutic relationships to ensure that children and youth are able to engage
and feel that staff are genuinely supporting them. Gradually, staff and students would recognize
that the LGBTQ student community needs support and advocacy when implementing a
curriculum involving the LGBTQ community. By sharing experiences and encounters, students
are able to seek teachers to help them understand their own sexual orientation or changes that
may be happening within their bodies that do not match the ‘norms’ of society.

A few researchers have identified principal support as one of the most important
resources teachers need to engage LGBTQ students (McCarthy 2003 & Jackson 2007).
Principals are able to book professional development, host workshops, and use community
resources to help teachers learn more strategies about the importance of integrating LGBTQ
culture in classrooms, finding reflective LGBTQ material and lastly, interacting with our
LGBTQ students. Finally, administrators could work on enhancing the school environment by
creating safe spaces for staff and students to learn about LGBTQ issues in a non-intrusive way
by prohibiting homophobic language, asking LGBTQ students what they need in order to feel safe and welcomes and lastly, improving school climate to celebrate LGBTQ inclusion.

2.4.1 *Infusing Literature to Support Inclusive Techniques*

While integrating literature about LGBT is challenging, teachers and various staff are educating students to be open-minded and ask healthy questions that entice curiosity. This lesson builds knowledge on LGBT issues, which is lacking since there are insufficient amount of writings on sexual orientation and education. McDowell (1994) and Davies (1993) both comment on how staff are the ‘directors of conversations.’ As teachers become directors of conversations, this allows students to be part of a safe environment to discuss topics that they may not feel comfortable discussing with adults because of the conflicting arguments between the student body and school staff. Overall, the support for teaching, administration and support staff is needed for the inclusion of LGBTQ issues in school because children and youth spend the majority of their time at school doing school related activities. It is important for staff to be supportive for the students to feel comfortable and accepted for being lesbian, gay, transgendered, bisexual or questioning and not deemed as being wrong, but a different way of being themselves.

The relevance of discussing support for staff in schools is necessary when examining LGBTQ issues in a school environment because teachers, administrators and support staff are the first educators and directors of conversations with students identifying as LGBTQ. As mentioned in the literature review, when staff are susceptible to discuss LGBTQ issues with students, they feel more secure in talking about the challenges of identifying as a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in school, which often at times is difficult due to a lack of knowledge or acceptance for children and youth identifying as LGBTQ.
2.5 Conclusion:

This literature review analyzes multiple resources that detail what is needed for inclusive education for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or questioning children and youth. Curriculum, protective factors and adopting a new attitude is needed in the discussion of LGBTQ inclusion in school to promote positive change within the ministry of education to update documents to include homosexual topics within the curriculum and support teachers to take workshops to enhance their knowledge of the LGBTQ student population. Most of the articles I reviewed contained vital information on previous research that encouraged educators to seek additional resources to help include LGBTQ curriculum and pursue support when unsure how to approach sensitive topics within the classroom. In addition, other articles I examined mentioned how detrimental it would be to ignore the significant advances recognized by the LGBTQ community, and celebrating their accomplishments would help students who identify within the group to feel confident with school related activities. My research will contribute with the literature by supporting existing ideas the literature has mentioned while adding new ideas that my participants have also suggested that they have found effected when fostering LGBTQ students and strategies in their primary classrooms.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I elaborate on the type of methodology I used to investigate how teachers foster inclusion of students identifying as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered and queers/questioning (LGBTQ). I began by sampling teachers who have a range of experience teaching in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), which is a very accepting, proactive board embracing the LGBTQ community by having various programs supporting the community within the school environment and participating annually in the Toronto Pride Parade. Furthermore, I sampled teachers from this particular board as I am very interested on how the TDSB is providing support and skills for teachers to utilize within their classrooms for students identifying as LGBTQ. In addition to my curiosity of how the TDSB provides support to teachers fostering LGBTQ inclusion, I wanted to understand which strategies were most common, effective and most importantly why were those strategies so successful.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

This qualitative study was based on semi-structured face-to-face interviews with teachers and a literature reviews. The study draws on characteristics of phenomenological research and ethnographic research. Phenomenological research refers to “participants sharing a common experience as a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). The research draws on phenomenology in that I want to learn about these teachers’ shared experience of fostering inclusion of LGBTQ students.

The second qualitative approach I am drawing on is ethnographic research. Creswell, (2013) describes ethnographic research as shared, learned patterns of values and behaviours according to culture-sharing groups. My sampling group draws on elements of an ethnographic research study as I wanted to interview participants associated with the Toronto District School
Board (TDSB). Participants would share a common culture (the school board) that prioritizes common values, missions and commitments. One aspect that I found to be interesting was learning about my individual participants and how the board policies surrounding inclusion and equity supports and informs their teaching practices. Currently, the TDSB has several GSA’s (Gay-Straight Alliance groups) operating in various schools, for example, and I was interested in learning about these teachers’ experiences of accessing professional development from board related to issues concerning LGBTQ identity. I wanted to know if GSA’s were available to primary junior students as it only mentions support for students in the secondary level.

Overall, characteristics of phenomenological research and ethnographic research best suited my study as they both reflected on personal experience of my sampling group and membership in a shared culture.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The primary instrument of data collection is a semi-structured interview protocol (see appendix B). Semi-structured face to face interviews were an appropriate method because it allowed for my participants to be interviewed when their schedule allowed it to and the interviews were conducted after school hours so participants were able to unwind and feel comfortable in their own classroom. In addition, semi-structured interviews provided a chance for participants to voice their opinions freely, build rapport between the interviewer/interviewee and allows for participants to prompt/probe on connecting ideas (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Correspondingly, building interpersonal skills such as rapport, humor and humility between the interviewer/interviewee, it allows both participant and interviewer to build trust and begin an open and comfortable dialogue for necessary discourse (Opie, 2004). Semi-structured interviews were best because it became a personal experience for both interviewer/interviewee to explore
strategies of inclusion for LGTBQ students and how each experience differs from each participant because of the informal setting allowing my participants to actively engage in the discussion of inclusion.

3.3 Participants

I sampled teachers with a range of teaching experience to participate in my study. I sampled teachers only from the Toronto District School Board. With this in mind, I wanted to gain a wealth of knowledge from both male and female teachers. For the purpose of this study, I sampled three female teachers and one male teacher. In this section I outline the participant criteria, recruitment strategies, and biographies of my participants.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

The goal of this study was to understand how teachers foster inclusion of students identifying as LGBTQ, so therefore I intended to interview a few teachers ranging in teaching experience from 2-30 years in the TDSB. I was successful in finding 1 male teacher who was newly hired, another teacher with a middle range of experience (10-15 years) and two teachers close to retirement. I am interested in their views because I wanted to know how their experience has changed throughout the years with or without support from their board. The teachers were based on the following criteria:

1. Have a minimum of 2 years teaching experience with the TDSB
2. Are currently working for the TDSB and are familiar with the new Health and Physical Education Program (2015) (additional bonus: If they have attended workshops for the new curriculum or intend to take workshops geared towards teaching the new Health and Physical Education curriculum)
3. Have demonstrated commitment, leadership and/or expertise in the area of supporting sexual minority students and/or fostering inclusion (e.g. they have led or participating in professional development, developed curriculum resources, lead a school club, conducted graduate research in this area etc.)

It was important that all the teachers I interview have a minimum of 2 years teaching experience with the Toronto District School Board, as I was interested in the board’s philosophy, mission and values pertaining to the inclusion of the LGTBQ population. I wanted my participates to have a minimum of 2 years teaching experience as I wanted them to be familiar teaching in a classroom with either a full-time position or a long-term occasional position as they would have known how to implement LGBTQ inclusion strategies according to their student population. In addition, I wanted participants to have a minimum of 2 years teaching experience, to compare the difference of in-service workshops committed to fostering inclusion with students who identify as LGTBQ between a teacher whom has had a minimum of 2 years to a teacher whom may be teaching longer and has had more opportunities to attend workshops.

It was also important that teachers be familiar with the new Health and Physical curriculum as I was curious to see if any training, dialogue or workshops have been introduced to teachers on how to teach students this new curriculum. I wanted to interview teachers who are currently still employed with the TDSB because of the current changes happening with the new curriculum.

Lastly, I wanted to interview teachers who are interested in this study as a means to create dialogue and interpret what they think of inclusion strategies are for the LGBTQ population. I wanted to know how strategies, support and skills have changed throughout the years at the
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TDSB and if support was always available for my participants, for those who have worked for 20-30 years

3.3.2 Sampling Procedures

To recruit participants, I applied purposeful sampling by seeking recommendations from individuals who met the criteria I have outlined above. I found these individuals through recommendations from associate teachers from my internships, approaching practitioners who have asked about my study or practitioners who have shared an interest in fostering LGBTQ and have some background knowledge in fostering inclusion. I provided a brief synopsis of my study to those whom were willing and interested to participate in my study. As mentioned by Creswell (2013) purposeful sampling allows the researcher to choose meaningful participants by being deliberate in whom they choose.

I planned on having a small sample size as guided by Creswell for qualitative research for quality and extensive detail about the few participants (Creswell, 2013, p.157) Pinnegar & Dayness (2007) also suggest using a small participant group in order to recant specifics in information. Not only were my participants be purposefully chosen, they were conveniently chosen as I am surrounded in a community full of teachers to network with.

3.3.3 Participant Bios

Janet (Pseudonym)

At the time of the research Janet was employed with the TDSB and had been teaching for nearly 25 years. She was in a junior-middle school teaching in the primary grades. She would call herself a social justice activist as she explained fostering inclusion is all about equity and how we teach the child holistically.
Lisa (Pseudonym)

Lisa was also a TDSB teacher teaching at the primary level. She was a French immersion teacher offering and fostering inclusion strategies in both English and French for her students to effectively grasp the concept of inclusion by using children’s literature to introduce fostering LGBTQ strategies for her students.

Mia (Pseudonym)

Mia was a primary teacher who had been employed with the TDSB for nearly 13 years. She was also teaching in a junior-middle school. Mia expressed that fostering inclusion for LGBTQ students is near and dear to her heart as she has a personal connection to the LGBTQ community.

Rick (Pseudonym)

Lastly, Rick was a newly hired teacher with the TDSB. Rick was hired nearly 2 years ago with the TDSB and was immediately placed into a long-term occasional placement. At the time of the research he was teaching in a kindergarten to grade 8 school and he taught rotary subjects including, language arts, math and history in grades 7 and 8.

3.4 Data Analysis

I analyzed the data by transcribing the interviews and organizing it into categories, then grouped similar themes that arose from each interview. I then proceeded into drawing on the data analysis approach described by Huberman & Miles (1994). I took notes, summarized field notes, noting patterns/themes and made contrast and comparisons of the data available. In addition to
analysing the data, I organized the data using coding methods such as detailing descriptions, which made it easier to place them into similar themes (Creswell, 2013).

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

All participants remained anonymous and were assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. In addition, schools, student names and other factors that could potentially identify my participants were given another name to protect confidentiality of my participants. Participants were notified that they could withdraw participation at any point of the study, with or without any reasons given. There are no known risks to participation. I minimized the risk of my participants feeling vulnerable or anxious about the interview by briefing them with the interview questions beforehand. Participants were able to review the interview by reviewing the transcripts transcribed and were able to retract or clarify any statements made during the interview. In addition, each participant signed a consent letter (Appendix A) giving their consent to be interviewed. Furthermore, the consent letter detailed the study, the waiver to consent and my contact/my supervisors contact if any questions/queries arise, and the overall expectations of the interview (time, address, semi-structured, audio recorded). The data will be stored electronically on a password safe laptop for up to 5 years. After 5 years, the data will be erased and will no longer be accessible to anyone. The data will be only accessed by me and my course instructor.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and strengths

A few key methodological limitations include the small sample size. I would have welcomed more participants, however due to time constraints and deadlines, I was not able to interview a larger number of participants. In addition, the small sample size is not generalizable
to the TDSB and cannot represent how other teachers implement inclusion strategies in their classroom for LGBTQ students because I was only hearing from four participants. Another methodological limitation is the lack of research readily available for inclusion strategies for LGBTQ students and regarding how the new Health and Physical Education curriculum would affect LGBTQ inclusion strategies as the new curriculum covers topics dealing with LGBTQ issues. This topic is still evolving and the curriculum associated with this topic was introduced in Ontario only in 2015.

A few methodological strengths include interviewing teachers to hear their ‘lived experience,’ as outlined as the essence of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Another methodological strength is using queer theory to interpret how my participants might describe inclusivity strategies for their LGBTQ students. Watson (2005) describes queer theory as an interpretive lens that focuses on the lesbian, gay, or homosexual identity; thus creating discourse for classroom appropriate strategies. Lastly, one key methodological strength is the qualitative approach of phenomenological for this particular study. This study is initially designed to explore inclusive strategies for the LGBTQ population and how teachers implement them. Furthermore, by teachers divulging how they introduce these techniques, they will be providing information on their beliefs, values and strategies. (Creswell, 2013).

3.7 Conclusion
This qualitative research study involved semi-structured interviews with three experienced teachers ranging in various years of experience from the Toronto District School Board. I will be finding participants employed currently with TDSB and I want to research how the TDSB has supported teachers in incorporating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer/questioning inclusive strategies in the classroom. My study will reflect the
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phenomenological and ethnographical type of qualitative research because of the ‘lived experiences’ my interviews will detail. Next, in chapter 4, I will be reporting my findings and data.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss and report my findings from the four interviews I conducted with teachers who are currently employed with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The four participants range with a variety of teaching experience ranging from 2 years to 24 years with the TDSB. All four interviews were conducted around the beginning of September to mid-November of this current year (2015). I was fortunate to interview three female teachers and one male teacher. All four teachers contributed to my data by answering my main research question which is, “How do teachers create opportunities for inclusion by normalizing LGBTQ identity in schools and society?” By the data I have collected, I was able to formulate overarching themes (and numerous sub-themes) that I was able to extrapolate into categories by similar quotes, references, experiences and strategies. The main themes that were developed through each interview by the participants were, parental involvement, school support, professional development and lastly, inclusive strategies. Some sub-themes that were present were communication, lesson plans, advocacy training for both students and teachers and lastly, discussions between teachers and students. The teachers I interviewed emphasized these main reoccurring ideas as the most crucial aspects when implementing and fostering inclusion strategies for LGBTQ student vital, due to the sensitivity of discussing issues relating to LGBTQ students and having support from all participants (parents/guardians, administration team, school staff, peers and lastly, the child identifying as LGBTQ).

4.1 Participants discussed a range of parental involvement as a vital inclusion strategy

Each of the four participants had different ways of approaching parental involvement. Although the participants noted that parental involvement was key in order to implement
fostering inclusion strategies for all, they all described different ways of interacting with parents. Each participant noted that parental involvement did include communication with parents, respecting cultural beliefs, parental resistance and finally, parental consent. When discussing what parental involvement entailed, Janet stated “Parental involvement is crucial when implementing strategies for inclusion because I want the parents to know and be involved when I am designing a lesson or want to teach the kids social justice issues.” She mentioned sending classroom newsletters as one of her strategies when wanting to implement social justice issues such as discussing different types of identities in the classroom. She found the best way to start discussing different types of identities was to use the grade 1 Ontario Social Studies curriculum as she is a grade 1 teacher. She also cited using picture books relating to themes of identity as a great way to introduce social justice and equity issues relating to LGBTQ inclusion.

The other participants discussed parental involvement as parents seeking them for advice or wanting to incorporate their child in the class in a non-obvious way. Lisa recounted during one of her years teaching in the early primary grades, parents of a student who was ‘gender fluid’ approached her and briefed her on what was to be expected since their child was enrolled in her class. Lisa and the parents had a great working relationship as the parents provided Lisa with materials on how to incorporate the child and discussions to have with the class and working knowledge moving forward to allow the child to express themselves. Lisa stated that there was only one time the students asked why “John” was wearing pink tights. Lisa opened up the discussion and told the students to ask John. John replied “because I want to.” After that, the students never questioned John’s choice in clothes ever again. Lisa noted that was another way she would implement inclusion strategies with students was by asking the students to have a discussion with the child who is figuring out their identity. She noted that it was important to
have discussions at a young age in order for students to become comfortable in identifying
themselves whether it be through sexual orientation, gender identity or simply knowing
themselves. Lastly, all participants said that validating the parents ‘voice’ was a successful key
factor for implementing inclusion strategies for LGBTQ students because it takes into account
what the parents want and need from the school system and teachers, which provides a great
working relationship. The participants noted that parent’s willingness to have their child
participate in these types of lessons validated whether or not the parents ‘voice’ was heard. For
instance, Mia referred to the example of one of her previous student’s parents. They were not
pleased with Mia wanting to discuss and use children’s books to talk about different types of
love that people can have for one another (straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning). Mia
wanted to incorporate a lesson emphasizing that all families are made up differently and used
picture books as examples referring to blended families. A concerned parent refused for her child
to participate in the lesson due to religious beliefs conflicting with the lesson of how families do
not need to be heterosexual. Mia respected that decision and used other tactics to teach the
family unit citing the social studies curriculum as a way to ground the lesson. An important
lesson each participant always articulated was to know the Ontario curriculum well in order to
cite and guide parents to it whenever questions come up about why their student is learning
different concepts.

4.1.1 Teachers communicating with parents about the use of inclusion strategies for LGBTQ
students

Each participant mentioned the importance of communication with parents as one of their
greatest challenges when incorporating LGBTQ inclusion strategies. Collectively, the notion of
wanting to be respectful to parent’s ideas conflicted with the way some teachers would teach. For
example, Mia encountered a parent who was reluctant to discuss LGBTQ issues in school. Mia was able to teach LGBTQ inclusivity by explaining to parents through monthly newsletters that she would be teaching the family unit as guided by the social studies curriculum of Ontario and would discuss same-sex parents as it is important to note all families are different.

In addition to monthly newsletters, Lisa mentioned asking parents what their comfort level is and what they want their child to know. She described a scenario in her class where she took resources and ideas from the parents who had a child who was gender fluid and taught generally to all students using those ideas.

The literature supports the idea of open communication between parents and educators as vital, because it demonstrates the importance of role modelling and having open communication to create a working, progressive relationship (McDonough et. al., 2007). Janet remarks that teaching the whole child is what we do as educators and as educators, we need to keep in mind that we are not only teaching the child, but as well we are teaching their families. In her words:

When we teach the students, we are also teaching parents. It is important to remember that we aren’t just teaching the students. Students interact and will tell their parents what they learn in school. That is why it is important to have an open dialogue with the parents so that we can all remain on the same page.

Janet makes an excellent connection that when we do incorporate LGBTQ inclusion strategies, we must make sure that it is age appropriate and students are able to understand the lesson in order for them to explain to their parents what they are learning and are able to articulate the importance of learning LGBTQ issues.
Overall, parents and teachers need to be able to openly communicate as it supports the teaching of the whole child, which the Ontario ministry of education strives to enforce (Zegarac, 2014). Communication with parents needs to be constant and is a key factor when implementing LGBTQ inclusion strategies because parents should know what their child is learning and how they can continue the learning of LGBTQ inclusion strategies at home, if the parent chooses to do so.

4.2 Participants identified school supports as a key factors supporting their practice for fostering inclusion (Initiatives, Social Justice Kits, Staff Support and Administration)

All four participants reflected that school support is one of the greatest assets one could use when fostering LGBTQ inclusivity. Each participant spoke about the importance of knowing the administration team and having that open communication with them. Rick said that being able to have a strong, reflective and encouraging administration team makes teaching equity issues connecting to LGBTQ inclusion a lot easier when the administration team knows what you want to teach to the students. Janet also recommended introducing your ideas to administration to avoid parental backlash due to unknowing what said teacher would be teaching. Janet stressed the importance of communication with the administration team as an effective strategy to teaching LGBTQ inclusion due to administrative staff being able to book certain professional development if the staff or community reflected or wanted it.

Lisa also mentioned board wide initiatives that take place yearly to promote LGBTQ inclusion. She cited ‘Pink Day’ as a board wide and school wide initiative the school practices yearly. She described ‘Pink Day’ as a day to remember people who are victims of bullies because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The board presents the initiative to all the schools and there is an assembly and discussion that follows. However, at the school Lisa is
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currently employed with, she noted that ‘Pink Day’ is celebrated and remembered twice because the national day differs from when the school celebrates it. She pointed out that engaging parents in both days is an excellent to start the discussions at home about the importance of inclusion for all and not just a certain group of individuals.

All four participants mentioned staff support as an essential factor when incorporating inclusion strategies in the classroom, with regards to using staff strengths as a means to find resources and support. The participants outlined that each team of staff they have worked with are all different and have phenomenal strengths and knowledge in relating to different topics. They noted that the importance of team collaboration helps develop inclusion strategies for LGBTQ students as staff are able to seek ‘in-house’ support when needing to find resources on how to deliver lesson plans pertaining to LGBTQ inclusion. As previously mentioned in my literature review, creating opportunities to collaborate as team not only promotes a sense of community but also as a crucial source for ideas and validates the strength of a person on the team. (Sykes, 1996). Staff team consolidation provides growth and opportunity for the school community to progress in their ability to further deliver LGBTQ inclusive strategies by using resources brought up by other staff members that may have been successful in their own classroom and should be tried in other classrooms. Lastly, each participant mentioned that each school has an equity representative for the school that attends professional development workshops at the main board office location and would report about their workshops and how to implement the skills, strategies and techniques for equity. An equity representative may change every year so each staff member is able to understand the role and is encouraged to part take in it, in order to effectively deliver equity techniques in their classroom. Lisa and Janet both exclaimed how the equity representative is responsible for making sure the school is accountable
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and practicing equity strategies. For example, in Lisa’s school, the equity representative would be responsible for organizing ‘Pink Day’ and have week-long initiatives planned in order for the purpose to be meaningful and the students to understand what the message of equity is for that certain topic. In this case, ‘Pink Day,’ would be followed by discussions around the school on how to make everyone feel included no matter their beliefs, sexual orientation or gender they choose to identify with.

Finally, Janet mentioned the use of Social Justice Kits available by the board on a loan basis. She stated that the board loans social justice kits by request from a school that covers any social justice issues such as bullying, racism, discrimination, equity. She remembered using one of the kits tying it into equity. She said the kit was quite helpful because it covered all aspects of equity and inclusion for all, not just LGBTQ students.

4.2.1 Using resources from the TDSB to foster LGBTQ inclusion strategies

Participants stated finding ‘in-house’ resources to be more useful than researching other methods of inclusion to be more engaging and valuable as it was easier to access. Lisa said she would rather ask her colleagues for strategies they have used in their own classroom as it may have been successful for students they have taught previously and are now in Lisa’s class. In addition to ‘in-house’ support, Janet said it is easier to converse with colleagues on literature they have found helpful in their own classroom when discussion LGBTQ issues.

Each participant claimed that using cross-curricular lessons were also most effective as the Ontario curriculum is very broad. In combining the different curriculums, it would be they found it easier to teach LGBTQ issues when merging social studies and the language arts curriculum together. The literature states that implementing curriculum with acknowledgements
towards the LGBTQ community allows students to reflect and to think critically about identity (Jeltova & Fish, 2005). A great way into introducing new LGBTQ issues is to use the new Health and Physical Education curriculum (2015) as a guide to do cross-curricular lesson, while consulting the HPE specialist at the school or using other ‘in-house’ supports such as staff familiar with the new curriculum to collaborate with.

4.3 Participants described the importance of Professional Development geared towards LGBTQ inclusive strategies and professional growth to understand how to teach the whole child

Professional development was mentioned several times throughout each of the four interviews I had conducted. Professional development was defined as receiving guest speakers, in-house workshops or specific training relating to a topic. Each participant concluded the significance of receiving professional development in regards to LGBTQ inclusion. A few participants commented that although they did not receive specific training for LGBTQ inclusion, rather inclusion for all students. They noted that there wasn’t options for taking LGBTQ inclusion strategies for the elementary level because generally those workshops are offered to middle school and high school educators.

Of the four participants, none would be able to teach the new Health and Physical Education due to having a Health and Phys. Ed. Specialist available in the school to teach the new Health and Physical Education curriculum (2015). However, each participant stated that they were in favour of the new curriculum and would want to know more about the new curriculum if there were workshops given about the new curriculum. Janet stated “the new curriculum dropped and there were no implications of staff training on how to proceed with the new curriculum. There was no dialogue and I think that’s why we had all the chaos earlier in the
year.” Lisa seemed to share the notion on how the was no discussion moving forward about the new curriculum.

Though each of the participants would not be teaching Health, they remarked that if professional development was available surrounding LGBTQ inclusion strategies they would be interested in learning about it and receive special training for it. Lisa aired on the side of caution in terms of wanting to take professional development, however she would not use the professional development in her class immediately unless the child identifying proceeded to tell her to do so. She said “I would approach the child first and ask what they wanted me to do as an educator. I would never want to isolate or put the child on the spot without knowing them and knowing what they needed from me.”

In the literature, I found that if any educators from the TDSB wanted to access professional development, they would be entitled to do so. Under the Toronto District School Board’s policy of P071, *Gender-Based Violence*, entails preventative approaches to support teachers in addressing gender-based violence within the student population by attending workshops, training, peer education and annual support. Therefore, if teachers wanted to implement professional development within their own school, support and resources would be available for them.

4.4 **Participants found literacy strategies most effective and used inclusion strategies in their own classroom**

Fostering inclusion strategies ranged from each participant. However, the most prevalent strategy commonly mentioned was the use of literacy and picture books since all the participants are currently teaching in the elementary level. Each participant stated numerous books that they
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found to be great discussion starters and would utilize in their classroom when wanting to start a unit about inclusion and regarding LGBTQ inclusion. As the literature promotes, using literacy as a form of an inclusion strategy works best as students are able to see themselves in the literacy, which at times works the best because it is reflective of the student population. As reported in the literature by Clarke and Blackburn (2009), using English literature is a great way to address heterosexism, gender neutrality and homophobia within a school environment while using the guided curriculum as a source prove why teachers are covering different, social justice topics.

In addition to using picture books, all four participants regarded ‘knowing your students’ as a fundamental factor in teaching LGBTQ inclusion strategies. Janet remarked that knowing the maturity of the students in your classroom is important in order to successfully teach with LGBTQ issues in mind. She said that she would not be able to introduce literature to the children regarding LGBTQ inclusion if the grade ones in her classroom did not seem cognitively ready. She would not want to start discussions with her student if they would not be able to understand the content she wanted to cover. Lisa also mentioned that knowing your students and utilizing literature that was written for students of that age/grade range was essential in order for the students to appreciate and recognize what lesson was being taught. The literature supports these ideas of knowing your students by reporting how teachers need to build strong, open communication with students in order for effective teaching (McDonough et. al. (2007).

4.4.1 Instructional lessons as LGBTQ strategies

Aside from using literacy and picture books to describe LGBTQ issues and fostering inclusion strategies within the classroom space, my participants also mentioned using cross-curricular lessons as ways to introduce LGBTQ issues within the classroom. For example, Rick
stated that although he does not teach the new HPE curriculum, he would integrate a literacy and HPE or math and HPE. Rick also mentioned that he would want to know what other teachers are teaching his students so he could continue the learning in his classroom, so the student would feel comfortable to approach Rick if they had questions about LGBTQ issues, if they were learning about it with another teacher.

4.4.2 Setting the tone and using tribes, community circles and creating a safe space for acceptance

Rick, Mia and Lisa automatically gravitated towards the notion of using Tribes and community circles. Rick described Tribes as learning how to mutually respect, appreciate, and have positive expectations for everyone. He said that Tribes was a key factor for fostering LGBTQ inclusion within his own classroom as it provided an ambiance of understanding and acceptance of others. He said that Tribes is first and foremost an important strategy in his classroom because it sets the tone for the rest of the year as he builds his classroom community first because tackling the curriculum at the start of September. Rick mentioned the use and purpose of community circles in his classroom because he feels that community circles allow everyone to truly show themselves and be proud of who they are. He said he would use community circles to start discussions about inclusion because he wanted his students to feel the need and importance for creating a community that everyone could rely on. He also mentioned when introducing LGBTQ issues in his classroom, he would likely use community circles because it becomes personal and gives students a way to connect to their community.

Lisa quoted safe spaces as a key factor for introducing LGBTQ issues in her classroom as she would always want her students to feel space. She said she would never bring up the conversation if she felt her students didn’t feel safe. She stressed the significance of having a
safe space as on the top of her list for building inclusive classrooms as it provides students with comfort when discussing personal issues. The literature has proven that creating a safe space for students to discuss and identify as LGBTQ is crucial to their learning because they might not have other places to discuss their identity issues as some students might be reluctant to share their identity as they may be fearful of negative backlash. (Macgillivray 2004)

4.4.3 Discussions initiated by students and facilitated by teachers

Although challenging conversations arise in classrooms daily, educators should embrace those discussions as it seems that students are curious and want to learn about things since they have brought it up. Lisa talks about the importance of following the child’s pace throughout her interview. She said that using discussions in her classroom is a strategic inclusion technique, however, she wants her students to start at their own pace with the conversation. She remarks that she would approach with caution LGBTQ issues in her classroom as she wants her student to be reflective of what is being taught.

Lisa often talked about the significance of having ‘in-moment’ conversations during the interview. She gave the example of students laughing at other students for dressing differently. She addressed it in her classroom as “Why is it funny the way someone dresses?” She stated that she wanted to address those conversations when they happen because there is so much meaning and leaning to be happening during those moments. As an educator, she expressed the importance of having those conversations during the moments so the students can remember and reflect on the spot, rather than waiting for that teachable moment. She stated that pointing those
messages of inclusion starts with vocalizing and deconstructing stereotypes and trying to understand children’s point of view (i.e.-why is wearing different clothing funny?)

The literature goes in-depth about addressing homophobia with conversations and acknowledging that homophobia exist, counters the stigma and creates a safe and open space for discussion. Ryan & Futterman (1998) explain that students retain reflective conversations when issues are acknowledge because educators are able to explain situations using real life experiences, so students will be able to understand the severity of using harmful language to describe people.

McDowell (1994) and Davies (1993) also reiterate the impact of having teachers as ‘directors of conversations.’ The importance of teachers guiding LGBTQ discussions lets students know the appropriate tone and how to frame difficult discussions. In addition to directing the conversations, teachers are able to steer the discussion in a positive, reflective, empathetic and safe environment.

4.4.4 Collaboration teaching with colleagues

Throughout the four interviews I conducted, each participant stated collaborating with colleagues is a necessary and fundamental approach in teaching and implementing LGBTQ inclusion. As previously mentioned, collaboration with teachers could be as simple as running an idea by some colleagues on how to start discussing LGBTQ issues in the classroom or utilizing support from staff located within the school before reaching out to board level help. In addition to some of those strategies, Janet also indicated that collaborating with colleagues builds a
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rapport and demonstrates a unified presence to students that all teachers are on the same page when it comes to teaching lessons about LGBTQ inclusion strategies.

4.4.5 Teaching students advocacy skills for their own identity

Each participant stated that teaching students to advocate for themselves is important when discussing LGBTQ issues. Janet and Lisa remarked that, whether the student has identified as LGBTQ, it is essential to teach each child that they have the right to stand up for themselves. They stated at times, it is difficult to teach the children how to advocate for themselves, however it’s all about ‘knowing your students’ and using the language they use in order to teach them to be advocates for themselves. The literature stated that teaching students to advocate for themselves is crucial, especially those identifying as LGBTQ because it builds their resiliency skills and teaches them that standing up for their beliefs is important and necessary. (Bauman & Sachs-Kapp, 1998; Peters, 2003). In addition to teaching advocacy skills, Lisa mentioned the significance of assessing the student’s mental health. She stated that if the students seem like they are not ready to learn in-depth about LGBTQ issues or they aren’t mature enough, educators should slowly introduce concepts of LGBTQ inclusivity in the classroom. She said she wouldn’t want to over-load her students because the message becomes lost. Instead, she would gage and listen to what the students are discussing and try to incorporate inclusivity and advocacy for all. The literature further details that advocacy training later benefits students of LGBTQ orientation because they can pass on the skills of advocacy to other students, who lack the ability to advocate since they have education about advocacy (Szalacha 2003; & Whiteman et. al., 2007).
4.5 Factors that hindered these teachers implementation of the new HPE curriculum:

Although collectively, my participants range with a variety of experience and a plethora of knowledge, none of my participants will be teaching the new Health and Physical curriculum (2015). All participants had the same reason for not teaching the new curriculum; there are health and physical specialists available in the school to teach the new curriculum. However, all of the participants have expressed their opinion on the new curriculum.

Mia states “I am in favour of the new curriculum. However, because I am not teaching it, I haven’t really examined it. From the bits of what my colleagues and I have discussed, I am for it, especially since in this day and age the use of technology has an impact on children’s development. In terms of learning the lingo of sexting and texting. I think it’s important to know how to deal with current issues our students will be facing in the near future.”

Janet comments “I know I won’t be teaching the new curriculum because we do have someone responsible in the school for delivering that curriculum. However, it doesn’t mean that I wouldn’t talk about it in my own classroom. I would definitely want to discuss it with my students. I want to be on the same wave length as those teachers teaching the document, so that if something were to happen in my classroom, I would want to team teaching and let them know, ‘hey one of my students expressed he likes boys and he is a boy and wants to know if that’s okay.’ So I would want to co-teach so that the student doesn’t feel that they only have one support when they have many supports all around and as I said, the school would be their safe zone.”

Rick said “If I was given the opportunity, I would definitely want to explore the new Health and Physical curriculum with my students. I think it’s important that they know these kinds of things like consent, naming body parts, learning how to eat healthy but remembering the financial aspect of eating healthy. I am in favour of the new curriculum and I wish people would just give it a chance.”

Lisa remarks “I think the new curriculum reflects what society is currently like. It is trying to educate our students on what it means to be healthy, have healthy relationships, eating, feeling and mental health as well. I feel like the new curriculum is very innocent and it is all about interpretation. I think that people have exaggerated what the new health curriculum is about. I think it depends where the teachers who are teaching the new curriculum will take it. They can follow the teaching prompts, however it’s about how you phrase things when trying to teach the lesson. I understand that it’s not acceptable to be teaching these things in some cultures, but then again, it’s all about acceptance. If we are accepting of all cultures, we need to be accepting of all people. I would definitely incorporate some aspects of the curriculum, for example the relationship aspect. Although, it is covered in the new HPE curriculum, I would still discuss it with my students as I believe it is important to teach the whole child.”
Overall, the consensus from my participants is that they do agree that the new curriculum is needed currently to teach our ever developing students. Our students need to be reflected in the curriculum they are learning from in order for them to have a deeper connection and learn about themselves and others (McFarland, 2001 and Peters, 2003). All participants seemed to have the same opinion that making cross-curricular connections would definitely benefit each student whether or not they identified as LGBTQ as it would set the tone of acceptance in the classroom and throughout the school environment. Lastly, in each of the interviews conducted, each participant stated, if given the opportunity to teach the new HPE curriculum, they would gladly do so to learn along with the children and experience new curriculum that currently reflects today’s society.

4.5 Participants did not share the same opinions as outlined in the literature (Negative attitudes and the Health and Physical Education Curriculum)

From the semi-structured interviews I conducted, most of my participants answers did reflect the literature previously researched. This included using literature to support students and their families to understand and accept students identifying as LGBTQ or having family members that did identify as LGBTQ. In addition, to using literature, the teachers mentioned using staff support as a priority resource as the literature mentioned above also states that as a viable strategy for inclusion. However, there were a few underlying issues that arose in the literature that were not displayed during the interview. In the literature, many researchers have documented the “fear, anxiety and negativity (personal opinions)” towards LGBTQ inclusive curriculum. The literature placed a heavy emphasis on teachers having a negative, discouraging
attitude and behaviour towards teaching LGBTQ infused curriculum due to ignorance and not understanding why LGBTQ curriculum is needed and should be taught (Mudrey et. al., 2006).

In addition to ‘negative attitudes’ displayed by teachers, the literature also pointed out the significance of not including LGBTQ in the curriculum. The research reflected that not including LGBTQ curriculum “robs teens of the full high school experience” because it fails to support teenagers identifying as LGBTQ and reduces the feelings of being cared for, supported and feeling unwelcomed, as opposed to students of heterosexual orientation (Loutzenheiser, 1996). The literature relied heavily on educators having a negative attitude and being unable to implement LGBTQ curriculum and inclusion strategies. Of the four participants I interviewed, none of them expressed ‘negative attitudes’ into implementation of LGBTQ inclusion strategies. All four participants expressed a great deal of welcoming students identifying LGBTQ in their classroom and would be open into using a range of inclusion strategies including literature, guided lesson planning (curriculum based) and asking for support from parents and the administration team.

Consequently, the literature researched does not include the new HPE curriculum, since it just came out recently and has yet to be taught in Toronto District School Boards. Since I have concluded my four interviews with practicing TDSB educators ranging from grades 1-8, I have found that the teachers I have interviewed do not share the same views, values and opinions as I researched from different authors. The teachers I have interviewed, share a unified vision of inclusion for all, while putting an emphasis on LGBTQ issues. Each participant was able to articulate the importance of inclusion for LGBTQ while mentioning their personal stories on why inclusion for LGBTQ matters, the significance of having reflective, current material and
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curriculum in the classroom and lastly, the key fundamental strategies they use in their classrooms to incorporate and foster LGBTQ strategies.

Finally, since all my participants are currently employed with the TDSB, the participants follow the policy and procedure of Equity and Inclusion as guided by the board. The policy states “We strive to make all students and staff feel welcome and accepted in their school so that they can be successful and reach their full potential regardless of their background or personal circumstances” (Equitable and Inclusive Education, TDSB, 2014). In addition to that statement, the board has numerous links for the Equity Foundation Statement, Human Rights Policy and Procedures, located on the TDSB website that entails rules and regulations to follow that include being inclusive, respectful and appropriate for all students and staff members.

4.6 Conclusion

Overall, some of my findings from my participant semi-structured interviews correlated with the literature review. The participants and literature concluded key strategies for implementing LGBTQ inclusion, the significance of having LGBTQ curriculum and lastly, vitality of taking professional development in regards to fostering LGBTQ inclusion and having staff/administration collaboration and support. Most notably, the participants outlined valuable and essential LGBTQ inclusion strategies to utilize in the classroom and how to foster and implement those strategies. Conversely, the participants reiterated the importance of knowing the child’s maturity and comfort level before beginning to discuss LGBTQ issues. My participants concluded that fostering LGBTQ inclusion strategies would not be challenging as long as there is support, professional development and clear communication between students, parents and educators.
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In chapter 5, I will be speaking to the significance of my findings as a beginning teacher. I will elaborate on why it is important to implement LGBTQ inclusion strategies and which strategies would work for any ages. In addition, I will examine how my educational research would expand if given the opportunity to conduct and observe the new HPE curriculum in action and being taught at TDSB schools. I will also be making recommendations based on my findings for the TDSB, professional development and teacher education.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to examine how a small sample of teachers from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) fostered inclusion strategies for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer/questioning students in the elementary division. While conducting semi-structured interviews, I was able to understand and learn what successful strategies were used to engage LGBTQ students and what needs to happen for these strategies to continue being successful in the classroom. The research above concluded that supporting our student whom identify as LGBTQ is vital for the classroom climate by having teachers use reflective material, attend professional development and communicate with parents, students and administration to include LGBTQ fostering strategies. In addition to the research I conducted, I found that many researchers spoke to similar strategies the teachers I interviewed outlined in my findings in chapter 4.

In this chapter I outline my final discussions, implications of the research findings for the education community, suggestions for me as a beginning teacher, recommendations for stakeholders (school boards, professional development, and teacher education etc., and lastly the significance of the research findings for short and long term goals. In addition, I will outline areas for future research that were raised by my findings and some important areas requiring future research attention given what I concluded in my research.
5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The findings presented above initially guided my research question by formulating my idea of “How do teachers create opportunities for inclusion by normalizing LGBTQ identity in schools and society.” This in turn gathered plentiful information from the teachers I had interviewed to add to the discussion of nurturing LGBTQ issues and students in the classroom. My findings were generally conclusive to the research that had previously been explored in the importance of fostering LGBTQ inclusion strategies for students to create an inclusive environment for learning LGBTQ issues.

Some of the key findings that strengthened the research completed, mentioned the use of using curriculum as a means to present and deliver successful ways to integrate LGBTQ issues. With the new Health and Physical Education document (2015), many teachers felt that this document was effectively written to reflect our current students and how they are developing with the help of technology. For instance, Mia (one of my participants) mentioned the crucial step of teaching our students the positive and negative effects of using social media and how that can relate to LGBTQ issues by using the new HPE curriculum as a platform to start discussions about healthy relationships and what is appropriate to do or not do when in a relationship. This relates to the idea of LGBTQ issues because normally in schools, heterosexual love is taught, however LGBTQ students also engage in love, so it makes sense to use the HPE curriculum to show that any sexual orientation or gender can be subjected to bullying via social media and that is why it is important to teach our students how to properly and appropriately use social media. (Mia, 2015)
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Another key finding that all the participants mentioned was communication. Lisa spoke about communication with parents, administrators and students as a means to understand, guide discussions and know what strategies works best for all when implementing LGBTQ inclusion strategies. Lisa mentioned that asking LGBTQ identified students what works best for them is a way to start using inclusion strategies but also asking their parents how they would want to approach issues in the class would also be an additional strategy. She would want everyone to be on the same page and by having open dialogue with parents, administrators and students is one of the best ways to introduce and use LGBTQ inclusion strategies.

Finally, a strategy that was highly recommended and discussed throughout the paper that were evident in the semi-structured interviews was the purpose of having professional development surrounding the issues of integrating LGBTQ issues and teaching reflective material to LGBTQ students. Each participant stressed the significance of attending professional development available through the TDSB or utilizing planning time to find resources and strategies that would work for fostering LGBTQ inclusion as a means to start implementing techniques in the classroom.

With these strategies in mind, it strengthens the argument that fostering LGBTQ inclusion in our elementary school is as vital to the development of all students as it is to learn about heterosexual issues. As educators teach the child holistically, it is important to be inclusive for all because not all of our students are brave enough to embrace their identity or are unable to identify themselves due to not knowing how to. Teachers are able to support our LGBTQ students (identified or not) by using inclusion strategies to make these students always feel welcomed and safe in our schools. The strategies mentioned above contribute to existing
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literature and research by having TDSB teachers support and acknowledge the essential idea of using fostering techniques to engage LGBTQ students.

5.2 Implications of research to education community

The implications that effect the education community based on scholarly research is that teachers should utilize resources available to them from the board and use curriculum to guide the discourse in the classroom about LGBTQ issues. In addition to using curriculum, forming a partnership between teachers and the administration team can only strengthen how schools foster inclusion for LGBTQ by principals providing necessary workshops and professional development for teachers to part-take in to learn how to become a LGBTQ inclusive facilitator. Another essential point to mention is how to include parents when designing lessons that include LGBTQ topics. For instance, Janet mentions letting parents know via a newsletter on topics that would be covered in a month’s glance so if parents had any questions they would be informed beforehand and could have meetings with teachers to discuss why and what their child is learning. Janet clearly identifies the importance of letting parents and administration know what will be covered in class so parents are not alarmed and surprised to what their child is learning. She attributes letting parents know what will be covered in her class as a successful inclusion strategy as parents aren’t caught off guard and are more susceptible to her teaching of LGBTQ issues.

Teachers need to be receptive and open into using inclusion strategies for LGBTQ students whether or not LGBTQ students are present in the classroom to show heterosexual students different relationships, love people can experience and issues that could potentially face the LGBTQ community. Since the TDSB partners with Pride T.O each year to have a float present in the parade, it would make sense for TDSB teacher to talk about pride throughout the
year and make it a mainstream topic in the classroom rather than waiting during that specific month to talk about pride.

5.3 Implications as a beginning teacher

As a beginning teacher, I have learned immensely from the scholars I have researched by creating a warm and welcoming environment for all students, especially to the ones that feel most vulnerable, in this case it is the LGBTQ student community. Moreover, I have learned successful strategies many teachers from the TDSB recommend and suggest using to engage our LGBTQ students and families by having open communication, reflective material and asking what the child needs in order for her/him/ze to succeed in the classroom and in the school community. I have learned valuable lessons from my participants to ask questions, reflect and most importantly do professional development either personally or provided by the board to enhance my understanding of LGBTQ inclusion and how to successfully integrate that into my own practice and classroom daily.

Subsequently, as a beginning teacher I want to build that open classroom by introducing TRIBES during the first month of school and then progress forward into role-modelling and having an inclusive classroom for all my students but mainly LGBTQ as I am very passionate about that community because of family and friends who identify as LGBTQ. I want to create open discussions for my students to ask questions and learn about what it means to be equitable and how to demonstrate acceptance for all. In summary, the research provided me with clarity on my teaching philosophy as I am dedicated creating inclusive LGBTQ classrooms with successful strategies learned from my participants and scholars.
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5.4 Recommendations for future growth and development regarding LGBTQ inclusion strategies

The key aspect of this paper was to understand how the Toronto District School Board teachers were fostering and implementing LGBTQ inclusion strategies in their classroom and how to introduce reflective LGBTQ material to students in the elementary panel. With regards to my participants, they explained multitudes of strategies that they found successful in their own classroom. The main reoccurring theme my participants suggested for future growth is to communicate effectively with administration so that everyone understands what material is being taught. The emphasized the importance of communication throughout their strategies as they commented it builds the foundation for inclusion.

Based on my findings in regards to the TDSB, I recommend they should arrange for more opportunities for professional development by providing workshops on how to utilize the new Health and Physical Education curriculum. The TDSB should guiding their teachers on how to use the new HPE curriculum in a way that both parents and students are comfortable with the material and are able to discuss the material at home in order to support further learning that could take place at home. Furthermore, I think the board would benefit from teachers taking professional development around LGBTQ inclusion as it has become more evident that children and youth are ever changing are start realizing gender biases, heterosexual normativity, hetero/homosexual love. It is great that the TDSB supports Pride T.O every year, however I feel that as a board they need to provide more professional growth for their staff to enhance the learning purposes of LGBTQ students.
Lastly, I would recommend beginning teachers to have current up-to-date material for covering LGBTQ inclusion strategies in their elementary panel. In terms of using children’s literature, there are so many valuable books that talk about love for all, different kinds of family or books about how we dress. I think it is important to bring that culture into a classroom for students to identify and recognize that being unique is great and it defines us, rather than stifle our students because they did not see reflective material in the classroom. I would tell beginning teachers to always have reflective material in the classroom and know the curriculum well. For instance, if in grade 1 if you wanted to cover the different types of families in the social studies strand, I would discuss all the possibilities of families (nuclear, single-parent, same-sex etc.) Let’s say If a parent wanted to complain or disagree with your teachings, at least you would be able to refer to the curriculum document because of knowing what each strand covered and why. The recommendations above were developed as a result of research question of wanting to know what TDSB teachers were doing to incorporate LGBTQ reflective material and if they had any strategies to engage LGBTQ students. In summary, most of the strategies that were being used in classrooms provided successful example on how to interact and present LGBTQ students and materials by building a partnership between students, parents, teachers and administration, communication and finally having purposeful reflective material for all students to interpret and learn about.

5.5 Areas for future research

There is an abundant of areas for future research to contribute to the idea of fostering LGBT inclusion. One main idea I would like to further explore is how gym specialists are addressing fostering LGBTQ inclusion strategies in gym class in the elementary panel. I am curious and wonder how the new Health and Physical Education curriculum effects their
teaching practices and if their teaching strategies have changed to include LGBTQ topics. I would want to further research how the TDSB is providing support for teachers teaching the HPE curriculum and other types of professional development the board is offering to foster LGBTQ inclusion. I am interested in how principals provide support to teachers with students identifying as LGBTQ in their class and book professional development based on that criteria. I would want to interview HPE teachers and principals to gain further knowledge on their perspective using the HPE curriculum to integrate LGBTQ issues and I want to know how principals work with teachers who have discomfort dealing with LGBTQ issues due to their personal opinions or religious purposes. In summary, I want to explore applying the HPE curriculum using LGBTQ fostering inclusion strategies and discover the types of professional development offered by the TDSB in regards to LGBTQ inclusion for elementary teachers.

5.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine best practices on how to foster inclusion strategies for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer/questioning elementary students. I wanted to understand how a small number of elementary teachers are able to effectively introduce and integrate LGBTQ issues and strategies daily in lesson planning. With this in mind, I was able to gather data and formulate successful strategies that each participant reflected on and utilized daily in their classroom, whether or not they had students identify as LGBTQ. The main reoccurring theme of research collected was teaching all students about acceptance by having reflective material of all student identities that students may come across. Each participant stated that teaching inclusion for all by using equity practices and role-modelling is what inclusion looks like for all in order for students to understand and engage with other LGBTQ students.
This research is important for short-term implications as the new HPE curriculum was just delivered in 2015 and only now are educators starting to introduce the new curriculum to their students. This effects short-term implications in regards to how teachers will continue to foster LGBTQ inclusion strategies. In addition to long-term implications; I feel that this effects the way the board will design professional development for elementary teachers in the purpose of offering more support around LGBTQ inclusion. I think it is important to have LGBTQ inclusion training in both elementary and secondary panel for teachers because students can identify themselves at any age and it is important to accept and work with the student to help them grow and develop as any other student whether their gender or sexual orientation. In summary, the research concluded that TDSB elementary teachers should have a range of material when teaching about love, identity, acceptance and families that cater to all students, especially LGBTQ students. More importantly, teachers need to clarify with all parents in the classroom what topics would be discussed in order to avoid any conflict that might arise from teachers teaching students something that would cause parents to be disturbed based on personal opinion or religious observances. However, teachers could bypass conflict by tying the curriculum to the lessons and provide a brief synopsis to parents to evade problems that may arise. Equally as important is for teachers to build that open communication between parents, students and administrative team just so that everyone is clear as to what the expectations are for fostering LGBTQ inclusion in the classroom. In short, the few teachers I have interviewed are doing an amazing job nurturing LGBTQ inclusion in their own classrooms by setting the foundation of acceptance for all students and providing reflective literature that all students could relate too. The most important part of fostering lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer/questioning
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inclusion strategy is teaching students to be proud of their identity and to educate others around them so that others can be open to acceptance as well.
Works Cited


Appendix A: Consent Letter

Date: July 28, 2015.

Dear ___________________________,

My Name is Madia Farid and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on “How teachers create opportunities for inclusion by normalizing LGBTQ identity in schools and society”. I am interested in interviewing teachers who work for the Toronto District School Board. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only people who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Dr. Angela MacDonald-Vemic. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to participation, and I will share with you a copy of the transcript to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Madia Farid

647-400-4070

madia.farid@mail.utoronto.ca
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Madia Farid and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ________________________________

Name: (printed) ________________________________

Date: ________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview, I appreciate you taking the time to participate in this interview. The research aims to learn about fostering inclusion for students whom identify as LGTBQ. The interview should take approximately 45-60 minutes. I will be asking you questions focusing on your inclusion techniques for students identifying as LGTBQ and how prepare your classroom to integrate issues concerning the LGTBQ population. I want to remind you of your right to refrain from answering any questions. You may revise, retract or decline from answering any questions. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions:

Section A: Background Information

1. Can you please state your name for the recording?
2. What board are you currently employed with and have you been employed in any other board previously?
3. What grade are you currently teaching this year? What grades have you taught previously?
4. How long have you been teaching in TDSB?
5. How many schools have you taught in and how long have you been at your current school?
6. Can you tell me more about the school you are currently teaching in? (size, demographics, program priorities)
7. In addition to classroom teacher, do you occupy any other rules in the school? (advisor, coach, counsellor, leader etc.)
8. As you know, I am interested in learning how teachers create opportunities for inclusion by normalizing LGBTQ identity in schools and in society. Can you start by telling me how you developed an interest and commitment to this area? *probe personal, professional, educational experiences e.g. have you taken any professional development workshops to improve your LGBTQ inclusivity strategies? Do you think any of your past experiences encouraged you to become a more inclusive teacher towards the LGBTQ student community?

Section B: Beliefs and Experiences

1. What does inclusion mean to you? What do you believe are key characteristics of an inclusive space?

2. In your experience, what are some of the greatest challenges students who identify as LGBTQ face in schools?

3. What does normalizing LGBTQ identity mean to you?

4. In your experience, what are your students’ attitudes toward people who identify as LGBTQ? Have you had students in your classroom who have identified as LGBTQ? How did you know that they did? How did other students respond?

5. Why do you believe it is important to create opportunities to normalize LGBTQ identity?

6. What role and responsibility do you believe schools have to do this work?

7. What are some of the reasons why you think schools have been slow to respond to this specific aspect of inclusion?

8. In your view, does the curriculum policy adequately address themes pertinent to the inclusion of LGBTQ identity in schools and society? Why/why not?
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9. What are your views on the new Health and Physical Education Curriculum? Do you feel that this new curriculum will support greater inclusion and normalization of LGBTQ identity? Will it change what and how you teach?

Section B: Teaching Practices

1. Generally speaking, what are some inclusion strategies that you use and find to be effective in your teaching? How do students typically respond to these? What inclusive strategies have not worked? Why do you think it did not work out?

2. More specifically, how do you introduce inclusion strategies relating to students of LGBTQ identity in your classroom? How do your students respond to these?

3. How do you create opportunities to normalize LGBTQ identity through your teaching? Where in the curriculum do you locate this work?

4. What instructional strategies, approaches, and resources do you use to normalize LGBTQ identity through your teaching?

5. Can you give me an example of a lesson that you have conducted?
   a. Where in the curriculum did you locate this work? (grade, subject, strand, policy)
   b. What were your learning goals?
   c. What opportunities for learning did you create?
   d. How did your students respond? What outcomes did you observe?
   e. How did you assess this lesson?
   f. What resources supported you in this lesson (books, literature, videos, music, space, guest speakers etc?)
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6. What range of resources support you (generally) in your commitment to normalizing LGBTQ identity in your teaching? *probe for names of books, children’s literature, videos, internet resources, guest speakers

Challenges, and Next Steps

7. What challenges do you encounter in this work? How do you respond to these challenges? How might the education system further support you in meeting these challenges?

8. What advice, if any, do you have for beginning teachers who are committed to normalizing LGBTQ identity through their teaching in elementary schools?