LGBT Summary and Lesson

This is an area that I was probably the most ignorant of the awful realities of conditions for many students. I have numerous gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in my life. They all seem to have achieved a level of happiness and contentment equal to my straight friends. They do not regularly complain of prejudice or tell tales of abuse or discrimination. They have positioned themselves in progressive areas such as Uptown Minneapolis or Portland, Oregon and, to me, they seemed just fine. We are past all this same-sex marriage opposition, these narrow views of relationships, the preoccupation with such trivial issues has finally stopped, among rational people, anyway, right? Wrong, I was wrong. I was living inside my bubble, viewing the examples readily available to me: my sister’s male bridesmaid, my uncle, my two female friends who just had a baby, by male friend who has two very happy female bisexual life-partners, my yoga instructor who is recovering from a tough breakup but making it through. These people, despite their alternative sexual situations, lead completely normal and, usually, healthy lives filled with the same ups and downs, the same responsibilities and aspirations, as any of my heterosexual friends. Here was where my “aha” occurred… they are all adults, they made it through, they found their comfort zone, and though they still face challenges never voiced until I asked, the worst is definitely behind them.

Here are the statistics that *really* got me:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Non-LGBT youth are nearly twice as likely as LGBT youth to say they are happy.  Among non-LGBT youth, 67% report being happy while only 37% of LGBT youth say they are happy. | Among LGBT youth, about a third (29%) disagreed with the statement “There is at least one adult I can talk to about my personal problems” while only 17% of the non-LGBT youth disagreed with it. | LGBT youth are twice as likely non-LGBT youth to use drugs and alcohol. Over half (52%) of LGBT youth say they have used alcohol and drugs while only 22% of non-LGBT youth say they have.  <http://www.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Growing-Up-LGBT-in-America_Report.pdf> |
| Roughly three-quarters (73%) of LGBT youth say they are more honest about  themselves online than in the real world, compared to 43% among non-LGBT youth. |

Those figures, along with watching countless home-made videos put out by the It Gets Better Project went a long way in changing my skewed perception that this is a problem of the past. This is an active problem in (likely) every school in America as we speak. I even asked some of my children’s friends who attend very small rural schools and they confirmed that bullying due to supposed alternative sexual orientation is a normal part of teasing or picking on others. The highschool students I talked to had mixed reactions. At the larger school in Brainerd it was more accepted, there was a group similar to Gay-Straight Alliances that are popping up in schools and communities across the country, and many felt quite supported and comfortable. In the smaller schools of Pequot and Pine River I did not find the same feeling of acceptance being offered to students who were, or were simply suspected of being gay. I would like to make quite clear that I had conversations with a very limited number of students and do not assume my findings to be representative or the makings of statistical information, just simply my observations.

Despite my saddening and sickening entrence back into the harsh reality of this epidemic of hate I am still hopeful. The Safe Schools Act just passed and, as we know from the past, though laws do not automatically create changes in feelings, beliefs, and behaviors, they are certainly a step in the right direction. I am feeling idealistically optimistic that this is an area in which change CAN occur, and is, although not near quickly enough.

I regret that this is a lesson that is, as of now, purely theoretical. I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to teach many of my lessons, this is not one of them. All the more evidence that change is very much needed.

**Lesson Plan**

Level: Middle School

Theme: Video to call for Social Action

Materials Needed: Online media player and projector for launch, laptop computers or tablets for video viewing, one device per group with video recording capabilities, poster board, markers and other artistic materials, audio player.

Objectives:

Students will learn factual data regarding the realities and challenges faced by students who identify themselves as LGBT by watching videos made by students.

Students will create their own video calling for social action in regard to an issue of disproportionate challenge to LGBT students, present videos, and provide feedback to other student groups.

Launch: Play “Minnesota's Youth Speak Out for Safe Schools” Video (1:55) Clip which shows an event at the capitol building in support of the Minnesota Safe Schools Act. The video is very emotional and motivating, an excellent example of social action, dedicated youth, and current change being made.

Video can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jmmmg96bV_Y>

Collect the Data: Students will visit the website <http://www.outfront.org/> which is dedicated to assisting people affected by anti-LGBT bias crimes or domestic violence, providing a crisis support line, legal referrals, and free and confidential crisis counseling and advocacy services for LGBT crime victims, and has been a strong advocate of the MN Safe Schools Act. Outfront offers a variety of online videos made on subjects ranging from LGBT Statistics and Facts to personal testimonies and pleas for change (links to different videos pop up on the same player as the launch video after it has played).

Reflect through Discussion: Students will be placed into 4 person heterogeneous groupings to share and discuss their findings, thoughts, and feelings on the information and stories they were presented with. Students will appoint a note taker to record conversation points.

Student Collaboration: Students will, using their previously watched home-made videos as inspiration, create a video of their own on a challenge disproportionately faced LGBT students (bullying, drugs/alcohol, homelessness, depression, suicide) or on LGBT awareness and support (if they are so inclined). A script will be written before video production.

Product: Students will shoot the video and present to class. Groups will provide feedback to one another verbally and in the way of written peer evaluations. Groups will have the opportunity to review written evaluations of their presentations as a closing activity.

Assessment:

A three part assessment will be used for this lesson. A teacher checklist, totaling 25 points with a 5 point extra credit opportunity, a peer evaluation of the video presentation used for reflective purposes only, and a group member evaluation that will be filled out by the students cooperative group mates and will be considered when attaching additional individual points on to the group score.

Checklist (teacher): (5 points each)

* Data was presented in a clear effectual manner.
* Visual aid was used and was of benefit to the presentation.
* Speakers spoke clearly and were easily understood.
* Appropriate and applicable musical choice was used during the credits.
* Video was of or beyond required time length.

\_\_\_\_\_/25

\_\_\_\_\_/0 Five extra credit points available for inclusion of an “expert” interview in your video.

\_\_\_\_\_/25 Total Group Score

Peer Evaluation:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Excellent | Good | Fair | Weak |
| Video was interesting and held my attention. |  |  |  |  |
| Data was easy to understand and related to topic. |  |  |  |  |
| Quality of the video, audio, and visual aids was… |  |  |  |  |
| This video did a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ job in helping to promote positive change. |  |  |  |  |

Group Member Evaluations/Self Evaluation:

Your Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Group Mate’s Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Please rate your group mate on each of the following areas:**

Participation 5 4 3 2 1

Quality of Work 5 4 3 2 1

Attitude 5 4 3 2 1

**5 = Excellent 4= Good 3= Okay 2= Not Good 1= Poor**

Fill out one feedback form for each member of your group, don’t forget to do one on yourself, be honest!