

What does the work look like in St. Vrain Valley Public Schools?

A Queer Endeavor does work with multiple schools and districts and it is important to note that that work looks different in different contexts, depending on the needs and expectations of our partners. We always align our work in SVVSD with what we agree upon in our partnership meetings, the mission of the district, and the standards that the district sets for your employees.

In general, all of our work is in the context of Colorado law and policy. As an organization led by 3 public school educators who collectively have over 30 years of K12 teaching experience, this is our priority-- to support educators and administrators to implement the law.

Context: In 2008, the Colorado General Assembly passed SB08-200 which barred discrimination based on sexual orientation, including transgender status. In November 2009, the Colorado Civil Rights Commission adopted rules to implement SB08-200. According to DORA (Department of Regulatory Agency), "The goal for school districts is to ensure the safety, comfort, and healthy development of all students, including transgender or gender nonconforming students. As with any other civil rights protections, the goal is to afford student access to the school district's programs, facilitate students' social integration, and minimize stigmatization." Further "the school should train administrators and educators that interact directly with this (LGBTQ) student on the school's plan and any relevant legal information regarding the health, well-being, and safety of the student."

Action: Level 1 Training Objectives

- Collaborating with educator colleagues in SVVSD to understand LGBTQ students' lived experience in schools, including the potential lack of support structures that cause them to be vulnerable to bullying, marginalization and self-harm .
- Grappling together about how to introduce, engage in, and navigate conversations related to gender, sexual and family diversity.
- Learning practical strategies for creating safe, inclusive, and affirming classrooms through both the social and academic curriculum
- Become knowledgeable about LGBTQ students' experiences in your school and become a resource for your staff and students around these important topics
- Receiving 2 hours relicensure credit

Context: HB19-1192 The act mandates funding instruction in public schools of history and civil government of the United States and Colorado, including but not limited to the history, culture, and social contributions of American Indians, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals within these minority groups; the intersectionality of significant social and cultural features within these communities; and the contributions and persecution of religious minorities.

Action: Level 2 Training Objectives

We know that when students see themselves reflected in the academic curriculum that they feel more safe and more connected to school. It's also important that students see people in the curriculum who are different from them (e.g., along lines of race/ ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.). Participants will be introduced to examples of what diversifying the curriculum looks like and receive guided support in exploring the following questions of inquiry:

- Who is portrayed within the scope of the curriculum in which students are routinely exposed? In the stories I read? In the examples I use?
- In the lessons I teach, whose voices are most prevalent and whose are absent in the curriculum? What happens when new voices are added? How does that change the way the story gets told?
- Do you believe there are assumptions embedded in this lesson's content? (Is there a broad perspective represented related to gender, sexuality, families and also to race, ethnicity, social class, language, and ability.) If so, what would it look like to facilitate discussions around those assumptions? To bring them to the surface?
- Do you believe that students might walk away with stereotypes after engaging in this lesson? If so, how are those stereotypes discussed and addressed in your classroom?

We will note that we support educators to understand these topics at age-appropriate levels. For example, with regard to sexual diversity, at the elementary level the focus is on family diversity. In other words, in units about families, which exist at many elementary grade levels, we support educators to also include families with 2 moms or 2 dads, given that many students in the district have families like these.