Up4Diversity

Empowering Young People and Youth Workers to Become Active Upstanders in the Prevention of Violence Towards LGBTIQ+ People in the Digital Era

UP**4**
DIVERSITY

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Module 6. Successful strategies on combating violence against LGBTIQ+ achieving social Impact

In the following module, we will highlight some interventions, strategies or materials that have an evidence base on preventing violence: some of them are more linked to bystander intervention or are more directly targeted at LGBTIQ people or youth. They can be good examples of other practices that are being carried out, that follow a rigorous foundation and show good signs of social impact in reduction of bullying or violence.

1. Gay-Straight Alliances

A Gay–Straight Alliance (GSAs, from now on) is a **student-led or community-based organisation,** found in middle schools and high schools as well as colleges and universities, primarily in the United States and Canada, that is intended **to provide a safe and supportive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) children, teenagers, and youth as well as their cisgender heterosexual allies.** In middle schools and high schools, GSAs are overseen by a responsible teacher. The first GSAs were established in the 1980s.

There are plenty of ways in which GSA is supporting the LGBTQI+ youth. These include digital campaigns and support or even physical actions with the clubs in the high schools and colleges. There are several publications from the organisation to help the students and teachers to start acting for that.

Virtual GSAs in action: Digital Organizing Toolkit

In 2020, GSA Network launched the Virtual GSAs in Action, a toolkit for organizing digital events or trainings while keeping the fun of the physical events.

The Toolkit provides steps for young people to get started in creating a Virtual Community GSA and take their clubs online. Also, it provides help to existing young people and clubs to take a step further to their activism and support them to create a safe online space for young people.

Especially while students are in a remote learning environment, it is becoming a need to move the GSA Network online. Moreover, some schools have very strict administrations that don't allow the students to have clubs or move their clubs digitally because they worry about the safety of the environment. The toolkit is providing safe platforms to make the meetings, understandable ways to involve old members and attract new ones, and most importantly how to be careful about personal privacy in the digital world.

GSA NETWORK
VIRTUAL GSAS IN ACTION: DIGITAL ORGANIZING TOOLKIT

Further that in the toolkit everyone can find very important information and the important role of straight allies and how they can involve and support the LGBTQI+ youth. With several Q&As, diagrams and questions to assess the risk of advocating for either yourself or a GSA club, resources and contact details, the specific toolkit is a very important publication for everyone.

Besides, it is an educational toolkit for straight allies to stand up and support the community, teaching about the forms of oppression you need to learn and unlearn to be a better advocate. In the Appendix B. we can find some good examples that dive us deeper in our own research to learn more about how oppression shows up for some, develop a

This toolkit is a step-by-step guidance for everyone to educate themselves and others, to contact the Trans,

Queer, Non-binary / Gender, Non-Conforming, Black, Indigenous, youth of colour peers and show them that you care, you are aware of what's going on, and can make a difference; also, to affirm that you are there for them in any way they may need. Furthermore, you can start and encourage dialogues across differences and use your privilege (and your physical and monetary resources) to support LGBTIQ+ and Black and Indigenous people of colour issues, businesses, and projects.

Last but not least and very important, in the toolkit there is always a reminder to bear in mind that some people might hold privileges others don't. And especially during a digital meeting or event these privileges are expanding. This toolkit is helping the facilitator to build trusting relationships and a dynamic that centres the needs of those who are too often left out among the participants, which is oftentimes LGBTIQ+ and indigenous and people of colour.

To know more:
Visit the website of the program:
https://www.gsanetwork.com

2. LARM – Teaching materials for schools

LARM is a set of teaching materials about LGBT+ rights targeted at students aged 12-16 years. The EU considers "youth" from 15 years old, but even so it is important to focus on students in the initial stages of adolescence as well. With early intervention, a larger probability of successful and sustainable change is created, and therefore it is very relevant to focus on this age group as well. Furthermore, giving children and youth the language to talk about discrimination and bullying will increase their level of understanding of these issues. Even though the

material is targeted at student aged 12-16 years, it can easily be moderated and implemented with students aged 15-18 years as well.

LARM serves two main purposes:

1. Making it easier and more accessible for teachers to teach students about gender, body, and sexuality as part of the mandatory health- and sexual education.

2. Teaching students about norms, rights, identity, minorities, media, and activism.

Especially purpose number two is important in the current context, seeing as it focuses on creating awareness and structural changes, and on **norms, rights, and discrimination, and how to be an active, informed, upstanding citizen contributing to a positive (online) environment for all inhabitants,** regardless of gender, gender identity, and gender expression.

Instead of focusing on the sexuality and/or gender identity of the minority, the material focuses on the norms of society, that all people can feel subject to, to a greater or lesser extent. In this way, **it is the norms of society, that the students are being asked to analyze and to take a critical stance against,** rather than the identity or sexuality of a minority group.

When using LARM, students first analyze norms and structures of society, and **afterwards produce their own campaign for diversity and equal rights.** Viewed from a societal perspective, it is of the upmost importance that **students cultivate the democratic skills necessary to promote the rights of themselves and others.** LARM supports the development of these skills.

LARM draws on several different school subjects, such as social studies, health and sexual education, history, religion, computer science, and design. The material consists of seven modules, as described below.

1. Introduction to the material and to LGBT
2. Norms and rights in contemporary society
3. Gender, body, and identity
4. Minority and majority
5. Violations and discrimination
6. A break with existing norms
7. Getting started on your LARM campaign

The material consists of different types of exercises, **training the students to use different types of discussion and expression.** In some exercises, students are required to read or write, but seeing as the exercises take place in groups, it is possible for students with dyslexia or other learning disabilities to participate. Animated films play a key role throughout the material, but seeing as they are very expressive both audibly and visually, hearing and seeing impaired students can still be included in the work. Some exercises require students to walk or stand, but these can easily be adapted to suit students with physical disabilities. As such, LARM is a very inclusive set of teaching materials.

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looking into who is hurt by the limiting social structures, that contribute to them having fewer privileges and rights compared to others. By analyzing and speaking out about what and who are seen as being "normal", and thus have the power and responsibility to change the norms affecting us all, students are empowered to take actions against it. Taking an action-focused approach means putting oneself into play, rather than simply and passively accepting minorities without putting much thought into the power and responsibility of the majority.

To know more:
Visit https://larmlgbt.dk/teachers for an extensive explanation of the program, and for teacher resources.

The material is based on the following scientific literature, all of Scandinavian origin:
- I normens öga. Brade (ed)(Sverige, 2008)

- Seksualitet i skolen. Røthing & Bang Svendsen (eds) (Norge, 2009)

- Normkritisk pedagogik. Bromseth & Darj (eds)(Sverige, 2010)

- Åbne og lukkede døre. Kirk, Scott, Siemen & Wind (eds) (Danmark, 2010)

- Skola i normer. Martinsson & Reimers (eds) (Norge, 2014)

- Køn, seksualitet og mangfoldighed. Hansen & Nielsen (eds)(Danmark, 2016)

- Upassende opførsel. Ananda Lodahl (Danmark, 2018)

LARM focuses on two main areas:
- Norms rather than individuals.
- Actions rather than tolerance.

Norms rather than individuals means focusing on norms rather than the people who break these norms. Focus is on limiting social structures, i.e. the expectations everyone meets, that in some instances limit LGBT+ people's identity, sense of self, options, and behavior. Being critical of norms in a practical sense means broadening the focus, so more people can affect the norms, and pointing out how certain structures affect everyone in the form of (societal) expectations.

Actions rather than tolerance does not mean showing special compassion, pity or tolerance towards people experiencing bullying or discrimination. Rather, it means

LARM was developed in 2018 and 2019, and started being implemented in schools in the fall of 2019. However, when the pandemic hit in March 2020 the use of LARM naturally came to an abrupt halt. Therefore, there are currently no assessments of the implementation of the program in existence. However, anecdotal evidence shows positive responses among students as well as teachers.

3. MOVISIE – Doing It For Optimal Impact

Doing it for Optimal Impact is a Dutch booklet with guidance for secondary teachers or youth workers on how to deal with LGBTI issues in school, based on scientifically validated methodologies. It includes tips for more effective discrimination reduction of LGBT people through information, training, and workshops.

The 64-page booklet is based on a review of 400+ academic, evidence-based papers, plus a range of interviews with experts.

Based on the existing (academic) evidence, the guide outlines 7 approaches for building acceptance of the LGBTI community:

1. Sharing stories: what's it like to be LGBTI?
2. Exchanging and listening to each other's stories;
3. Film and theatre on stories of LGBTI;
4. Creating a positive association with LGBTI;
5. Setting positive norms through leading by example;
6. Creating cooperation among LGBTI and non-LGBTI youth;
7. Stimulating self-awareness and self-control.

Each approach is unpacked in detail: alongside scientific references, the guide explains why, when and how the approach is best employed, offering tips and activities

along the way. Users are invited to combine two or more approaches depending on their audience and, of course, the time and resources at hand.

Interestingly, the booklet also discusses the competences of ideal upstander and professionals working with youth. These including having up-to-date knowledge of terminology, discrimination methods, and examples; continuous professional development; having the skills to reassure people and provide them with a trusted environment; and a close connection with the target group.

The full booklet – available in Dutch – can be found **here**. Below are further details on one of the approaches ('story-telling') and an example of how these tips and insights can inform day to day practice.

Story-telling: tackling stereotypes and building empathy

Story-telling is a powerful tool for raising awareness and education around LGBTIQ issues. As *Doing It For Optimal Impact* outlines, research has demonstrated that approaching and learning about LGBTIQ issues

through the lens of lived experiences can help understanding and empathy. In other words: reading or listening to the experiences of LGBTIQ people can help tackle implicit and explicit stereotypes. This creates room for a meaningful dialogue and mutual respect.

Story-telling is also complex, however. How do find people who are willing to share their stories? And how do you create a safe space for them to do so? To these and many other questions, Doing It For Optimal Impact offers thoughtful guidance. A small selection:

What should you do?
• Make it as easy as possible for your audience to connect with the person and their story. You could use illustrations (photos, videos), even humor where appropriate.

• Be clear in your language. If it is a story about a transgender person, make sure that that is named. Part of the objective is making sure people become comfortable using these terms.

• Naturally, such stories will have negative elements. It's important, however, to include positives as well. What support did people get, how did they overcome difficulties, what role did others play in making them feel good about themselves?

• Encourage listeners to ask questions – but understand and accept that you may not have all the answers!

What should you not do?
• Try to make sure that the audience can relate to the person(s) telling the stories. It can be inspiring to see very independent people, who do not care to 'look and sound like everyone else'. But many will find it easier to understand someone who is more like them (in looks, ways of speaking, ...). Understand your audience: what would work for them?

• Empathy might be more difficult for young people for whom a 'tough' or 'strong' image is very important, especially in group. It can also be more difficult for people with low self-esteem, or with people who are already dealing with substantial personal issues themselves. In these cases, think carefully about whether story-telling is something you want to pursue.

Beyond Stories: How to be an ally

Sections 5 and 6 of this booklet deal with setting positive social norms (what society feels is 'right' and 'wrong) and creating cooperation around those norms. Where society holds positive ideas about the LGBTIQ+ community, it is much easier for people to become upstanders. Where society feels there is something wrong or strange about being LGBTIQ+, it becomes much harder – not just for young people, but for youth workers, teachers and others.

Studies show that statements or testimonies by 'famous' people (celebrities, politicians) have a significant impact, as does art (movies, song, public exhibitions). You can use these as references for a group conversation, to help young people see how leading voices in society are trying to build support. You can also use it as a starting point to set rules around how LGBTIQ+ issues are talked about in your own group.

Finally, *cooperative learning* can be used to get young people to work or 'learn' with LGBTIQ+ people, for exam-

ple by setting them a series of challenges or having them on the same team in a game. This can be highly effective approach when young people find it difficult to talk or express themselves about these issues: instead, you give them an opportunity to put it into practice and set their differences aside. For this approach to work, it is important that it is clear who is (and is not) LGBTIQ+ - otherwise this will have little effect.

4. KiVa antibullying program

This program has been developed at the University of Turku, Finland, and it represents an **evidence-based antibullying program.** The program focuses on combating bullying in schools and provides materials and tools that assist in such an objective. KiVa starts from a **social paradigm of bullying, acknowledging that bystanders can reduce social status and power of bullies by acting in victim support and bullying disapproval,** and therefore reduce their motivation to bully.

KiVa program is based on three pillars:

1. **Prevention.** Working on reducing bullying incidents by preventing them from happening. To achieve this, different games and lessons have been designed addressed to students

2. **Intervention.** Here the main focus are children who have been involved in incidents of bullying. The objective is to supply those children with solution-based techniques and tools in order to tackle bullying.

3. **Monitoring.** The monitoring is provided as a tool to the school and it evaluates the current situation and the progress of any institution (school) by surveying both staff and students.

Evidence – based

The efficiency and effectiveness of the program has been studying rigorously and findings conclude that the KiVA programme **showed a significant reduction in homophobic-transphobic bullying and school violence (Salmivalli, 2011). KiVa elements are common with effective measures against LGBT-based bullying from scientific articles.** Additionally, other aspects have been measured and the program has been effective such as school liking, academic motivation and achievement (Salmivalli, 2012). Due to the positive impacts of this program, it appears in various schools in Finland and in the rest of Europe (The Netherlands, Estonia, Italy and Wales).

Reduction in both bullying and being bullied has been reported already after the first year of implementation. The below chart shows the effect of the program after each year of implementation on the rates of bullying or being bullied.

The program provides the materials on the following formats:
- Teachers' manuals
- Online games, Video clips, Vests, posters
- Parents' guide and Info letters for parents
- Presentation graphics,
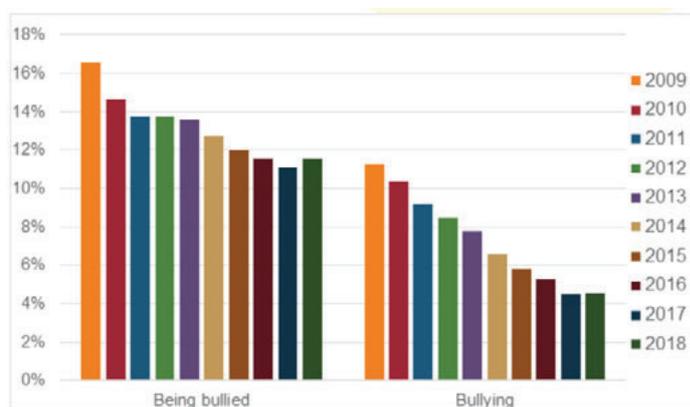
• Online surveys for students and staff

• Forms to be used in discussions with the bullied student and the child who has bullied

• Instructions on how to implement the program correctly

To know more:

Granero Andújar, A., & Manzano León, A. (2018). Possibilities of the KiVa program to face homophobic and transphobic bullying. Revista Complutense De Educación, 29(4), 943-958. https://doi.org/10.5209/RCED.54346

Referencias:

1. Salmivalli, C., Kärnä, A., & Poskiparta, E. (2011) Counteracting bullying in Finland: The KiVa program and its effects on different forms of being bullied. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 35, 405-411.

2. Salmivalli, C., Garandeau, C., & Veenstra, R. (2012). KiVa Anti-Bullying Program: Implications for School Adjustment. In G. Ladd & A. Ryan (Eds.), Peer Relationships and Adjustment at School. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing