



Mill Creek Middle School
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Dear Dexter Board of Education,

Two of the most difficult experiences for students are feeling misunderstood and lacking a sense of belonging.

As a counselor, I have had the privilege of working with many LGBTQ+ students over the years, hearing their stories and what it's like for them on their journey:

- I have heard students speak about how hard it is for them to get through each day.
- I have heard students who have learned to be ashamed of who they are.
- I have heard students who have said, "I hate that I am this way" – perhaps the ultimate statement of not belonging.
- I have heard from students who have been physically and verbally assaulted in the community.
- I have heard from students who come to school and are called derogatory names or are told, "go home" or "go kill yourself" because of who they are ... and I have seen LGBTQ+ students who have attempted suicide because they were made to feel that they do not belong. In a society where suicide rates are on the rise for all children, the suicide rate among LGBTQ+ youth is three times the national average.

Somebody once said that as humans, we like to put things in boxes. When something doesn't fit in our box, we perceive it is dangerous and our fight-or-flight response is activated: we lash out physically or verbally at the perceived danger.

Often hostile actions and derogatory comments are made out of fear and ignorance: the belief that different is dangerous. Students should be offered the opportunity to learn different perspectives and develop understanding; to have the opportunity to expand their boxes if they so choose; to have the opportunity to make their schools a safer place.

The need for an LGBTQ+ awareness curriculum in Dexter can be summed up in four words: Safer Schools. Saved lives.

If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Robert Grams
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