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Is it important to teach children about LGBTQIA+ issues?

Yes. In a study done by *Psychology Today*, Dr. Kaeser visited schools to teach children about homosexuality and transgender issues. Most notable were the initial reactions from the students, They were filled with ignorance and discomfort because **they did not truly understand the topic nor realize it was okay for them to know about it.** Censorship causes it to become associated with all the other topics that parents censor from their children like sex or violence.

How does exposure affect children?

Exposure leads to reducing the stigma surrounding queer issues with youth. In most elementary schools, homosexual content is often restricted unless it relates to HIV/AIDS. It adds to a heteronormative atmosphere and makes younger children only associate homosexuality with sex and STDs, a taboo topic. It is fueling the belief that these topics are not child appropriate because there is no queer content presented to children the same way heterosexual relationships are introduced. Instead of being associated with sex, children should at least be exposed to homosexuality through parental characters or the couple falling in love in a PG animated film.

What if there isn't a LGBTQIA+ student in my class?

There is! Additionally, it is important to expose all children to these topics. Whether it's through classroom or media, characters and stories can serve as a reference to the younger audience. Many children do not know about homosexual couples but will find out about heterosexual couples after watching their first Disney princess movie. They show children how their desires and habits might develop. Imagine growing up with no examples showing how common your feelings are. Watch for characters going through similar situations can help children. This kind of exposure does not only help questioning kids understand themselves, but also helps all children become more accepting of diversity. Even if the parents bring conservative views in the family household, showing diversity in media will also shape children into being more accepting and tolerant because "they aren't immediately closed off to the opportunity to get to know them and won't have the knee-jerk reaction of writing them off—simply because their favorite show has someone who resembles them" (Pride).

Sources

Kaeser, F. (2011). Teaching your young child about homosexuality and transgenderism. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-your-child-needs-know-about-sex-and-when/201112/teaching-your-young-child-about>.

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