



ILA CHAPTER AFFILIATE

## June 2018 - Literacy Strategy Spotlight

### Equity in Education

June is national Pride month recognizing and celebrating the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) community in their fight for equality. In honor of this, we wanted to share some ideas on making your classroom and school a safe space for LGBTQ students. O'Donnell (2018) highlighted three simple practices in promotion of ILA's second annual Equity in Education panel at this year's conference. She recommended: (1) address the past histories of the LGBTQ community, (2) encourage critical questions about gender identity and sexual expression, and (3) build critical consciousness through self-examination.

To do this we recommend Hall (2015) *Red: A Crayon's Story* as a read aloud. This children's book addresses the universal feeling of being mislabeled, as a crayon comes to terms with being labeled "Red" but actually coloring blue. In a statement about this story, Hall (n.d.) recounted his own personal experiences with being mislabeled in school. Hall indicated he had been mislabeled as "not bright," and later learned that he had dyslexia.

After reading Hall (2015) *Red: A Crayon's Story* aloud, consider asking the following questions to your students. This can either be done through writing or discussion.

1. How do you think it felt to be Red when he finally had the right label?
2. How have others tried to label you?
3. What happens when you do not agree with their label?

In conclusion, MacGillivray (2000) stated, "By including discussions of gender identity, sexual orientation, and discrimination against GLBTQ people in the curriculum, schools can help destigmatize nonheterosexual identities and can deconstruct gender role stereotypes that limit all students" (p. 305). It is not about promoting or prioritizing certain identities but allowing students to be themselves and belong. As O'Donnell (2018) quoted Jessica Lifshitz who stated, "We're so fearful of parents' complaints and yet I don't understand why we're not more fearful of children sitting in our classrooms feeling like they're invisible" (p. 37).

For those interested in learning more or continuing this discussion, there will be an Equity in Education Panel at the ILA Conference in Austin. For more information, please follow [this](#) link.

## References

- Hall, M. (n.d.) Author's statement: *Red: A crayon's story*. Retrieved from <https://www.michaelhallstudio.com/pages/books/crayon/authors-statement.html>
- Hall, M. (2015) *Red: A crayon's story*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books
- MacGillivray, I. K. (2000). Educational equity for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and queer/questioning students: The demands of democracy and social justice for America's schools. *Education and Urban Society*. 32(3), 303-323.
- O'Donnell, A. (2018). Literacy and our LGBTQ students: Starting and sustaining schoolwide transformation. *Literacy Today*. 35(5), 36-37.

If you would like to share a literacy strategy or highlight something your school is doing, please email Matthew Panozzo, the Community Involvement Committee Director, at [talecommunityinvolvement@gmail.com](mailto:talecommunityinvolvement@gmail.com)

If your school is interested in applying for the International Literacy Association's Exemplary Reading Program Award, please visit their online [application](#) for more information.