

Dear Dr. Malchesky,

As a senior, reflecting back on years past it's clear that the education system failed to educate us on many crucial social issues, specifically within the LGBTQ community. For as long as I can remember, equality and acceptance has been preached in the classroom yet LGBT people are often left out of the discussion. Whether we've been deprived of this information due to lack of knowledge on the topic or out of fear that parents may complain at the next school board meeting, it is long overdue. Of course Perry High School has shown efforts to give LGBT students options and safe places to share their feelings and experiences with clubs such as PRIDE. However, most of these efforts are not part of the curriculum therefore not every student receives this education. That is why I am proposing that we implement the education of diverse families as well as the LGBT community and its history in the school curriculum.

A study by the Youth Risk Behavior Survey taken by LGBT students revealed alarming yet not surprising, statistics. When asked how many of them had been bullied at school, 34% said yes. Equally important, 28% reported that they were bullied electronically and 10% reported that they were threatened or attacked with a weapon at school. These statistics alone show that LGBT students are still very susceptible to bullying due to sexual orientation despite nationwide efforts to be more inclusive. These numbers would likely be greatly lowered if students were better informed on their LGBT peers' lives and community.

California became the first state to require public schools to adopt a LGBT history curriculum in 2017. Since then, other states have repealed anti-LGBT education laws but several still have those laws in place. Ohio is in a gray area where it doesn't have any anti-LGBT education laws yet it doesn't have any state school regulations that make teachers address discrimination or bullying of students based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Therefore, it would be important for Perry High School to be a beacon of light in the state of Ohio to become a driving force for these state school regulations to be implemented. I'm proposing that current elective classes, such as PSL, adopt an LGBT curriculum. This newly implemented curriculum could make up for what is missing in our current history classes. These history classes preach the importance of activists and historical events that have allowed us to live the lives we live today. However, these historical events never include pivotal points of LGBT history such as the Stonewall Riots, the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" as well as the ban on transgender people serving in the military. How are the queer students of Perry High School supposed to relate to the material being taught in the classroom? How are the heterosexual students of Perry High School supposed to learn about the discrimination and violence against the queer community? The discrimination we see in our schools is likely an act of ignorance among other variables which could be solved with being properly educated on such topics.

Not only should students be given the opportunity to learn about LGBT in our normal history classes to get the message across to the entire student body, there should be specific courses that specifically focus on LGBT topics or gender studies. These courses would analyze the history and politics of oppression and empowerment of queer people, sexual identity, and what can be done to improve the future of the LGBT community. According to the University of Colorado, these types of studies encourage "students to think across established disciplines in order to understand the meaning of sexuality in society." Students would not only benefit from the education presented in these classes but could receive either a history or elective credit for completing the course. Although these classes would be optional thus making it less likely for all students

to receive the information, it would certainly do no harm to remove a less popular course and replace it with one that is extremely beneficial in today's society.

With all of this being said, there are many who would be opposed to such an idea. To put it simply, I believe that in the past there have been topics that are considered controversial being taught in the classroom. Speaking personally, as a student at Perry High School I participated in an activity in American History where we proposed a new law to be implemented in the United States and we had our peers vote on whether or not it was important enough to be recognized as a law. Some students proposed laws about gun control, racism and even laws about LGBT people. This assignment was a prime example of how controversial topics can be beneficial for the education of the students. If the implementation of LGBT history and education in the curriculum stirred controversy and debate, it would be beneficial and if anything further prove the point that it is something that needs to be discussed.

In conclusion, if LGBT topics and courses were integrated into the education of those at Perry High School it would greatly benefit my LGBT peers as well as those uninformed on such topics. As previously stated, PRIDE is also an optional club at Perry High School which has done excellent work in creating a safe environment for queer students and allowed discussion of such topics as I have proposed in this letter. The club has been an excellent step in the right direction and I believe that new courses and course material will bring great things to come not only for the students being affected currently by discrimination but protect students in the future from experiencing such prejudice. Perry High School could become an example for the state of Ohio to implement new school regulations and potentially be the driving force behind getting other states to change for the better as well. I hope that this will be taken into consideration in the near future.

Works Cited

Center of Disease Control and Prevention. (2017, June 21). LGBT Youth. Retrieved November 18, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>

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