



American Association
of School Librarians
TRANSFORMING LEARNING

Defending Intellectual Freedom

LGBTQ+ Materials in School Libraries

Defending Intellectual Freedom

LGBTQ+ Materials in School Libraries

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[AASL Standards Framework Applied with LGBTQ+ Materials](#)

Explore this resource guide using this AASL Standards Framework application as a secondary table of contents to navigate more quickly to relevant resources, inspiration, statistics, and activities based on your specific questions and needs.

Forward

School libraries accomplish many things in today's school communities, but I truly think our most important work is what we do to ensure equity and access for all learners. This toolkit provides a vital resource for school librarians in our work to create and maintain inviting physical and virtual spaces that serve all learners.

A glimpse at the Table of Contents of *Defending Intellectual Freedom: LGBTQ+ Materials in School Libraries* tells the reader what AASL values. The members and staff of AASL work each day to empower leaders to transform teaching and learning. A vital way that we accomplish that is through the *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*. This resource guide is AASL's first to highlight the National School Library Standards, and it does a phenomenal job of demonstrating the beauty of Include, my favorite shared foundation of the Standards. I know you will find this to be a uniquely useful resource as you maintain your collection to provide "windows and mirrors" for all learners in your community (p. 9 of this guide).

The call to action that led to the creation of this resource guide came from AASL's Affiliate Assembly, the grassroots body that ensures that the AASL Board has a connection to our state affiliates. I applaud the 2018 American Library Association Emerging Leaders Group A for accepting the challenge of creating this resource guide. As an alumnus of the Emerging Leaders program, I knew they would thrive with an opportunity like this one. I would also like to thank AASL member guide Rachel Altobelli for her writing for *Knowledge Quest* in this area as well as her thoughtful guidance throughout the creation of this guide. And last, but never least, the ever-talented AASL staff member Stephanie Book for her masterful work on the design of what you see in this document. After reading this high-quality resource guide, I hope you feel energized to continue doing your best work for our LGBTQ+ learners. Equity and access—our mission, our drive, our passion.

Steven Yates
AASL President, 2017-2018

Introduction

The American Library Association's (ALA) [Top 10 Most Challenged Books of 2017](#) included four titles that centered on LGBTQ+ characters and issues (ALA 2013). School librarians defend learners' rights to access information and provide library services that effectively meet the needs of all learners. In light of the number of challenges that LGBTQ+-focused books face, school librarians need continued support to safeguard their collections against challenges that target their inclusive books featuring LGBTQ+ realities.

This resource stems from a concern brought forward by AASL's Affiliate Assembly; the concern was then presented to a 2018 Emerging Leaders team. The Emerging Leaders team was charged with creating a guide to support school librarians in addressing challenges related to censorship of LGBTQ+ materials and patron privacy issues.

This resource guide rests firmly on AASL's *National School Library Standards*. A key part of developing the standards involved revisiting and reframing the Common Beliefs of what defines the qualities of "well-prepared learners, effective school librarians, and dynamic school libraries" (AASL 2018a). Intellectual freedom is at the heart of these Common Beliefs. The fifth Common Belief is, "Intellectual freedom is every learner's right" and is further explained:

Learners have the freedom to speak and hear what others have to say, rather than allowing others to control their access to ideas and information; the school librarian's responsibility is to develop these dispositions in learners, educators, and all other members of the learning community. (AASL 2018a).

Improving and safeguarding LGBTQ+ collections positively impacts the academic and social-emotional learning of **all** learners. Read on for ways to use the Shared Foundations from the AASL Standards—*Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage*—to build LGBTQ+-inclusive library instruction, collections, and spaces.

How to Use This Guide

Shortly after beginning this project, the Emerging Leaders team realized the *AASL Standards Integrated Framework* could serve as the scaffolding for this resource guide. The Shared Foundations are powerful vehicles for helping school librarians understand the importance of and defending LGBTQ+ materials and, more broadly, intellectual freedom and learners' rights to privacy. Each of the six Shared Foundations detail what ideally can be applied to any area of a librarian's work, whether it be a curricular unit or collection-development policies. Below, you will find the Shared Foundations, along with their Key Commitments and essential questions that helped guide the team's inquiry into these topics.

| Shared Foundation | Key Commitment | Essential Questions Arising from This Shared Foundation |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <u>Inquire</u> | Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is intellectual freedom, and what should school librarians know about it? • What are school librarians' knowledge gaps about LGBTQ+ materials and how to defend them? • What are our biases and how can we develop collections that transcend our biases? |
| <u>Include</u> | Demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the advantages of and tools for creating an inclusive collection? • How can school librarians defend the value of an inclusive collection as part of the health and well-being of individual learners and learning communities? |
| <u>Collaborate</u> | Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can school librarians work with school and community partners to grow their capacity to expand and defend a collection that includes more LGBTQ+ materials? • How can school librarians leverage collaborations to improve their LGBTQ+-inclusive collection, space, and instruction? |

| | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| <u>Curate</u> | Make meaning for oneself and others by collecting, organizing, and sharing resources of personal relevance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can school librarians build collections using strong, effective collection-development policies while avoiding self-censorship? • What are some of the best tools for developing an inclusive collection, and how can that collection be shared with the school community? • How can learners be involved in collection development? |
| <u>Explore</u> | Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can school librarians explore their own biases and grow by looking at their biases? • How can school librarians examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of their current collections, with a focus on LGBTQ+ collections? • How can school librarians engage with a wider community around the issues of LGBTQ+ representation in libraries? • What are some tools for reflecting on the school library's current challenged materials policy? |
| <u>Engage</u> | Demonstrate safe, legal, and ethical sharing and creating of knowledge products independently while engaging in a community of practice and an interconnected world. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can school librarians prepare for responding to challenges to their LGBTQ+ materials? • What AASL Standards are active within the school that school librarians can use to direct and promote resources, services, policies, and procedures having to do with the collection? • How can school librarians encourage all stakeholders to actively engage with these issues? |

These essential questions address what the AASL Standards recognize as the key roles of school librarians in their communities: leader, instructional partner, teacher, information specialist, and program administrator (AASL 2018a, 11).

Additionally, this guide recognizes that, to enhance and empower librarians within these roles, continuous evaluation and professional development is necessary.

To enhance learning and school librarian growth, each of the Shared Foundations is broken down further into four Domains. These Domains recognize the different roles and learning styles of school librarians, as well as the important end-goals for learners. The *National School Library Standards* note:

These four AASL Standards Domains describe a continuum on which school librarians and school libraries empower learners to master competencies, access resources, and use tools to do the following:

Think: Inquire, think critically, and gain knowledge. This is a cognitive domain.

Create: Draw conclusions, make informed decisions, apply knowledge to new situations, and create new knowledge. This is a psychomotor domain.

Share: Share knowledge and participate ethically and productively as members of our democratic society. This is an affective domain.

Grow: Pursue personal and aesthetic growth. This is a developmental domain.
(AASL 2018a, 15)

This guide is organized according to the *National School Library Standards'* Shared Foundations and Domains. School librarians will find valuable resources and links as expected in a traditional toolkit. However, this guide recognizes learning is enhanced when the learner undertakes their own journey of inquiry and growth. To this end, the guide includes activities in each section that will help school librarians engage in active inquiry.

This resource is in no way meant to be an exhaustive guide on intellectual freedom, access, and privacy. Instead, the team hopes it will prove a powerful tool in safeguarding school library collections as well as learners' rights. Librarians need not be experts in all fields, but they can create value for their patrons and communities by making connections through events, creating space for collaboration, and modeling lifelong learning.

Using the AASL Standards as a framework, this resource guide encapsulates how school librarians can protect themselves and the LGBTQ+ materials in their collections from the challenges and confrontations that can arise. Despite these

challenges, school librarians can—and must—create collections that serve as both windows and mirrors for their entire student body and the community in which those learners live. School librarians can help communities and individuals think, create, share, and grow by guiding them through inquiry, inclusion, collaboration, curation, exploration, and engagement.

Need Help Quickly?

As librarians, we recognize the constraints on time inherent in the work you do. Therefore, we've provided what we hope will be a helpful guide to using this resource when you have a particular need or question in mind. After the sample school library scenarios and questions below, the section(s) with relevant information is (are) listed.

Scenarios

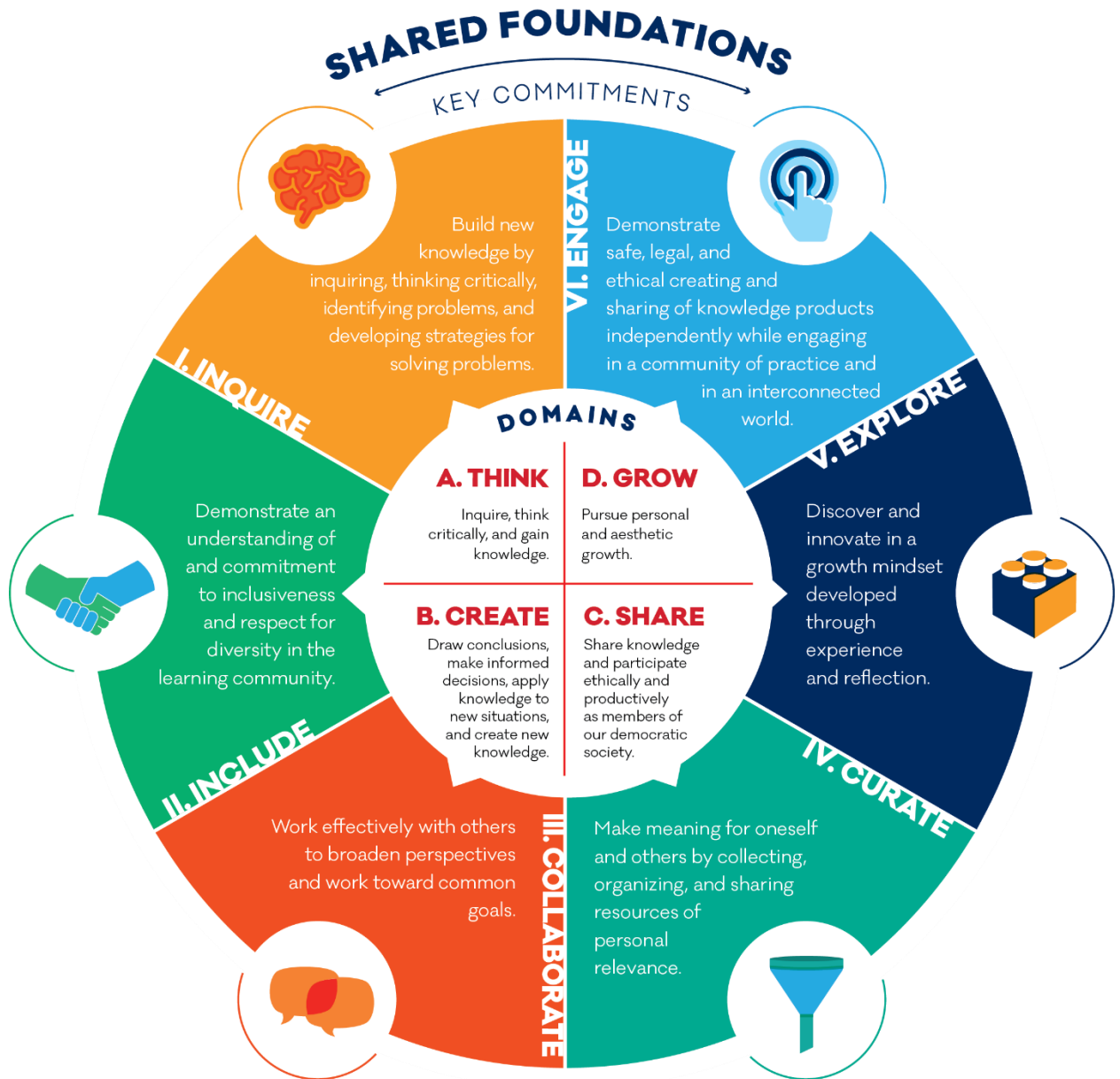
- My collection has been questioned by my administration and/or educators in my school. See the activities in [Explore: Grow p. 38](#).
- Learners in my school are requesting specific materials or types of materials I'm uncomfortable collecting. [Inquire, p. 13](#); [Include, p. 17](#); [Curate, self-censorship, p. 32](#).
- My school has just welcomed its first openly transgender student. [Include p. 17](#).
- An openly gay parent has questioned why my collection doesn't contain LGBTQ+ materials. [Curate p. 26](#).
- I'm worried about the climate at my school. How can I help make it more welcoming? [Collaborate, p. 21](#).
- A parent has challenged the inclusion of certain materials in my collection. [Engage, p. 39](#).
- A parent and/or my administration has asked me to create a "restricted" area in my library for books learners must have caregiver permission to view. [Engage, p. 39](#).
- A teacher in my school has come under fire for materials they're using in the classroom. [Explore, challenge policies, p. 38](#).
- My principal has asked me to remove pages they find offensive, such as nude art, from books in my collection. [Explore, challenge policies, p. 38](#).
- A neighboring school system has been removing materials on certain subjects from their collection due to pressure from parents and/or administration. I'm currently evaluating my collection and deciding what to do with materials on those subjects. [Curate, collection audit, p. 32](#).
- I'm worried my school's Internet filtering software might be biased against LGBTQ+ websites. [Explore, p. 34](#).

Questions:

- Who do I reach out to for help? [Collaborate, p. 21](#); [Engage, p. 39](#).

- How do I justify collecting LGBTQ+ materials in conservative areas where this hasn't been done? [Curate, p. 26](#); [Engage, p. 39](#).
- How do I deal with my emotional involvement in this situation? [Explore, p. 34](#).
- Where do I look for recommended titles? [Curate, p. 26](#).
- How do I create a policy for challenges to my materials? [Explore, p. 34](#).
- Do I need to include LGBTQ+ issues in lessons? [Collaborate, p. 21](#).

Shared Foundations





Inquire

Key Commitment: *“Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems”* (AASL, 2018a, 68).

Inquire is the first Shared Foundation explored in the *National School Library Standards* and an ideal start to reflecting on school library LGBTQ+ collections. Though all Shared Foundations are of similar interlocking importance, Inquire is a key point to begin any project as it establishes essential questions, identifies knowledge gaps, and explores strategies for addressing gaps with further research or deeper questioning. As the *National School Library Standards* explain, the school librarian is key to the process. “Why would school librarians start with Inquire?... By facilitating the building of new knowledge through the process of inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems, school librarians are conduits for inquiry” (AASL 2018a, 42).

Inquire is a key Shared Foundation for tackling any issue and building capacity among school librarians as individual practitioners and as a group.

Click [here](#) to see how **Inquire** is demonstrated as an infographic.

THINK: *“Learners ask questions rooted in prior knowledge and curiosity”* (AASL 2017b).

- Why is it important to include LGBTQ+ materials in your school library?
- What do you know about developing and including LGBTQ+ materials in the library? What would you like to know?
- What do you know about protecting intellectual freedom in the library? What would you like to know?
- What are your biases, fears, and concerns as you think about creating a diverse collection?
- How can you address your biases, fears, and concerns?
- Why do school librarians self-censor their own collections?

Suggested Activities:

- Brainstorm any personal associations and/or questions you have with the following phrases: Intellectual freedom, LGBTQ+, LGBTQ+ and school libraries.
- Examine your potential biases by taking the [Harvard-based Project Implicit Test \(2011\)](#). Choose "Sexuality" in the menu. Another option is to take the "[Personal Self-Assessment of Anti-Bias Behavior](#)" created by the Anti-Defamation League (2007).
- Create a KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) chart to explore your learning and inquiries as you begin to think about LGBTQ+ materials and intellectual freedom (see [Appendix A](#)). What do you know? What would you like to know? What falls outside your comfort zone? What are the essential elements and practices of a collection-development policy that will help you defend LGBTQ+ materials?

CREATE: "Learners strive to make meaning and create new knowledge using an inquiry process" (AASL 2017b).

Investigate any of the questions you may have created above, focusing first on the questions that interest you most. Follow up by investigating the questions that make you feel most uncomfortable. If you don't know where to begin your research about these issues, start by reading any of the following:

[National Coalition Against Censorship's "LGBTQ+ Right to Read Resource Guide" \(2018\)](#)

[Shannon Oltman's Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults blog post "'They Kind of Rely on the Library': School Librarians Serving LGBTQ+ Students" \(2016\)](#)

[Andrea Swenson's libguide of LGBTQ+ resources \(2018\)](#)

ALA's ["The Freedom to Read Statement" \(2004\)](#)

ALA's ["Library Bill of Rights" \(2017\)](#)

ALA's ["Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights" \(2018\)](#)

ALA's ["Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors" \(2017\)](#)

ALA's ["Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, or Sexual Orientation"](#)

ALA's ["Advocating for Intellectual Freedom: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights"](#)

ALA's ["Diversity in Collection Development" \(2014b\)](#)

ALA's ["Equity, Diversity, Inclusion: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" \(2017\)](#)

ALA's ["Evaluating Library Collections: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" \(2008\)](#)

Suggested Activity: Make a new KWL chart or build on the one created in the last Domain. What did you learn? What are your learning gaps about this topic? What could be your sustainable plan to find out more? Write or draw your plan.

SHARE: "Learners share design, solutions, and evidence with peers and authentic audiences" (AASL 2017b).

Suggested Activity: Make a list of stakeholders, peers, and potential networks with whom you could share your findings. E-mail, tweet, or message one of the authors or resources you connected with or had the most questions about. If the article you read has a forum, share your comments. Find a peer who wants to grow in their ability to defend against challenges or develop their knowledge of LGBTQ+ materials.

GROW: "Learners make personal questions by engaging in an iterative inquiry process and reflecting on their learning" (AASL 2017b).

What is a sustainable learning path to stay aware of LGBTQ+ issues and how they connect with school libraries? What are the publications, social media accounts, and personalities you can follow to stay up to date about this topic? How can you put your newfound understandings into your library instruction, collections, pedagogical approach, professional associations, and district initiatives? How can you reflect on your biases and knowledge to make informed decisions about your collection development and defend against possible challenges?

Suggested Activity: After looking at your initial inquiry findings, your KWL charts, and your communications with others, develop a set of Thin and Thick

Questions (see [Appendix B](#)). Thin questions are questions that could be answered with a quick search; Thick questions may take multiple sources and may not have a direct answer.



Include

Key Commitment: *“Demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community”* (AASL, 2018a, 76).

Every child finds something different within the pages of a book. Some see magical worlds, others see themselves, and still others find an escape from the world around them. Yet, in some school libraries full of books, there are children who struggle to find a book that reflects their life and reality. Dr. Rudine Bishop says in her article, *Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors*, “When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part.” (1990)

Even children who find themselves reflected in the books they read still need to be challenged to reach beyond their own reality. This is one of the reasons why celebrated author Gene Luen Yang, in his role as the National Ambassador of Young People’s Literature, issued a challenge: Read a book about a character who doesn’t look like you (2016). Reading books from different perspectives helps build empathy and compassion as children develop.

As we look at the LGBTQ+ community, it is important to ask what school librarians know about diversity and why it is important. Begin by asking yourself, how can I support children who feel different, even if they seem to blend into society? How can I provide them with books that reflect their truth, while expanding the horizons of their peers?

Click [here](#) to see how **Include** is demonstrated as an infographic.

THINK: *“Learners appreciate the value of and critically analyze the merits of different perspectives”* (AASL 2017c).

Consider the current culture within your library and surrounding community. By thinking critically about the questions below, you can begin to build a foundation of your school library's inclusiveness upon which to build.

- How do you think about diversity?
- Does your library or school have a policy on inclusion and diversity?
- How much do you know about the LGBTQ+ community?
- Why would it be important for kids to see themselves in literature?
- Why would it be important for kids to see kids from different walks of life positively represented?
- How much do you think about the concept of the #OwnVoices movement in the publishing industry? If you are unfamiliar with the term #OwnVoices—titles that are authored by members of the marginalized communities centered in the novels or texts—coined by author Corinne Duyvis, get up to speed with this [#OwnVoices FAQ](#) on Corinne's website (n.d.).
- What do you think the makeup of the publishing industry is?

Suggested Activities:

- Watch "[The Danger of a Single Story](#)" TED Talk with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009)
- Watch "[Why We Need Diverse Books](#)" with John Green (2014)
- Read the Human Rights Campaign "[Glossary of Terms](#)" (n.d.). Reflect on any new terminology you learn.
- Review "[Where Is the Diversity in Publishing?](#)" the 2015 diversity baseline survey results (Low 2016)
- Review "[Serving Everyone: Welcoming the LGBT Community](#)" from the ALA (Symons & Freeman 2015)

CREATE: "Learners deepen their understandings as they identify with the stories, thinking, and experiences of others" (AASL 2017c).

Reflect and ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you work to ally yourself with LGBTQ+ learners?
- Is your library a space where a range of gender identities and orientations are seen and welcome?

- Do you have enough LGBTQ+-inclusive books and authors in your collection to seamlessly include in displays—whether those displays are on books with red covers, summer books, science-fiction, or any genre/topic?

Suggested Activities: After reading the *Library Journal* article above, think of your library space. Is it conducive and welcoming to LGBTQ+ learners?

- GLSEN's "[Libraries as Safe Spaces](#)" (n.d.)
- Scholastic's "[Create Inclusive, Affirming Schools for LGBTQ Students](#)" (DePasquale 2017)
- *Library Journal*'s "[LGBTQ & You: How to Support Your Students](#)" (Barack 2014)

SHARE: "Learners respectfully communicate thoughts and ideas while listening to others who have contrasting points of view" (AASL 2017c).

The American Library Association's "[Strategic Plan for Diversity](#)" (2011). While the "Strategic Plan for Diversity" is intended for a diverse and inclusive ALA, it can also be used as a way to think about the importance of building an inclusive collection and the stakeholders involved.

Find allies in your community and in your school. "[Teen & Student Allies](#)" from GLAAD, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (n.d.)

Explore your local PFLAG, the nation's largest organization for families and allies of LGBTQ+ people: [Local Chapters](#) and [Mission](#) (2018)

Suggested Activity: Create a list of allies in your school and community. Think about learners and staff with whom you could share this list. Now think about who your allies on a national level might be. For starters, think about what resources your state library association might provide, as well as the ALA and the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom.

GROW: “Learners seek opportunities to learn about others’ differing experiences and opinions” (AASL 2017c).

Learn how to increase your diversity and become an advocate for LGBTQ+ learners and allies. Improving your diversity IQ will not only help LGBTQ+ learners, but it will also help other learners within your school library. Our students are situated within a global, diverse society and being comfortable in this reality is a key component of 21st Century Learning.

Suggested Activities:

- Watch the [“Improving Your Diversity IQ” TEDx Talks video](#) (Melville 2015)
- Explore the [It Gets Better Project](#) website for different perspectives from LGBTQ+ youth (n.d.)
- Read the *Knowledge Quest* blog post [“How to Become a LGBTQ+ Ally”](#) (Gaffney 2017)

After you finish the readings and activities, re-ask yourself the questions from the “Think” section. How have you have increased your awareness of LGBTQ+ issues?



Collaborate

Key Commitment: *“Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals”* (AASL, 2018a, 84).

The third Shared Foundation—Collaborate—is a commitment to work with others to broaden perspectives and is at the heart of the school librarian position. By cultivating relationships, school librarians share resources, deliver instructional content, and advocate for the literacy of their learners.

The **Collaborate** Shared Foundation is a crucial component to examining LGBTQ+ materials as they relate to intellectual freedom, as school librarians are not alone—and should not be alone—in this effort. By collaborating with community and school partners who are LGBTQ+ inclusive, school librarians can deepen their own knowledge and understanding of issues related to building a strong LGBTQ+ collection and creating more-inclusive instructional practices. Leveraging a greater awareness of these issues allows librarians to then collaborate with school staff to embed content into the curriculum, create better supports for their learners, and build a more-inclusive school climate.

Click [here](#) to see how **Collaborate** is demonstrated as an infographic.

THINK: *“Learners deepen understandings and solve problems more effectively when they work together”* (AASL 2017d).

As you seek to deepen your thinking about defending intellectual freedom as it relates to your LGBTQ+ resources and inclusive instructional practices using the Collaborate lens, consider the following questions:

- Who can be identified as possible partners—both within the school and in the greater community—to broaden understandings of LGBTQ+ issues for librarians, fellow educators, and learners?

- How can collaboration with school and community partners be leveraged to build a stronger LGBTQ+ collection for the benefit of all learners?
- How can you collaborate with teachers to embed LGBTQ+ issues into the curriculum?
- How can you work to ensure your collection, library, and instructional practices fit within an inclusive framework so learners who identify as LGBTQ+ view the library as a welcoming and brave school space?

Suggested Activities:

- Conduct a community assessment that specifically identifies resources related to LGBTQ+ issues that are available for LGBTQ+ learners. Visit the [GLBT's National Resource Database](#) to help find resources in your area.
- Examine your own professional learning network—including educators, librarians, scholars, and authors you read, listen to, or follow. How diverse—in terms of stated LGBTQ+ identity—is your personal learning network (PLN)?
- Assess your own school climate by surveying both learners and teachers using *Teaching Tolerance's* "[School Climate Questionnaire](#)."

CREATE: "Learners use a variety of communication tools and resources to articulate their thoughts, negotiate meaning, and integrate new ideas into their thinking" (AASL 2017d).

By taking advantage of LGBTQ+ resources in our schools and the greater community, we strengthen our collaborative practices and our library practices for all learners.

Suggested Activities:

- Work with school personnel to create and/or ratify your library's collection development plan, which should include language about the importance of intellectual freedom, the value of diverse literature for all learners, and the procedures for responding to challenges. (*Additional information on collection development policies is available in the "Curate" (p. 18), "Explore" (p. 26) and "Engage" (p. 30) sections.*)
- Determine whether your school has a genders and sexualities alliance (GSA). If it does, offer your support by becoming involved. If there is no GSA at your

school, consider working with learners to create one. The [GSA Network](#) and [GLSEN](#) have a wealth of resources related to beginning and maintaining a GSA. Basic steps are outlined in *Teaching Tolerance's "Ten Tips for Starting a GSA"* (2009).

- Create an inclusive PLN by identifying LGBTQ+ networks, educators, and authors to follow. The following resources can help:
 - [GLSEN \(Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network\)](#) and [GLSEN Research](#)
 - [Safe Schools Coalition](#)
 - [Teaching Tolerance](#)
 - [I'm Here. I'm Queer. What the Hell Do I Read?](#)
 - [ALA's Gay Lesbian Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table](#), including [Book and Media Reviews](#)
 - [Rainbow Book List](#)
 - [Welcoming Schools](#) (tailored to elementary libraries)
 - [LGBTQ+ Reads](#)
 - [GayYA.org](#)
 - [LGBTQ+-tagged posts on the YALSA Blog](#)

SHARE: "Learners solicit and respond to feedback, think flexibly, and seek diverse perspectives when solving problems" (AASL 2017d).

By sharing LGBTQ+ literature, resources, and tools with fellow educators in your school, you can work to create a more-inclusive school climate—including in your own library. This sharing and inclusion of diverse perspectives is then modeled for your learners.

Suggested Activities:

- Identify #OwnVoices authors who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community—and their novels—to include in literature circles, displays, readers' advisory, and book talks. (*Additional information on #OwnVoices and LGBTQ+ literature is available in the "Curate" section.*)
- Identify lesson ideas that you could use when collaborating with teachers to build a more-inclusive curriculum.

- [Teaching Tolerance has identified more than 60 lessons on their website](#) that specifically focus on sexual identity and gender issues (n.d.). Two are illustrated below to illustrate the variety:
 - [“Art and LGBT Rights: Study of Symbols.”](#) This lesson explores symbols as a type of art and focuses explicitly on the way symbols have been used to advance LGBTQ+ visibility and awareness of fights for LGBTQ+ rights. Grade level: K–2, 3–5.
 - [“Challenging Gender Stereotyping and Homophobia in Sports.”](#) This lesson discusses common characteristics and stereotypes that are associated with athletes. Grade level: 6–8, 9–12.
- [GSA Network’s “FAIR Education Act: LGBTQ+ Inclusive Lessons and Activities”](#)
 - This resource contains an annotated list of lessons built around inclusive films and documentaries.
- Collaborate with administration or district personnel to identify professional development activities for school librarians and other school staff to grow in your capacity and learning as you support your LGBTQ+ learners. [Welcoming Schools](#) has a listing of [example PD modules](#).
- Identify specific ways to respond to hate and bias at school by reviewing resources and being intentional and consistent about responding. The following resources can be helpful:
 - [“Responding to Hate and Bias at School”](#) from *Teaching Tolerance*
 - [“Speak Up at School: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias, and Stereotypes”](#) from *Teaching Tolerance*

GROW: “Learners learn with and from others by contributing to discussions and making meaning together” (AASL 2017d).

Learning from and with your collaborative partners enables your LGBTQ+ library practice to grow and better support all your learners.

Suggested Activities:

- Collaborate with administration, your school’s equity team, and/or leadership team to be intentional about creating an inclusive school climate. Resources to help:

- [“Creating an LGBT-inclusive School Climate”](#) from *Teaching Tolerance*
- [“Common Roadblocks: Some Individuals May Hesitate about Adopting Practices or Policies that Advance Equality and Safety for LGBTQ+ Students”](#) from *Teaching Tolerance*
- [“Building Support for Schools that Openly Affirm the Diversity of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity—A Communications and Community Organizing Guide”](#) from Groundspark.org (n.d.)
- [“Creating Safe Space for GLBTQ Youth: A Toolkit”](#) from Advocates for Youth
- [“Open to All: Serving the GLBT Community in Your Library,”](#) a toolkit from ALA’s GLBT Round Table
- [“Six Ways to Stand Behind Your LGBTQ+ Students”](#) from *Teaching Tolerance*
- [“GLSEN Safe Space Kit: Be an Ally to LGBTQ+ Youth!”](#) (n.d.)
- [“Tips for Making Classrooms Safer for Youth with LGBT Parents”](#) from COLAGE (an organization for people with parents or caregivers who identify as LGBTQ+)
- Utilize your expanded PLN—with identified groups and individuals who are LGBTQ+ inclusive—to continue to grow and learn. Join the conversation to help safeguard both your LGBTQ+ collections—and your learners!



Curate

Key commitment: *“Make meaning for oneself and others by collecting, organizing, and sharing resources of personal relevance” (AASL, 2018a, 93).*

The fourth Shared Foundation in the AASL *National School Library Standards*, Curate, is a commitment to meaningful curation through “collecting, organizing, and sharing resources” (AASL 2018a, 93). The LGBTQ+ learners present in every school have the same rights of equitable access to information as all learners, yet school library collections lag behind in representing these stories and issues in their collections at all age ranges (Hughes-Hassell 2013). Not only will LGBTQ+ learners benefit from seeing themselves reflected in their school’s library books and resources, non-LGBTQ+ learners can also benefit from exposure to diverse ways of being (Gartley 2015).

Creating a diverse collection that includes LGBTQ+ titles can be a source of anxiety for school librarians due to their concerns about facing challenges or complaints about these materials; this is particularly true in elementary and middle school settings. There are key ways that librarians can use their collection development policies and procedures to create supports for the LGBTQ+ materials in their collection. By including LGBTQ+-specific selection aids in the collection development policy and compiling support documentation for titles susceptible to challenges school librarians can curate more diverse, inclusive collections that benefit all learners. Anonymous learner input can be an important addition to the evidence for continued inclusion of titles in the collection in the event of a complaint or challenge.

Your well-curated collection of LGBTQ+ materials can be shared with learners in a variety of ways that do not require learners to out themselves. However, curating and sharing LGBTQ+ materials requires constant upkeep. Your collection will need to be regularly audited, and titles will need to be removed or added based on learner input and new information. As new awards and sources of professional reviews are created, your collection development policy will need to be updated to reflect these changes. In order to stay abreast of developing issues in the world of LGBTQ+ literature for youth, it is a good policy to regularly check several reliable sources of book reviews and other LGBTQ+ publications.

Click [here](#) to see **Curate** described in an infographic.

THINK: *“Learners find, evaluate and select information sources in response to an information need” (AASL 2017e).*

- Are you collecting LGBTQ+ titles that reflect a wide range of gender identities and experiences, or are you self-censoring these titles out of fear of retaliation from administration or other community members?
- How well does your collection development policy support the inclusion of LGBTQ+ titles in your school library?
- How can you collect learner opinions about titles to use for future collection development and as support documentation for inclusion of those titles?
- How do learners determine which titles in your collection are LGBTQ+ titles?
- Look at your current displays. Are titles featuring LGBTQ+ characters a natural part of your shelf and wall displays?

Suggested Activities:

- Perform a diversity audit of your collection to establish a baseline for collecting LGBTQ+ titles. How many do you have? What percentage of your collection do those titles account for? A great place to begin your audit is [Diversity Considerations in YA: Doing a Diversity Audit](#), a document by Karen Jensen, creator of the professional development website Teen Librarian Toolbox (2017). This [episode of the Books Between podcast](#) also covers conducting a diversity audit (Allen 2017). While the podcast is framed around auditing a collection for racial diversity, much of the information is also applicable to performing an LGBTQ+ diversity audit. While conducting a diversity audit of your collection can be intensive and time consuming, it is an important step in evaluating gaps and underrepresented areas.
- Leave a blank sticky note in LGBTQ+ titles so readers can share their thoughts anonymously. These comments can serve as supporting evidence for potential challenges. Remove the sticky notes when the books are checked back in and keep a spreadsheet of student commentary to add to support documentation in the event of a challenge.

CREATE: “Learners add value to a collection of resources by organizing and annotating them” (AASL 2017e).

Self-Censorship and Creating Great Collections

A recent study by April M. Dawkins found that 47 percent of school librarians were at least somewhat uncomfortable with collecting LGBTQ+ materials for their school collections, and that 58 percent of the same group of librarians felt that their principals would be uncomfortable with including LGBTQ+ selections (2017, 70). This discomfort can translate into a reluctance to collect materials with LGBTQ+ characters or feature LGBTQ+ stories and issues. In fact, a 2013 study showed that LGBTQ+ materials accounted for an average of only 0.4 percent of school library collections, despite research that suggests that 3–29 percent of learners may identify as LGBTQ+ (Hughes-Hassell, Overberg, and Harris 2013, 1; Horton 2017, 20).

However, as is pointed out in ALA’s [“Diversity in Collection Development: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights,”](#) “failure to select resources merely because they may be potentially controversial is censorship, as is withdrawing resources for the same reason,” and professional library ethics dictate that librarians collect materials for all members of our communities “according to

“BUILDING A HIGH-QUALITY LIBRARY COLLECTION IS AN INTENSELY PERSONAL ENDEAVOR, REQUIRING LIBRARIANS TO THINK DEEPLY ABOUT THEMSELVES AND THEIR LIBRARY COMMUNITIES” (ALTOBELLI 2017, 12).

professional standards and established selection and review procedures (ALA 2014). More about the professional ethics of librarians to not allow their personal beliefs or opinions to influence selection of library materials can be found in the [“Access to Resources and Services in the School Library”](#) and [“Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion”](#) interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights (ALA 2014a; ALA 2017b).

There are a wealth of resources available online to help librarians collect LGBTQ+ materials for their communities, such as the [We Need Diverse Books](#) website, the [Queer Books for Teens](#) database, the annual [Rainbow Book List](#), and [GayYA.org](#). A [2014 article from School Library Journal](#) contains many resources to help with discovery and selection of LGBTQ+ YA books; many of these resources are also

applicable to collecting LGBTQ+ titles for younger learners as well (MacGregor 2014). All of these sites also link to resources to learn about LGBTQ+ books that you may want to include in your collection. For more information about how to avoid harmful stereotypes in the titles you collect, look at the 2013 edition of the [“Standards for Evaluation of Instructional Materials with Respect to Social Content”](#) created by the California State Department of Education. These standards have information about choosing quality materials with “sexual orientation and gender identity” themes (2013). The shorter document [“10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Racism and Sexism,”](#) also produced by the California Department of Education, focuses mostly on gender differences and racial diversity, but many of the points made are applicable to LGBTQ+ materials as well (1998).

When collecting materials for your library, don’t forget to select plenty of nonfiction titles as well. The same 2013 study that found that school library collections contained only 0.4 percent LGBTQ+ titles also found that there were more fiction titles than biographical and nonfiction materials combined. A 2004 study found that “teens valued finding LGBTQ+ informational resources in the library over fiction” (Hughes-Hassell, Overberg, and Harris 2013; Gartley 2015).

Collection Development Policy Review

The best means of defense against intellectual freedom challenges in your school library is a well-developed, frequently updated collection development policy that includes reasoning and specific resources used to choose LGBTQ+ materials for your collection. As noted in Philippa Peall’s [2017 article “Diverse Books in School Libraries,”](#) books containing LGBTQ+ characters and stories often are not selected for historically “prestigious prize lists that librarians often rely on when choosing stock,” so including selection aids specifically focused on LGBTQ+ books in the collection development policy can help librarians justify the selection and purchase of these titles (2017). The following list of LGBTQ+ awards, selected lists, and review sources is not exhaustive, but it is a good starting place for gathering selection aids to list in your collection development policy. Reviews from standard trade publications are also important in creating support documentation for challenges, and those resources should be specifically named in your collection development policy as well.

- a. [Lambda Literary reviews](#) (for YA titles)
- b. [The Lammy’s](#) (Lambda Literary Awards, Children’s/Young Adult category)

- c. [Stonewall Book Award Winners and Honor Titles](#) (all ages)
- d. [Rainbow Book Lists](#) (all ages)

Learner Feedback

Statements from learners can be paired with positive professional reviews to support keeping a title during a formal challenge procedure; these statements also allow learners to have some ownership of the collection. While professional reviews can be a great support in the event of a challenge, anonymous personal statements from learners can also be a great piece of evidence for the continued inclusion of a title in the collection.

Suggested Activities:

- Begin a spreadsheet with positive (anonymous) learner comments about LGBTQ+ titles to use as support in the event of a challenge.
- Select an LGBTQ+ title from your collection and research reviews, award/list mentions, and best-seller information. Create a template document for curating support data for titles that you suspect may be challenged. Include professional reviews, reader reviews, and learner commentary, as well as award and selected list information.

SHARE: "Learners develop their own personal resource collections and exchange organized information sets with others" (AASL 2017e).

Readers' Advisory

In her 2017 article "Creating Space for Agency: Representing LGBTQ Perspectives in the Library Helps Future-Ready Students Chart Their Own Paths," Rachel Altobelli states, "if I had walked into my middle school library or high school library and seen all the LGBTQ+-themed books shelved together, perhaps with a helpful rainbow sign, I would have walked right out of that library and never returned" (p. 13). Because all-LGBTQ+ displays may create discomfort for learners who do not wish to publicly self-identify, every book display in the school library should include diverse books, including LGBTQ+ titles. This will ensure that learners see themselves on their library shelves and walls, and that non-LGBTQ+ students have access to books that represent the world around

them. LGBTQ+ titles should also be included in readers' advisory recommendations for all readers, not just when they are requested.

There are many subtle ways to let students know that LGBTQ+ books are available in the library. Librarians can create online displays on the school library's website or blog, create brochures or pamphlets with annotated reading lists, design bookmarks that feature several LGBTQ+ titles for a certain age range or related to a particular issue, or create flowcharts that include the LGBTQ+ titles in the library's collection. Microsoft Office offers a free bookmark template for Word, and Microsoft Publisher offers several templates for creating brochures that are simple to edit and design. A flowchart that can be filled out with titles currently in your school library collection is available in [Appendix D](#), along with a completed example in [Appendix C](#). Once these materials have been initially created and designed, it is easy to update them when new materials are purchased.

Cataloging

Cataloging standards have long neglected to properly note LGBTQ+ titles, making it difficult for learners to find these materials in a library's catalog. Learners who may not want to ask about LGBTQ+ materials will not be able to easily identify these materials without special cataloging rules. The Yale University Library [recommend adding a 690 tag](#) to the MARC record for all LGBTQ+-

related materials to make them easily searchable in the online catalog (2007). For an in-depth look at this issue, read "[Classifying Identity: Organizing an LGBT Library](#)" by Kristine Nowak and Amy Jo Mitchell, librarians for the Gay and Lesbian Services Organization in Lexington, KY (2016).

"THESE BOOKS ARE ABOUT THE WORLD OF EVERY TEEN, REGARDLESS OF HIS OR HER SEXUALITY" (HORTON 2017, 22).

Further Than the Library

There are two ways that school librarians can encourage the broad use of LGBTQ+ titles outside the school library: recommending these titles to teachers for inclusion in classroom curricula and offering these titles as book club selections within their school (Horton 2017). (*Additional information on classroom instruction is contained in the "Collaborate" section.*) Including these books in the curriculum as well as book displays, reading lists, and book clubs for

all learners helps remove the stigma and “othering” that can surround books about LGBTQ+ people (Horton 2017).

Suggested Activities:

- Check cataloging metadata for LGBTQ+ titles in your collection. Are they clearly marked as LGBTQ+ titles? Can learners search for LGBTQ+ titles specifically? If not, add 690 tags or specific subject headings to all LGBTQ+ materials to make them more easily findable for learners.
- For high school librarians: Use the blank sample flowchart in [Appendix D](#) and fill in LGBTQ+ materials from your collection. For elementary and/or middle school librarians: Use a bookmark template to create a topical bookmark featuring some LGBTQ+ titles that are available in your library. Some ideas for topics include books about families, magic-themed books, or books about being true to yourself.

GROW: “Learners reflect on and revise their information sets in an iterative process” (AASL 2017e).

Collection Development Policy

Even a great collection development policy will need to be revisited and updated regularly as new awards and selected lists are created and new sources of reviews become available. These lists and resources will need to be included in the collection development policy to add weight as supporting documentation for retaining a title in the collection. Have your library advisory committee review the collection development policy at least once a year.

Repeated Diversity Audits

LGBTQ+ titles added to the collection will need to be weeded and replaced like any other type of book. Self-censorship will likewise not be reversed with one book order; this is something that school librarians will need to continue to pay attention to for the long term. Regular diversity audits can help ensure that librarians are collecting materials equitably, and that proper consideration is being given to collecting LGBTQ+ materials.

Stay Up-to-Date

When a parent challenged the use of Brent Hartinger's 2005 book *Geography Club* in an 8th-grade class syllabus, librarian Kim Tyo-Dickerson was ready with a suggestion. In a survey conducted for this resource guide, Kim noted "I quickly recommended *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, with all the awards all over the front cover!" She explained that replacing *Geography Club* with *Aristotle and Dante* "addressed all of the stated objections the parents had" (AASL 2018b). Curating a strong LGBTQ+ component in a library collection is an ongoing process, and librarians who are up-to-date on current titles in the field can improve the educational options for the learners in their schools.

Keep in mind that great reviews in trade publications can occasionally be deceiving; sometimes problematic elements can be overlooked. Positive reviews in professional publications do not mean titles contain accurate representations. Books that contain harmful stereotypes and incorrect information are a poor choice for continued inclusion in a school library collection. It is important to factor in learner feedback and opinions from members of the LGBTQ+ community about titles that deal with LGBTQ+ characters, stories, and issues. Keep an eye open for mention of problematic titles and challenges to titles you have in your collection as well as how those challenges were resolved.

Suggested Activities:

- Create a blog roll or a bookmarks folder in your web browser that contains some of the review sites and blogs you have come across in this resource guide. Regularly check these websites to stay abreast of LGBTQ+ issues, new book releases, discussions of problematic content in published titles, etc.
- Ensure that your PLN includes LGBTQ+-inclusive authors, reviewers, and educators.



Explore

Key Commitment: *“Discover and Innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection” (AASL 2018a, 104).*

The fifth Shared Foundation explored in the *National School Library Standards* is Explore. This Shared Foundation encourages learners to “have a growth mindset and develop the habit of lifelong learning” (AASL 2017f). In this Shared Foundation, the focus is on exploring your own biases, engaging with a wider community, and reflecting on your collections and their development.

Explore represents a commitment to helping learners develop a growth mindset, which is crucial for overcoming adversity (Hochanadel and Finamore 2015, 47). In order to foster growth mindsets in learners, educators must also model a growth mindset—not just in words, but in actions as well (Dweck 2015, 20–24). Studying one’s own biases is an excellent way to begin the growth processes.

In **Curate**, collection audits were introduced as a way to analyze the school library’s collection and see what areas might need improvement. In this Shared Foundation, you will move on to looking at the specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of and to the collection.

A growth mindset requires not only internal reflection, but also interaction with the outside world. This Shared Foundation encourages school librarians to move outside of their current networks to gain new knowledge and perspectives.

In order to continue growing as professionals, school librarians need to look to the future of their libraries. Looking at the library’s current collection development policy and considering how it could be improved—and how to engage stakeholders—is an important part of the implementation of this Shared Foundation.

Click [here](#) to see how Explore is demonstrated as an infographic.

THINK: “Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity” (AASL 2017f).

- How can you, as a school librarian, grow by exploring your own biases?
 - What types (genre or subject) of books do you not currently read? What might you add to your reading list to expand your perspectives?
 - How can you reflect on your implicit biases?
 - How can you reflect more on your professional practices and develop your own growth mindset?

“Culturally aware teachers model how to live the core values in the Social Justice Standards. These values support a safe and inclusive approach to working with learners, colleagues, families and communities” (*Teaching Tolerance* 2016, 19).

Suggested Activities:

- Select a work from a genre you are not familiar with or one that focuses on a community you do not currently serve.
- Take [an implicit bias test](#) from Project Implicit, developed by scientists at the University of Washington, Harvard University, and the University of Virginia.
- Read an article or book about anti-bias education or intersectionality, such as:
 - [“Critical Practices for Anti-Bias Education”](#) (*Teaching Tolerance* 2016)
 - Key Concepts: Intersectionality (Collins and Bilge 2016)
- Undertake a self-reflection activity such as:
 - [Scholastic’s “Self-Assessment Checklists”](#)
- Read an article or book on the growth mindset:
 - *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (Dweck 2006)
 - [“Carol Dweck Revisits the Growth Mindset”](#) (Dweck 2015)

CREATE: “Learners construct new knowledge” (AASL 2017f).

- How can school librarians examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of their current collections, with a focus on LGBTQ+ collections?
- How can school librarians make sure that their collections are available in multiple formats and ensure that “multiple learning activities can occur in both physical and virtual spaces”? (AASL 2018a, 106)

“Less than half (42.4%) of students reported that they could find information

about LGBT-related issues in their school library.” (Kosciw et al. 2016, xx)

Suggested Activities:

- Examine your current Collection Development Policy (CDP) and apply a SWOT analysis (ALA n.d.):
 - Does your library have a CDP? Is it specific to your library, or does it apply to your school district wide?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of your current CDP?
 - What opportunities exist to improve or strengthen this CDP?
 - What other partners or stakeholders can you include in strengthening this document and its implementation?
 - What threats exist either to or because of this CDP?
 - How can you justify the inclusion of LGBTQ+ materials if they are not specifically mentioned in your CDP?
 - Do you have a challenge policy? How do your challenge policy and CDP interact? Do they use cohesive language? Is your challenge policy part of your CDP?
- Create a document that points learners to both online and physical resources for learning more about LGBTQ+ resources in your library’s available collections. Make sure that LGBTQ+-related materials are accessible from school- and library-based computers; in 2015, “just about half of students (49.1%) with Internet access at school reported being able to access LGBT-related information via school computers” (Kosciw et al. 2016, 55).

SHARE: “Learners engage with the learning community” (AASL 2017f).

- How can you as a school librarian engage with a wider community around the issues of LGBTQ+ representation in libraries?

“School communities benefit when teachers and other staff participate in professional development opportunities focused on working with LGBTQ+youth, students with disabilities, English language learners, specific racial or ethnic groups and so on. Reading and sharing professional journals, books or blogs related to anti-bias education can augment professional development” (*Teaching Tolerance* 2016, 19).

Suggested Activities:

- Research resources available for professional development around LGBTQ+ issues in libraries, either locally or nationally:

- [ALA's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table \(GLBTRT\)](#). In addition to networking and events, the ALA GLBT Round Table recently published an "Open to All" toolkit (n.d.) for serving the LGBTQ+ community in your library.
- [GLSEN](#). This organization promotes research and evidence-based policy around LGBTQ+ issues in schools. Their mission: "we want every student, in every school, to be valued and treated with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. We believe that all students deserve a safe and affirming school environment where they can learn and grow" (n.d.).
- ALA and AASL state affiliates for both.
- Research resources available to LGBTQ+ learners, parents, and allies, either locally or nationally:
 - [COLAGE](#) "COLAGE unites people with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer parents and caregivers into a network of peers and supports them as they nurture and empower each other to be skilled, self-confident, and just leaders in our collective communities" (COLAGE n.d.).
 - [PFLAG](#) "By meeting people where they are and collaborating with others, PFLAG realizes its vision through: Support for families, allies and people who are LGBTQ+; Education for ourselves and others about the unique issues and challenges facing people who are LGBTQ+; Advocacy in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ+" (n.d.).
- Give yourself time to prepare for in-depth conversations with "concerned" adults regarding specific LGBTQ+ titles or the inclusion of these materials by having a rehearsed plan and memorizing a few short statements.
 - Short statements that can be memorized are a useful tool for remaining assertive and calm when a disgruntled parent, administrator, or community member approaches the school librarian with a complaint. Combined with a challenge procedure, preparing your response in advance will help you remain calm and deal with the issue in a controlled way.
 - Having a predetermined procedure in place for dealing with parents, teachers, and administrators can remove some of the anxiety from these conversations.

GROW: “Learners develop through experience and reflection” (AASL 2017f).

- What are some tools for reflecting on the school library’s current challenged materials policy?

“OIF found that out of the 2015 Top Ten Most Frequently Challenged Books, nine of them contained diverse content. The 86 books on this list include content by or about people of color, LGBTQ+ people and/or people with disabilities” (ALA OIF 2013).

Suggested Activities:

- Know your policies and be prepared for challenges, especially to “diverse content” (such as LGBTQ+ materials)
- Determine what your current challenge policy is:
 - Who can challenge materials? Can administrators, teachers, etc. challenge materials on their own or only as community members?
 - Who makes the decisions about challenges, and how are the decisions communicated? How can the person putting the challenge forward feel listened to regardless of the decision?
- Determine who the stakeholders are for the current policy? Was it developed and approved by administrators, or with input from a professional organization?
- Are you one of the 19 percent of school libraries (LaRue 2016) who do not have a challenge policy? Ask yourself whether any existing policy needs to be evaluated or better communicated to stakeholders.
 - Check out ALA’s [“Answering Questions about Youth and Access to Library Resources”](#) (ALA 2017c)
 - If you do not currently have a challenge policy, here are some resources for developing one:
 - [“Be Prepared with a Challenged Materials Policy”](#) from Public Libraries Online
 - [“Sample Request for Reconsideration of Library Resources”](#) from ALA
 - [“Challenge Support”](#) from ALA



Engage

Key Commitment: *“Demonstrate safe, legal, and ethical creating and sharing of knowledge products independently while engaging in a community of practice and an interconnected world” (AASL 2018b, 112–13).*

The AASL *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* define a commitment to engagement as creating and sharing knowledge independently and within a learning community legally and ethically (AASL 2018b, 112–13). This translates most directly as an understanding of intellectual freedom, right to privacy, issues of intellectual and physical access, and information literacy. However, engagement also means engaging with the materials in your collection, asking the tough questions, and being proactive when it comes to censorship by having an up-to-date collection development policy that has stakeholder buy-in. In the context of this guide, **Engage** means knowing how to utilize the provided resources to answer any challenges that come your way and then sharing your experiences with other professionals in the field.

Click [here](#) to see **Engage** explained through an infographic.

THINK: “The school library serves as a context in which the school librarian ensures that the school community is aware of the guidelines for safe, ethical, and legal use of information” (AASL 2017g).

The first step in assisting learners in thinking critically and engaging with materials in an ethical manner is to have a shared understanding of how ALA, AASL, and other organizations define key terms. Armed with this knowledge, school librarians can focus on the essential questions about the materials in their collections—especially those they might be called upon to defend.

Information literacy: According to the Association of College and Research Libraries, information literacy is “the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning” (2015). School librarians are charged with creating critical thinkers who are capable of grappling with the wide array of information that’s constantly coming their way. In order to meet this goal, learners must have access to a wide range of materials they need to grow and develop.

Intellectual freedom: ALA defines intellectual freedom as “the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restrictions” (2007). In opposition to the compulsory nature of the classroom, school libraries serve as a voluntary access point to information and ideas. In addition to collaborating and co-teaching, school librarians also uphold the ALA’s [Library Bill of Rights](#) by providing learners with unfettered access to the information they need to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. ALA’s [Office for Intellectual Freedom](#) (OIF) is an invaluable resource in safeguarding learners’ right to access materials. The OIF offers confidential support to anyone dealing with challenges to their collection or services as well as free consultations in implementing best practices and preparing for potential challenges.

Right to privacy: Just as learners have the right to seek and receive information without restrictions, learners also must be granted the right to keep their topics of inquiry private. Without this assurance of confidentiality, learners cannot be entirely comfortable accessing all the materials within the school library collection. Both ALA and AASL affirm the importance of privacy within the library setting. In their “[Position Statement on the Confidentiality of Library Records](#),” AASL asserts that young people have the same rights to privacy as adults and urges school librarians to adhere to the tenets set forth in the [ALA Policy on Confidentiality of Library Records](#), ALA’s [Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#), and the [ALA Code of Ethics](#) (AASL 2012).

Intellectual and physical access: In *Protecting Intellectual Freedom in Your School Library: Scenarios from the Front Lines*, Pat R. Scales defines intellectual access as “the right to read, receive, and express ideas and the right to acquire skills to seek out, explore, and examine ideas,” and physical access as “being able to locate and retrieve information unimpeded by fees, age limits, separate collections, and other restrictions” (2009, 9). True intellectual freedom involves

both forms of access. Learners and educators must have access to materials that meet individual learning needs, abilities, and styles; provide background information to supplement classroom learning; and provide a broad range of views on issues ranging from sex and sexuality to politics and religion.

Suggested Activities:

- Keeping in mind the rights of your learners and your responsibility to uphold those rights, consider the LGBTQ+ materials currently in your collection. While examining your collection, ask yourself the following questions:
 - What do you know about the authors behind these works?
 - How accurate is their portrayal of the characters and information they handle?
 - Have the materials been reviewed? What awards have they been given?
 - What challenges have they faced in other libraries' collections?
 - How can this information help you assess your collection and future acquisitions?
 - How can knowing the answers to these questions help you defend those materials if you should ever need to do so?
- Use the checklist provided in the *National School Library Standards* to evaluate the current state of your school library in terms of effectively meeting short- and long-term learner needs and goals. The checklist for the Engage Shared Foundation can be found on pages 179–180.

CREATE: "The school library supports ethical processes for information seeking and use by providing an environment in which all members of the school community can work together to develop, approve, and engage in clearly stated use policies to guide acceptable and ethical use of information, technology, and media" (AASL 2017g).

One of the most important ways to safeguard your LGBTQ+-inclusive collection is by having a collection development policy that not only supports your collection, but also addresses the rights of your learners. Your collection

development policy should meet the goals and objectives set forth by your school district as well as current standards within the profession. It should consider laws, trends, and socioeconomic/cultural developments impacting your community. This is an iterative process of assessment and improvement. School librarians who successfully create welcoming spaces continually take into consideration the effect that their physical space, collection, and instruction are having on learners and their success. (*More information about collection development policies can be found in the “Curate” section.*)

A key component in this process is involving all stakeholders. Those who encounter your collection, either directly (learners and teachers) or indirectly (administration and district personnel), should fully understand and be aware of the policies and procedures for handling challenges to materials and the reason for including the materials in the collection. That way, you create a network of allies in defending the right to access. Having this network in place before challenges occur is important not only for ensuring positive outcomes to challenge situations but also for your mental and emotional well-being.

Suggested Activities:

- Put together a display that encourages learners to engage with issues of censorship, intellectual freedom, information literacy, and/or intellectual and physical access. For some inspiration, check out:
 - [ALA’s Display Ideas for Banned Books Week](#)
 - [Renovated Learning’s whiteboard discussion questions](#)
 - [Programming Librarian’s “Banned Books Week 4 Teens” blog post](#)
- During Banned Books Week and Banned Websites Awareness Day, create activities designed to engage learners with these topics and raise awareness of learner rights. Include LGBTQ+ issues in these activities and discussions.
- Create professional development materials—or seek out opportunities for such PD—for your library staff and/or the teachers at your school to help them understand learners’ rights to intellectual and physical access and your collection development and challenge policies.

SHARE: “The school library encourages participation in a diverse learning community to create and share information by providing a context in which the school librarian can model for learners, other educators, and administrators multiple strategies to locate, evaluate, and ethically use information for specific purposes” (AASL 2017g).

In order to most effectively share information—whether it be policies and procedures, resources and services, or the materials within your collection—the people with whom you’re sharing must be able to access that information both physically and intellectually. This not only means having appropriate resources available in your collection, but also making sure users are aware of how to locate and use those resources. In “Creating Space for Agency: Representing LGBTQ+ Perspectives in the Library Helps Future-Ready Students Chart Their Own Paths,” Rachel Altobelli points out that the learners who most desperately need LGBTQ+ materials “may be and remain invisible to you, but they are there, and a book on the shelf or an unblocked website has the potential to make all the difference in the world” (2017, 14).

LGBTQ+ learners are not the only ones who benefit from access to these materials, however. Every learner who enters the library is developing crucial critical thinking skills, and providing access to resources that educate them on all sides of issues—particularly sides to which they cannot personally relate—is crucial to their growth. School librarians can increase learner awareness of and access to these resources by ensuring displays always contain a diverse array of materials; learners have access to the library at times that work for them; and subjects that are underrepresented in your print collection are supplemented in other areas—such as through electronic offerings or by bringing in guest speakers.

Suggested Activities:

- Share this resource guide with others in the profession.
- Share resources with educators that will help them locate more diverse materials to support their lesson plans. (*Additional information on diverse materials and lesson planning is contained in the “Collaborate” and “Curate” sections.*)

- Find community members involved in LGBTQ+ organizations and have them share with learners and educators on topics of interest.

GROW: “The school library supports individual responsibility for information use by providing an environment in which the school librarian can effectively develop, direct, and promote resources, services, policies, procedures, and programming aligned with current standards, ethical codes, and principles of the education and information professions” (AASL 2017g).

As touched on earlier in this foundation, it is crucial that school librarians stay abreast of current practices and standards within the information and education professions as well as changes within your own community. This practice is especially important when it comes to your personal growth as the information expert within your school. The steps and ideas throughout this resource guide are part of an iterative process.

Suggested Activity:

The following scenarios are real situations experienced by school librarians in public and private institutions, serving a wide range of ages and facing challenges made by parents and caregivers, teachers and administrators, and even fellow library employees. They are designed to introduce you to the types of challenges school librarians face and get you thinking about how to utilize the information you’ve learned. For more scenarios, check out *Protecting Intellectual Freedom in Your School Library: Scenarios from the Front Lines* by Pat R. Scales.

Scenario 1: *A tenth-grade teacher at your school brings several LGBTQ+-related titles to your attention, stating the themes are inappropriate for children and that she would like them removed from the library’s collection.*

How do you respond to this teacher? What resources might you cite in support of your library’s collection?

*Scenario 2: The parent of a fourth-grade student at your school complains to the principal about the inclusion of *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier in your elementary school's collection. The principal forwards the complaint to the school's superintendent, who orders the book be removed from the library's shelves.*

Assuming your current district challenge policy involves a formal review process before books can be removed from library collections, what steps might you take to remedy this situation and/or ensure similar situations don't occur in the future?

*Scenario 3: Several parents submit a formal challenge to the inclusion of *George* by Alex Gino in your elementary school library. They cite numerous objections, claiming the book is sexually explicit, obscene, confusing, and too political.*

With your current challenge policy in mind, what do you think the outcome of this challenge would be if it occurred in your school system? Who might you contact to assist you in handling this challenge?

Appendix A: LGBTQ+ Materials and Intellectual Freedom KWL Chart

Print out or save this resource digitally to record your growth and investigations as you go through this resource guide. Feel free to add more pages as you continue this process.

| What do I already <i>know</i> about the THINK questions in each Shared Foundation section in this guide? | What do I <i>want</i> to know about the THINK questions under each Shared Foundation? What are my gaps? | What have I <i>learned</i> as a result of these resources, my investigations, and my collaborations with peers, sources, and community partners? |
|--|---|--|
| | | |

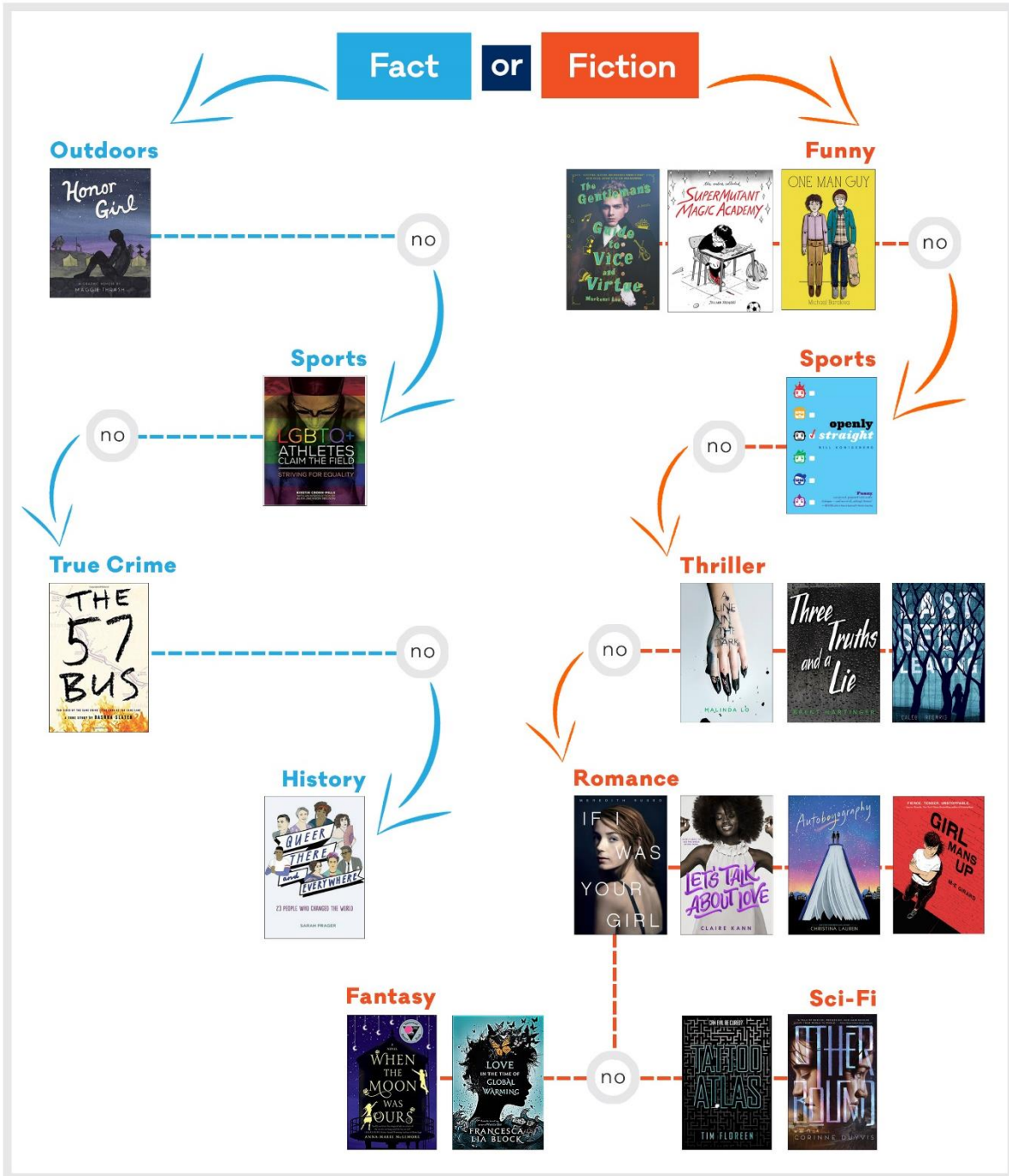
Appendix B: Thin and Thick

Questions for Reflection on Inquire

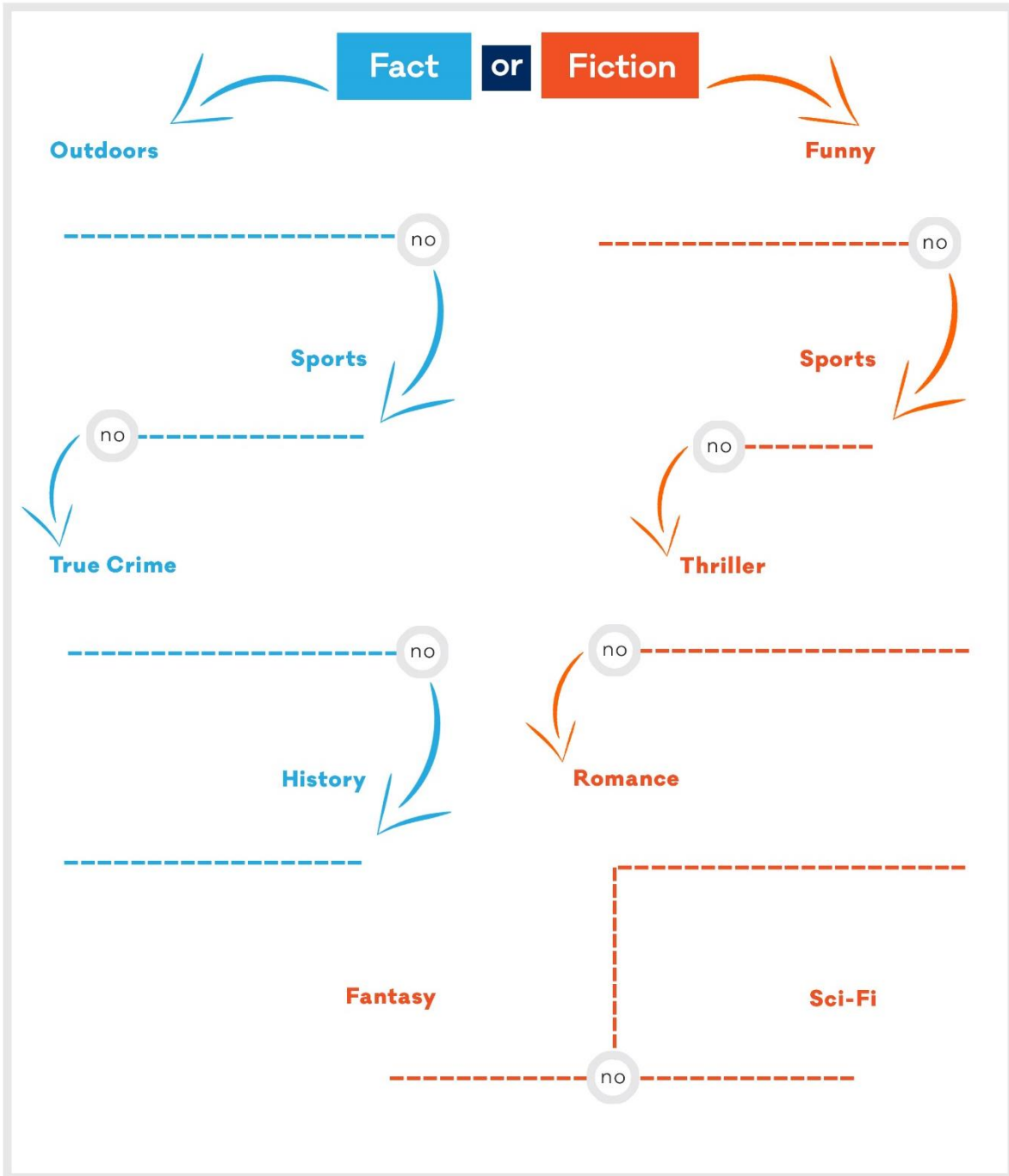
Thin Questions provide quick answers often to who, what, and when. Thick Questions may not have quick answers, may take multiple sources, and may not have one answer. Both types of questions are essential to understanding and lead to further research and learning.

| | |
|--|--|
| Example: Which books were considered for the Stonewall Awards in 2016? | Examples: What leads to challenges of LGBTQ+ materials? What is the effect of the removal of LGBTQ+ materials? |
| | |
| Plan for approaching follow-up questions: | |
| | |

Appendix C: LGBTQ+ YA Flowchart (Completed Version)



Appendix D: LGBTQ+ YA Flowchart (Blank Version)



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Appendix C: LGBTQ+ YA Flowchart (Completed Version)

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AASL Standards Framework Applied to LGBTQ+ Materials

Defending Intellectual Freedom: LGBTQ+ Materials in School Libraries, a resource guide developed by the 2018 ALA Emerging Leaders team sponsored by AASL, uses the National School Library Standards as a lens to support LGBTQ-inclusive library collections, instruction, and spaces. Use this framework application as a secondary table of contents to navigate more quickly to relevant resources, inspiration, statistics, and activities based on your specific questions and needs. To access the complete resource guide, visit www.ala.org/aasl/advocacy/tools/toolkits.

| | INQUIRE | INCLUDE | COLLABORATE | CURATE | EXPLORE | ENGAGE |
|--------|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| THINK | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you already know about LGBTQ+ materials and protecting intellectual freedom in the school library? What would you like to know? What falls outside your comfort zone? How can you address your biases, fears, and concerns? Why do librarians “self-censor” their own collections? <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a KWL (Know, Want to Know, and Learned) chart to explore as you begin to think about LGBTQ+ materials and intellectual freedom (Appendix A). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you think about diversity? Does your school or library have a policy on inclusion and diversity? Why is it important for learners to see positive representations of themselves and people from different walks of life in literature? <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch “The Danger of a Single Story” video. Watch the “Why We Need Diverse Books” video. Read the Human Rights Campaign “Glossary of Terms.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can collaboration with school and community partners be leveraged to build a stronger LGBTQ+ collection for the benefit of all learners? How can you collaborate with teachers to embed LGBTQ+ issues into the curriculum? <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community assessment. Examining our PLNs. Assessing school climate via learners and staff. | <p>Are you collecting LGBTQ+ titles that reflect a wide range of gender identities and experiences, or are you self-censoring these titles out of fear of retaliation from administration or other community members?</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at your current displays. Are titles featuring LGBTQ+ characters a natural part of your shelf and wall displays? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can school librarians explore their own biases? What might you add to your reading list to expand your perspectives? How can you reflect more on your professional practices and develop your own growth mindset? <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take an implicit bias test from Project Implicit. Read an article or book about anti-bias education or intersectionality. Undertake a self-reflection activity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are intellectual property, intellectual freedom, access, and information literacy? How does understanding these terms help you and the stakeholders in your school library appropriately engage with your collection? <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the current state of your library and collection using the questions and resources provided on page 179 of the <i>National School Library Standards</i>. |
| CREATE | <p>Investigate the questions you developed from the activities in the THINK Domain, focusing first on the questions that interest you most. Follow up by investigating the questions that make you feel most uncomfortable.</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you don’t know where to begin, start with suggested readings from the National Coalition Against Censorship, ALA’s Freedom to Read Statement, and others listed. | <p>Is your school library a space where a range of gender identities and orientations are seen and welcome?</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review several articles on creating safe, inclusive, affirming school library spaces for LGBTQ+ learners. After reading, think of your school library space. Is it conducive and welcoming to LGBTQ+ learners? | <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with school personnel to create and/or ratify your school library’s collection development plan, which should include language about the importance of intellectual freedom, the value of diverse literature for all learners, and the procedures for responding to challenges. Support (or support creating) your school’s GSA. Create an inclusive PLN, identifying LGBTQ+ networks, educators, and authors to follow. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways you can avoid self-censorship and create diverse, inclusive collections. Review your collection development policy to make sure LGBTQ+ selection aids are specifically included. <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a system for gathering learner feedback on LGBTQ+ titles to share with other learners and to support the title in the event of a challenge. Start a spreadsheet of reader feedback. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can you examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of your current collection, with focus on LGBTQ+ collections? <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine your current Collection Development Policy (CDP) Create a document that points learners to both online and physical resources for learning more about LGBTQ+ resources. | <p>Know your policies and make sure all stakeholders know them, too.</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create displays that encourage learners to engage with LGBTQ+ issues. Create activities designed to engage learners with issues of censorship during Banned Books Week Create PD to educate library staff, educators, and administration about library policies and procedures. |
| SHARE | <p>Build a network to investigate and grow your capacity to defend LGBTQ+ materials.</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a list of stakeholders, peers, and potential networks with whom you could share. Send or post your comments and questions to these organizations, networks, and discussion forums. Find a peer who wants to grow in their ability to serve their LGBTQ+ community. | <p>Do you work to ally yourself with LGBTQ+ learners?</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a list of allies in your school and community. Think about what learners and staff you could share this list with. Think about who your allies on a national level might be. For starters, what resources does your state association provide? Investigate resources from the ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom. | <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discover #OwnVoices authors who identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community—and their novels—to include in literature circles, displays, readers’ advisory, and book talks. Identify lesson plan ideas to use when collaborating with other educators to build a more-inclusive curriculum. Collaborate with administration or district personnel to identify professional development activities. Identify specific ways to respond to hate and bias at school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share LGBTQ+ titles in a way that doesn’t require learners to identify themselves. Use displays, printed readers’ advisory materials, and cataloging rules to make materials readily available. Suggest LGBTQ+ titles for use in book clubs and classroom lessons. <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review cataloging procedures. Use your collection to fill out the LGBTQ+ YA Flowchart (Appendix D) | <p>How can school librarians engage with a wider community around the issues of LGBTQ+ representation in school libraries?</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research resources available for PD around LGBTQ+ issues in school libraries, and resources available to LGBTQ+ learners, parents, and allies. Give yourself time to prepare for challenges by having a rehearsed plan and memorizing a few short statements. | <p>Access is all about having the resources you need and being able to engage with them.</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share this resource guide with fellow education professionals. Share resources with educators to help them find diverse materials to support their lesson plans. Find community members involved in LGBTQ+ organizations and have them share with learners and educators on topics of interest. |
| GROW | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a sustainable learning path to stay aware of LGBTQ+ issues and how they connect with school libraries? How can you put your newfound understandings into your instruction, collections, pedagogical approach, and district initiatives? <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit your KWL charts to see how you have grown and what questions you still have. | <p>Do you have enough LGBTQ+ books and authors in your collection to seamlessly include in displays?</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch the TEDx Talk video “Improving Your Diversity IQ” Explore the It Gets Better Project website Read “How to Become an LGBTQ+ Ally” After you finish, ask yourself, “In what ways have I increased my awareness of LGBTQ+ issues?” | <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with administration, your school’s equity team, and/or leadership team to be intentional about creating an inclusive school climate. Utilize your expanded PLN—Join the conversation to help safeguard both your LGBTQ+ collections and your learners! | <p>Continually revisit selection aids listed in your collection development policy, conduct regular diversity audits, and stay up-to-date on LGBTQ+ issues.</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a blogroll or bookmark folder of resources for keeping current on LGBTQ+ issues. | <p>What are some tools for reflecting on the school library’s current challenged materials policy?</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know your policies and be prepared for challenges, especially to “diverse content” (such as LGBTQ+ materials) Determine what your current challenge policy is (or create one if not currently in place). | <p>Be familiar with current standards, ethical codes, and principles of education and information professions.</p> <p>ACTIVITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice using real-life scenarios. |