



# Framingham Public Schools

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** September 25, 2020  
**TO:** Framingham School Committee  
**FROM:** Anne Ludes, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education  
**RE:** LGBTQ+ Curriculum Report

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In recent years, the Framingham Public Schools has made a concerted effort to create a more inclusive curriculum. Department heads, library media specialists, teachers, and curriculum teams have embraced this work at many levels, focusing on both the delivery of information (from the Health education lens) and the appreciation of different perspectives and experiences (from the English and Social Studies lens). While there is more work to be done, we are proud of our community of educators for their thoughtful approach to this important work.

Below is a summary of the areas in which LGBTQ+ is addressed in our Grades 6-12 curriculum.

### **Middle School Health**

In Grade 6, Health teachers introduce the concepts of gender roles and gender identity to help students understand that everyone is different and may identify differently. The teachers and department head recognize this is a complex topic and therefore carefully balance informing students without going so deep into the topic as to cause confusion. Their goal is to develop a common understanding grounded in acceptance and respect while laying the foundation for 7th and 8th grade, when reproduction and sexual education are discussed, so students understand why specific terms are used. Essential questions of the curriculum include

- What is a gender role?
- Why do we have gender roles?
- Do we have to follow gender roles?

- What is gender identity?

In Grade 7, the Health curriculum addresses self esteem which includes gender roles, identity, and expression. In Grade 8, the Health curriculum includes lessons on gender orientation, including students' role in creating a safe school that celebrates everyone.

### **High School Health**

High school Health teachers start early in the semester using proper language to help students understand key terms and become comfortable engaging in dialogue. LGBTQ+ topics are embedded throughout the semester (in learning about stress, mental health, drugs, and relationships) but are specifically covered during the Sexuality and Sexual Identity unit where teachers focus on addressing the essential questions: *What is the difference between biological sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation?* and *Do gender roles and gender stereotypes affect our relationships with others?*

### **Middle School English Language Arts (ELA)**

FPS is currently undergoing a review of the Grades 6-12 English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum with an explicit goal to ensure units and texts reflect our student population. While this work was put on hold in the spring, the curriculum review will resume this fall.

Currently, students in 7th grade participate in a social justice unit in which they read *Warriors Don't Cry*. As part of this unit, students research a social injustice, write an argument, and make recommendations to combat the injustice. Many students choose discrimination against LGBTQ+ people for this research project.

In 8th grade, teachers address the persecution of homosexuals by the Nazis during the Hope Endures unit. During the poetry unit, students often use it as an opportunity to voice their own perspectives of being part of – or an ally to – the LBGTQ+ community. Finally, some teachers more intentionally bring these perspectives into their units through books like *Lily and Duncan* by Donna Gephart, *The 57 Bus* by Dashka Slater, and *Simon vs. the Homo sapien Agenda* by Becky Albertalli.

### **High School English**

As already mentioned, the Grades 6-12 ELA curriculum review will continue this year. Currently, the high school English curriculum includes *The Laramie Project*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, each of which either directly or

tangentially address LGBTQ+ issues. These are all selections available for teachers to include in various curricular units.

However, the greatest contribution is through the summer reading books, chosen by the Framingham High School (FHS) library media specialist in collaboration with the English department. Students are provided access to high quality texts, but with options and choice. While each grade level lists 10 titles for students to choose from, the texts below include LGBTQ+ main characters:

#### 9th grade

*Turtles All the Way Down* - John Green

*Darius the Great is Not Okay* - Adib Khorram

*Nimona* - Noelle Stevenson

#### 10th grade

*Picture Us in the Light* - Kelly Loy Gilbert

*They Called Us Enemy* - George Takei

#### 11th grade

*I'll Give You the Sun* - Jandy Nelson

*Far From the Tree* - Robin Benway

*Dread Nation* - Justina Ireland

*The Porcupine of Truth* - Bill Konigsberg

#### 12th grade

*Inexplicable Logic of My Life* - Benjamin Alire Saenz

*The Grief Keeper* - Alexandra Villasante

*They Both Die at the End* - Adam Silvera

### **High School History/Social Studies**

LGBTQ+ issues and perspectives are intentionally included in several of our high school History/Social Studies courses. For example, the US History curriculum includes the following skills and understandings in a unit plan: “*Identify the contributions of women, African Americans, Native Americans, LGBTQ within the revolution.*” Specifically, our 10th grade US History I curriculum begins with an introductory unit on identity which includes gender and sexual identity. This course also discusses the Indigenous culture’s value of people with various gender and sexual identities. During the American Revolution unit, students discuss Baron Von

Steuben, discrimination, and the rights lost by LGBTQ+ people in the thirteen colonies. Students in US History II learn about the Stonewall riots and gay rights as part of the Civil Rights unit.

Students who take the high school elective, Exploration of Human Behavior and Society, spend an entire unit on gender and sexuality. Additionally, the Peer Leadership elective course explores identity as part of its curriculum.