

Introduction

It is already 2024, six years away from the United Nations proposed completion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030. While strides have been made, we are nowhere near achieving SDG 5: Gender Equality at the global level (Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs). "The Sustainable Development Goals and LGBT Inclusion" guide by Stonewall stated that "goal 5 calls for an end to all discrimination and violence against women and girls, which includes lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia" and that we need to work within the "whole community to address gender stereotypes." The current non-inclusive language used within policies needs an overhaul to expand the definition of 'gender' to fully include trans-inclusive and gender diverse language to be able to support all women and girls.

The United Nations article on Gender Equality confirmed that "women and girls represent half of the world's population" and that they play a key role in achieving all SDGs. Though being able to achieve any of the SDGs we need to start "using gender-inclusive language [as it] is a powerful way to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias" (Gender Equality) so all women and girls can thrive. During an interview with Tegan and Sara they stated that "we never felt comfortable representing ALL LGBTQ+ people" that their experience was their own and they couldn't speak for everyone. Everyone's experience is different and is dependent on many factors including where you live, and socioeconomic status. Statistics Canada reported that 20% of LGBTQ2+ women experience intimate partner violence and that 4 in 100 women were sexually assaulted in 2018 which is 3x higher than the proportion of men. As well as 4 in 10 women aged 15-19 are more likely to experience intimate partner violence which is 4x higher than women over 25. Women are inherently disadvantaged and those within the LGBTQIA2S+ community continue to have obstacles in achieving equality.

Access to inclusive, and safe places for non-binary and trans youth within the school community has been an aspect that is being challenged. Teachers and counsellors are being forced to mis-gender and deadname students within Saskatchewan (Latimer). Latimer stated that "gender-diverse youth experience a healthier, happier life when their identities are affirmed, validated and supported in social settings." Allowing students to be completely themselves and protecting their equality in relation to cis-gendered youth should be top priority to decrease the gender gap for all women and girls. We need to take a hard look at what gender equality looks like within our school community and beyond in relation to SDG 5 through targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.5, and 5.c.

School Based Plan

It comes as no surprise that "transgender and gender-nonconforming students face the most hostile school climates" and that "75 percent of transgender youth felt unsafe at school" (Gaffney, Mattingly, & Pettway). Gaffney et al. further stated that many would drop out or miss school due to safety concerns, "have significantly lower GPAs, and were less likely to plan for future education." Since achieving more notoriety Tegan and Sara created a foundation to improve "the lives of women and girls in the LGBTQ+ community" because

they face greater “socioeconomic and health disadvantages compared to their male, heterosexual and cisgender counterparts.”

Understanding and planning for our transgender and gender diverse youth allows us to bridge the gap to building equality for all women and girls. Implementing a program such as an after-school drop-in for trans and gender diverse youth where they can connect with a mentor that can act as a sound board and advocate for those who need support at school (Gaffney et al.) is just one program that needs attention at our school. Building a network of people will require funding, a gathering space, volunteers, and new policies in place with gender inclusive language that supports trans and gender diverse youth. Mentors will be able to accompany youth to meetings with teachers, pronoun use, and any other issue students may face (Gaffney et al.). Organizations such as Trans Sask in Saskatchewan who supports and is a resource network for transgender and gender diverse people is the direction we would want to go with this initiative.

Another initiative that we would embark on is to create equal access for all to use gender neutral bathrooms within the school community. While this is a small change within the school community it is huge strides in equality for trans and gender diverse youth. In some cases, this change could be replacing the single stall signs with a gender neutral one but in others it may mean creating new single stall bathrooms. To be achieve this we will need to assess the school’s infrastructure, work with the district, attain funding, and possibly build new infrastructure.

To further momentum on gender equality students will take part in a film festival where they will screen and create their own short presentation. This will include students exploring videos from UN Women such as, “Our vision for a Gender Equal World” and “There’s #noexcuse for Gender-Based Violence”, as well as “UN Free & Equal: The Lesson” from UN Human Rights. Presentations will also be scheduled with Out In Schools to expose students to LGBTQIA2S+ art. Students will also explore current gender equality policies within British Columbia to be able to compose letters to be sent to our government officials. I would like this to be a whole school initiative so setting up screenings of movies, documentaries, and shorts would be held in the gym over multiple days. There is a possibility that equipment would be needed so funding to rent what we need is required, as well as funding to have Out In Schools to hold multiple presentations for all grade levels.

Conclusion

The youth of today unfortunately have such a heavy weight on their shoulders to make great changes to our world, but as an educator I can act as advocate, guide, and mentor for my students to help achieve these goals. Trans and gender diverse youth have continually been marginalized and in many countries are not even recognized as a group of people. It is my hope that as students engage in this material and explore it further, they can start to see the disparities of equality within our school community and beyond, so they have the knowledge and tools to make changes.

Works Cited

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