

Opinion: Important to teach stories about life

By Gene Kahane

While the well-meaning grown-ups in Sacramento discuss and debate the merits of creating an LGBT curriculum for our state's schools, it should be noted that on the local level, where I teach, it has been happening for a while. And the way it worked at our school was fairly simple: We gave kids a chance to read great stories.

The first step took place several years ago when I received a grant to buy a class set of "The Laramie Project." I had read the play, seen the HBO film version and was deeply moved by the story of Matthew Shepard, his murder and the town of Laramie, Wyo. As it turns out, so were my students, and so have they been every year since then.

More than any other text we study, this piece of dramatic literature compels more kids to raise their hands and offer to read aloud. They want to participate, to know this story about homosexuality and intolerance. The play is honest, balanced and real, and about how we should treat each other. The play is now part of our core curriculum.

My "agenda" in bringing "The Laramie Project" to my students was this: It's not OK to hurt people. Kids get that.

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