



**Open Books.  
Open Hearts.  
Open Minds.**

## 01 What We Do

Open Books brings LGBTQ+ affirming stories to school libraries, so every child can feel like they belong.

## 02 Why We Do It

Open Books imagines a day when schools are full of stories that make every student feel seen. Until that day, we will champion access to diverse and affirming literature, to communicate that the LGBTQ+ experience is real and all children are valued.

## 03 How We Do It

Books are powerful tools for change. At Open Books, we use a three-pronged approach to maximize our impact and reach the most students:

**District Down:** We partner with school districts to place collections of LGBTQ+ affirming books in every elementary or middle school library within a district, ensuring that our books have a shelf life of 8 to 10 years and every student in the school has access.

**Early Stage Intervention:** We focus on elementary and middle school students, reaching them during critical stages of self-discovery and identity formation. We provide stories of self-acceptance to help every student build confidence and a strong sense of self.

**Public School Libraries:** We ensure LGBTQ+ affirming stories reach all students in public schools. When students feel safe and represented, they learn better, engage more deeply, and thrive.



**1,038,362**  
STUDENTS



**22,623**  
LGBTQ+ BOOKS



**1,529**  
SCHOOLS



Open Books is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.  
Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.  
EIN: 81-2417437.

[OPENBOOKS.ORG](https://openbooks.org)



It's not just enough to be included. You have to be cherished. All of us want access to literature that shows our shared experience. The goal is to have a library that's as inclusive as you can get it.

Bob Nelson, Former Superintendent of Schools, Fresno Unified School District



Only 16.3% of LGBTQ+ students were taught positive representations about LGBTQ+ people, history, or events in their schools.

GLSEN, 2021 National School Climate Survey



For generations, kids didn't have access to books like these; they just didn't exist or were impossible to find. I know that when I was little, having a book like *Annie's Plaid Shirt* would have helped me tremendously. Hopefully the right student will find one of these books and have it speak to them and help them feel seen.

Library Aide, LAUSD



These books, and books like them, are needed to help kids understand the full array of being human in all its beauty and complexity. They will help kids better understand themselves and others.





LGBTQ+ Community Liaison, Hopkins School District, Minneapolis, MN



Inclusive school libraries teach empathy and understanding, but they also reinforce to all students that they belong. A space that does not include their story tells them that they are not important. We can make sure that students never feel disconnected in their school library by reading and celebrating as many diverse books as possible.

Librarian, Colorado Springs, CO

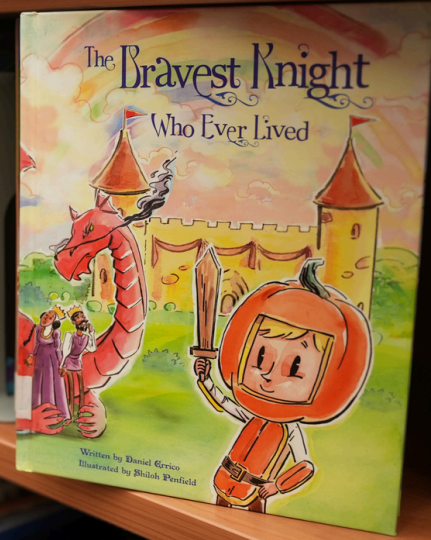
## Your Donation Will Save Lives!

\$25	\$250	\$5,000	\$10,000
			
Harness the power of one LGBTQ+ affirming book	Bolster thousands of students with one set of Open Books for one library	Transform every elementary school library in a small school district	Promote a country where every school library is an inclusive space



**SHARE. DONATE. AND BUILD** A FUTURE WHERE DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND LOVE ARE THE FOUNDATION OF EVERY CHILD'S LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

**Open Books.**  
**Open Hearts.**  
**Open Minds.**

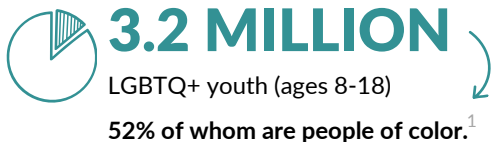


## WHY DO SCHOOL LIBRARIES NEED LGBTQ+ AFFIRMING BOOK SETS?

Open Books brings LGBTQ+ affirming stories to school libraries, so every child can feel like they belong.

### MORE YOUTH IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+ THAN EVER BEFORE.

The Williams Institute estimates there are



Our partnership with a school district ensures distribution of book sets in every elementary or middle school in the district, so we reach as many students as possible with a single bulk delivery. In addition, cataloged library books have a shelf life of 8 to 10 years.

**Open Books is the only organization whose model reaches thousands of students per delivery, immediately, and for a decade to come.**

### THE MORE LGBTQ+ RESOURCES IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY, THE SAFER THE KIDS FEEL.

In its 2024 report *Inclusive Learning*, GLSEN found that an additional



of LGBTQ+ students felt safer in schools if their library had many LGBTQ+ resources.

In addition to feeling safer, more students felt somewhat or very accepted in those schools.<sup>2</sup>

Open Books provides at least a dozen books to each school. To date, no school district we have contacted had more than a few, if any, of the books we provide.

**We donate in abundance to promote safety and acceptance for LGBTQ+ students!**



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[OPENBOOKS.ORG](https://openbooks.org)



## THE VAST MAJORITY OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES NEED LGBTQ+ RESOURCES.

Despite the positive impact on school safety, only



# 7.2%

of students reported in 2021 that their school libraries had many LGBTQ+ resources.<sup>3</sup>

Open Books has the network to reach dozens of districts a year.

**We have already reached 1300+ schools and aim to double that impact in 2 years.**

## KIDS' READING SCORES IMPROVE WHEN THEY READ BOOKS THAT MIRROR THEIR IDENTITIES.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the vast majority of children's books are **not diverse**. According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center,

# ! ONLY 2%

of the children's books published in 2022 had an Indigenous person as the primary or secondary character.<sup>5</sup>

Open Books curates a set of 12 acclaimed books that feature diverse racial and gender identities and expressions. Our curated book list includes recently published stories, desired by librarians.

**We engage in belonging for all students!**

## MOST SCHOOL LIBRARIES HAVE LIMITED FUNDS FOR ACQUIRING BOOKS.

Funding for school libraries has decreased by more than half in recent years, and



# 35 STATES

do not provide direct aid to school libraries.<sup>6</sup>

By donating to entire districts and leveraging bulk pricing, Open Books ensures that each school in the district has the same LGBTQ+ affirming collection.

**We facilitate equitable access, so that all kids can find themselves in a book!**



**All young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential.**

HARVEY MILK

### REFERENCES

1. Movement Advance Project, LGBTQ Youth, accessed October 17, 2024.
2. GLSEN, Inclusive Learning: A Synthesis of 20+ years of Research on the Education and Wellbeing Impacts of Inclusive Curriculum, Instruction, and School Books. GLSEN: New York (2024), p.27.
3. Ibid., p. 28.
4. First Book, The Impact of a Diverse Classroom Library, First Book Research & Insights: Washington, DC (2023), p.4.
5. Ibid., p.2.
6. Mark Lieberman, "How School Libraries Buy Books, Struggle for Funds, and Confront Book Bans: An Explainer." Education Week: February 27, 2023.



THESE BOOKS ARE A PERMISSION SLIP FOR KIDS TO LOVE THEMSELVES (OR THEIR CLASSMATES) EXACTLY AS THEY ARE.  
**YOUR DONATION MAKES THAT POSSIBLE!**





# TWO YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2026

## OUR PROGRAMS

Open Books advances our mission and maximizes impact through four key programs. These programs build on our three-pronged model focusing on district-wide donations, early stage intervention, and public school libraries.



### Open Doors

We provide librarians with tools to signal the library as a safe space for all students, and to support the use of our LGBTQ+ affirming book sets.



### First Chapter

We donate 12 diverse, acclaimed, LGBTQ+ affirming books to all elementary school libraries in a school district, impacting thousands of students per delivery and promoting safe and accepting school environments. Our books have a shelf life of 8 to 10 years in school libraries.



### Found in Translation

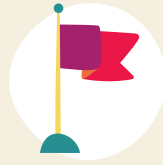
We engage in belonging for all students, by providing multilingual audio read-alongs, so students can listen in different languages and follow along with the English picture books.



### Next Chapter

We donate a set of diverse LGBTQ+ affirming books to all middle school libraries in a school district, helping middle school students learn better, feel safer, and engage more deeply in school.

# Our Goals



Five goals will drive our trajectory over the next two years (2025-2026). We value co-creating change with an inclusive community of educators, advocates, children, and families.



## GOAL 1

### Foster Safe Middle Schools

Open Books will expand our impact to older students, launching our middle school donation program Next Chapter.

**Objective 1:** Create and pilot a system for middle school book selection, in consultation with a focus group of students, educators, authors, and librarians in one small school district.

**Objective 2:** Leverage publisher relationships to review at least three future releases for inclusion in our book set.

**Objective 3:** Monitor and evaluate the impact of the book set in the pilot study, and refine tools to support school staff.

**Objective 4:** Implement the improved donation program in two distinct districts, reaching 75 middle schools.



## GOAL 2

### Engage in Belonging for Multilingual Students

Open Books celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity and strengthens communities by launching our program Found in Translation for four additional languages, increasing student engagement of LGBTQ+ affirming literature for non-native English speakers.

**Objective 1:** In consultation with five district partners, select four languages that are widely spoken in student households based on district demographics.

**Objective 2:** Engage linguistic experts and community groups to select and translate six picture books, after identifying and resolving challenges in translation.

**Objective 3:** Evaluate and refine audio read-along content, process, support tools, and integration, in conjunction with one pilot study school and its educators.

**Objective 4:** Implement the program district-wide, and refine based on evaluation data, for at least four districts encompassing 100 elementary schools.



### GOAL 3

#### Double Our Elementary Impact

Open Books will partner with an additional 1300 elementary schools over the next two years, reaching students in critical stages of self-discovery and identity formation.

**Objective 1:** Design and refine our district selection process to incorporate a target distribution of rural, suburban, and urban districts, in states with diverse rates of book challenges, as well as in states with “book deserts.”

**Objective 2:** Grow our emergency response program that identifies districts where hate crimes have occurred and mobilizes local partners to facilitate connections to impacted schools, and donate to one impacted school district.



### GOAL 4

#### Promote Inclusive Libraries

Open Books will create tools to optimize use of its book sets, such as a Welcoming Schools co-branded lesson plan program and portable display materials.

**Objective 1:** Collect and respond to qualitative information from librarians on the tools they need to incorporate LGBTQ+ affirming literature into their displays, outreach, and teacher and student engagement efforts.

**Objective 2:** In coordination with a librarian advisory group, develop two easy-to-use tools to physically enhance the library and improve students’ engagement with LGBTQ+ affirming literature.

**Objective 3:** Create and donate two products that signal school libraries are safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ students.



### GOAL 5

#### Establish Sound Infrastructure

Open Books will implement best practices in nonprofit development and growth as it transitions from a volunteer-run organization.

**Objective 1:** Develop organizational capacity and strengthen internal operations by measuring and optimizing our impact, and implementing accountability systems in programmatic, financial, strategic, and operational stewardship.

**Objective 2:** Co-create change by leveraging support from 5 new affinity groups and engaging 75% of our authors, to support funding partnerships, district identification, and social media outreach.

**Objective 3:** Implement diverse fundraising strategies, resulting in having 25% of the 2026 annual operating budget in reserve by the end of 2025.



“ ”

Thank you so much, for the amazing, amazing books. Our wellness team is so excited about the wide variety of representation of not only LGBTQ+ identities, but also gender fluidity and how LGBTQ+ identities may present or develop. The school counselor and I opened the box together and were squealing with joy.

School psychologist, CA

Children who see themselves portrayed in a story understand that they are not alone. We know these books will become well-loved treasures in our libraries.

Executive Director, Elementary Education, CA school district

I want to take this opportunity to thank you. It's organizations like yours that help us have libraries that can be inclusive, representative, and safe for all students at our schools.

Librarian

These books are beautiful, thoughtful, and fun. I'm so happy to have these resources that help us create a safe space for all children and adults to explore some of the questions they have.

Library Aid

