



## TEACHING THROUGH BOOKS

# ALLYSHIP

BY LEAH CROWELL, KELLY JOHNSON, AND BETH LYONS

## LEARNING FOCUS

In learning about ideas of allyship, students are able to connect to their own identity and the identities of others. Reading and exploring texts that focus on the lived experiences of a broader global community can help students to better understand their learning community, and by focusing on the theme of allyship, we can work to intentionally build a more inclusive society.

**Identity:** In learning about others, and as I gain insight into my own unique abilities, how can I connect to other people and make change for the better in our world? In what ways can I adjust my own behaviour and act to support and defend the community I belong to?

**Skills:** How might I describe or explain intersectionality and allyship as they relate to my experiences and my life?

**Intellectualism:** How can reading about the stories of others and their lived experiences help us develop our understanding of the people in our learning community? How does exploring the theme of allyship help us intentionally build inclusive communities?

**Criticality:** Why is it important to discuss and ask questions about our identity and how it connects to others? How does our identity connect to allyship?

**Joy:** How does talking about my identity and my connections to others bring me joy? How might I share my joy with others through creating or making?

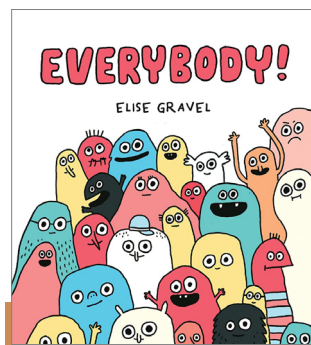
**THEME:** Diversity  
**SUB-THEME:** Allyship  
**GRADE LEVELS:**  
Elementary (K-3)  
Middle School (4-8)  
High School (9-12)



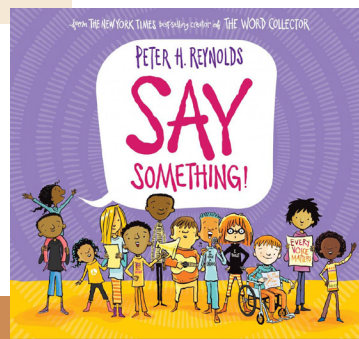
# ALLYSHIP | ELEMENTARY LEVEL

BY BETH LYONS

## FEATURED BOOKS



*Everybody!* by Elise Gravel  
(North Winds Press, 2021)  
Also available in FR: *Tout le monde!* par Elise Gravel  
(Éditions Scholastic, 2021)



*Say Something!* by Peter H. Reynolds  
(Orchard Books, 2019)  
Also available in FR: *Ta voix compte*  
par Peter H. Reynolds (Éditions Scholastic, 2019)

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### MINDS ON PROVOCATION

#### Background:

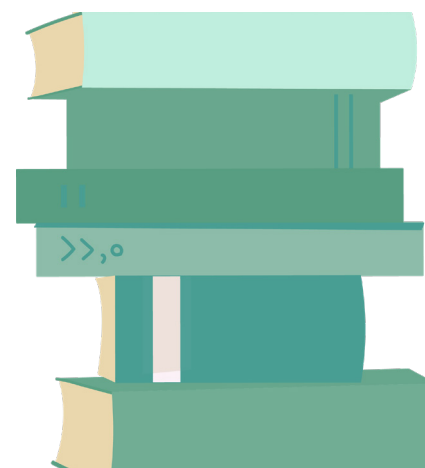
Display the covers of both featured books and ask students to share what they notice and what they wonder about these covers (e.g. both covers have groups of people/characters, a variety of expressions, some of the characters look like they are talking). Record the ideas in a T-chart. Ask students to make predictions about what these books might have in common.

## READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Start with reading *Everybody!* Ask students to think about what personal connections they can make to the story as you read through it. You can pause periodically to discuss or wait until the end, depending on the needs of your students.

Vocabulary that students might need help to understand before participating in a discussion:

- unique
- similar
- useful
- embarrassed
- discouraged
- accepted
- respect





Discuss concepts in the book by having students share the connections they thought of. Work to highlight similarities between the student's responses. (You could make a list of class fears, moments of joy, hopes/dreams, things they want to learn to do, ideas for creating, etc.)

Ask the students to think about a time they felt afraid, discouraged, lonely, sad, or angry, and how someone helped them or supported them. When did they help or support a friend? What actions can we use to show our classmates and our community that we are all connected and here to support each other?

After, introduce *Say Something!* to the students. Reflect back on the predictions that students made about how the two books might be similar and if they have new ideas to add.

Read through the book, pausing to highlight the different ways we can use our voices through words, actions, and creativity. This is also a good opportunity to look for text-to-text connections with *Everybody!* Reflect back on the lists you created and have students share whether the person who helped or supported them used any of the words, actions, or creative ideas that are featured in *Say Something!*

## MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Provocation question: How might we use our words, actions, or creativity to support our community?

Discuss this question with the class, then connect it back to the Learning Focus goal for joy: How does talking about my identity and my connections to others bring me joy? How might I share my joy with others through creating or making?

Ask students how they can share the message or theme from the two featured books with their community (a discussion of community may be needed here, depending on the prior learning of the class) to spread joy and show their community members that we are all connected.

Possible ideas that can be generated/explored:

- Chalk messages on the sidewalks
- Positive sticky notes
- Thank-you cards to community helpers
- Recorded voice messages for when people need a pick-me-up (could use [Flip](#))
- Random acts of kindness
- A class photobook of special places in the community

Work with your students to choose an idea that fits best and plan how you will carry out this inquiry (e.g. materials, timeline, roles/jobs, sharing with the community). Your plan can be as big or as small as you want and you can work to explore a different idea for supporting the community throughout the course of the year.





## REFLECT AND CONNECT

Work with students to connect back to the rest of the Learning Focus goals (rewritten below for younger students) throughout the exploration/lesson. Discuss and record ideas on chart paper or using a digital tool. Use the artifacts created to curate a living documentation of the learning.

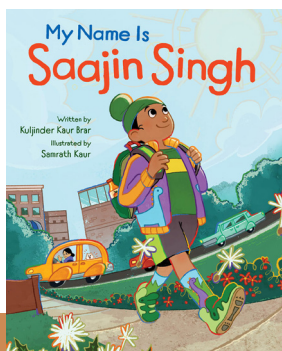
**Identity:** As I learned about other people, and as I thought about my own abilities, how did I connect to my friends and classmates? What actions did I show to support the community I belong to?

**Skills:** What does being an ally mean to me?

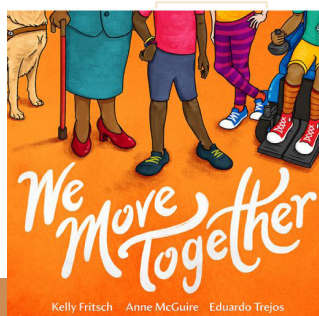
**Intellectualism:** What did I learn about others in my community from reading these books? How does talking about our similarities and differences help us build a stronger community?

**Criticality:** Why is it important to discuss and ask questions about our identity and how it connects to others? How does our identity connect to allyship?

## ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME



*My Name Is Saajin Singh* by Kuljinder Kaur Brar, illustrated by Samrath Kaur (Annick Press, 2022)



*We Move Together* by Kelly Fritsch and Anne McGuire, illustrated by Eduardo Trejos (AK Press, 2021)



*Pink, Blue, and You! Questions for Kids about Gender Stereotypes* by Elise Gravel and Mykaell Blais (Anne Schwartz Books, 2022)  
Also available in FR: *Le rose, le bleu et toi! Un livre sur les stéréotypes de genre* par Elise Gravel et Mykaell Blais (La courte échelle, 2022)



# ALLYSHIP | MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

BY KELLY JOHNSON

## FEATURED BOOK



## LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Introduce the word “allyship” (consult the Anti-Oppression Network’s [definition](#) for support if necessary). Ask students what it means to them, and have them record their ideas on sticky notes. Share and create a web on a whiteboard or use a digital tool such as [Padlet](#) to begin a class allyship board. Post and discuss the following Learning Focus questions, to be used as learning goals:

**Skills:** How might I describe or explain intersectionality and allyship as they relate to my experiences and my life?

**Intellectualism:** How can reading about the stories of others and their lived experiences help us develop our understanding of the people in our learning community? How does exploring the theme of allyship help us intentionally build inclusive communities?

### READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

#### Before Reading:

Explain that Edward is a child who grows to understand that although born a boy, they do not identify with that binary gender role. Explore the acronym LGBTQ2S+. Explain that this is a community of people who are often marginalized and have been targets of oppression throughout history. Discuss distrust, persecution, and ostracization of





the LGBTQ2S+ community. How do we stand up for and support LGBTQ2S+ students (Pink Shirt Day, Pride month, Rainbow Clubs, etc.)?

Post and discuss the following Learning Focus questions:

**Criticality:** Why is it important to discuss and ask questions about our identity and how it connects to others? How does our identity connect to allyship?

### During Reading:

If possible, use a document camera to project the text and images.

The book's illustrator, Cathryn John, is passionate about social equity. Notice the details she has inserted into the images. Choose one illustration and examine closely.

- What hidden messages do you see in Cathryn John's drawing?

### After Reading:

Invite students to record their questions and understandings on sticky notes and add them to your allyship board.

## MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Post and discuss the remaining Learning Focus questions.

**Identity:** In learning about others, and as I gain insight into my own unique abilities, how can I connect to other people and make change for the better in our world? In what ways can I adjust my own behaviour and act to support and defend the community I belong to?

**Joy:** How does talking about my identity and my connections to others bring me joy? How might I share my joy with others through creating or making?

Choose one or all of the following learning experiences to explore identity, allyship, and empathy with your students. Post student work on the allyship board.

### Labels

Warm-up with a simple grouping image, such as various trees. Ask students to describe the image without using the words "tree" or "leaves." After some practice with various groupings of objects, display images representing diverse groups of people—include as many different representations as you feel will help build understanding of the many ways we use stereotypes and labels to describe people.

Have students consider these questions:

- In what ways might using labels limit how we think about people? Can it be harmful? For example, at first glance you may think labeling someone as "smart" is positive—but can it also be negative for that person?
- What are some ways we can build inclusiveness in our community?





Have students create an allyship label for their classroom, school, sports team, etc.

### **Allyship superhero comic strip**

Go back through *The Name I Call Myself* on a picture walk. Note that the illustrator, Cathryn John, has included several images of a superhero in a cape. Also explain to students how the book's author, Hasan Namir, recalls that when he was growing up, he really wanted the kids at his school to be his allies and help put an end to the bullying of others who were different from the norm.

Challenge students to think about ways they can be superhero allies. What words can they use and what actions can they take to stand up for the rights and dignity of all their peers? Have students create a graphic novel-style comic strip which illustrates what that allyship might look and sound like.

### **A personal timeline**

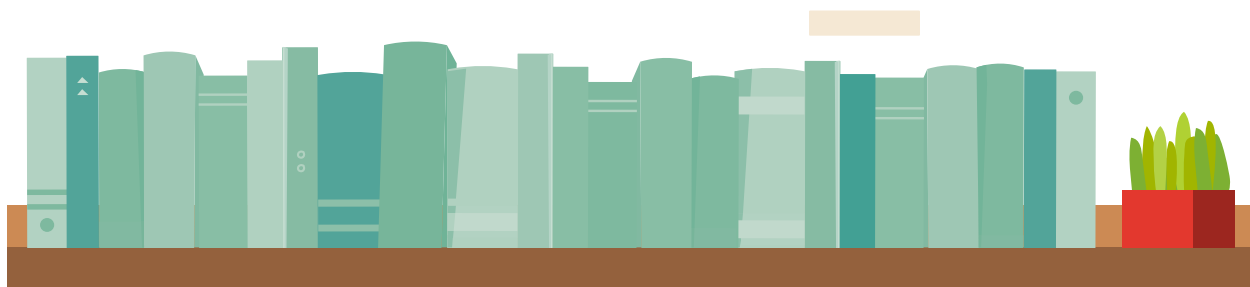
The story in *The Name I Call Myself* is written as a year-by-year timeline. Each page recounts positive and negative thoughts and feelings Ari has while growing up. Using a timeline format, invite students to recount a story of the years in their life. They should focus on remembering back to the things that mattered to them at each age or grade: joys, challenges, significant events, etc.

## **REFLECT AND CONNECT**

Return to the Learning Focus questions and discuss student learning, as well as any new questions. Celebrate the allyship board. Individually invite students to set their own allyship goals.

Continue exploring allyship:

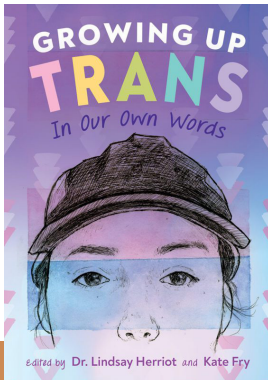
- Explore starting a Rainbow Club at your school;
- Invite a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community into your classroom;
- Connect with author Hasan Namir on his website, [hasannamir.com](http://hasannamir.com).



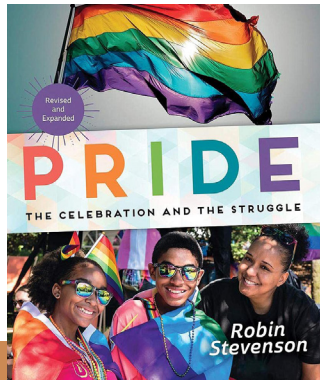




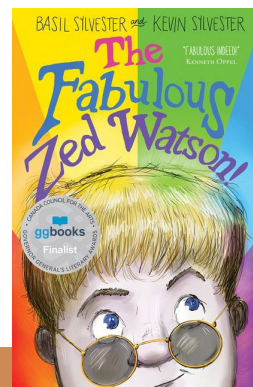
## ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME



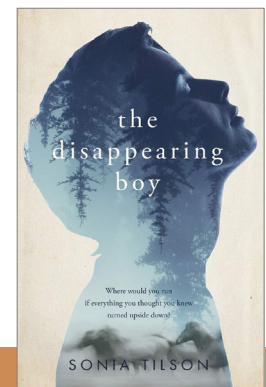
*Growing Up Trans: In Our Own Words* edited by Dr. Lindsay Herriot and Kate Fry (Orca Book Publishers, 2021)



*Pride: The Celebration and the Struggle* by Robin Stevenson (Orca Book Publishers, 2020)



*The Fabulous Zed Watson!* by Basil Sylvester, illustrated by Kevin Sylvester (HarperCollins Canada, 2021)



*The Disappearing Boy* by Sonia Tilson (Nimbus Publishing, 2017)





# ALLYSHIP | HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

BY LEAH CROWELL

## FEATURED BOOK



*Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* by Mariko Tamaki, illustrated by Rosemary Valero-O'Connell (Groundwood Books, 2019)

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Ideally, students will have read the whole book prior to the start of this lesson. Depending on their reading levels and pace, it could take 1-2 periods for everyone to read the entire book.

Place students into discussion groups (4-5 per group) and ask them to discuss these prompts:

- What does it mean to choose authenticity over belonging?
- Share examples of times when you feel that you were true to yourself.
- Share examples of times when you feel that you weren't true to yourself.

Give each group a different term/concept to research and define. Students can use a WipeBook / Whiteboard / Digital Jamboard to record their learning and share their information with the rest of the class.

Terms (one per group):

- Allyship
- Gender Identity
- Inclusion
- Intersectionality
- Sex Positive

Reliable research sources: [2SLGBTQ+: What does it mean?](#) and [The 519 Glossary of Terms](#).





## READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Working independently, students choose one of the questions below to write a short response (5-7 sentences) in their Thought Book journal (paper or digital). They must reference direct evidence (quotations or page numbers) from *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* to support their thinking.

- What is your reaction to *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me*? How does this story make you feel?
- What message does *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* send the reader about the importance of embracing allyship?
- How does the book explore ideas of freedom, identity, and/or oppression?

## MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Based on their reading of *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me*, their shared group discussions, and their individual Thought Book reflections, students should be primed and ready to jump into this portion of the lesson.

Introduce this activity by explaining that allyship is an ongoing process of self-exploration, unlearning, and actionable change.

Ask students to choose one of these activity options (they can work in groups or on their own):

**Option 1:** Create a public service announcement poster

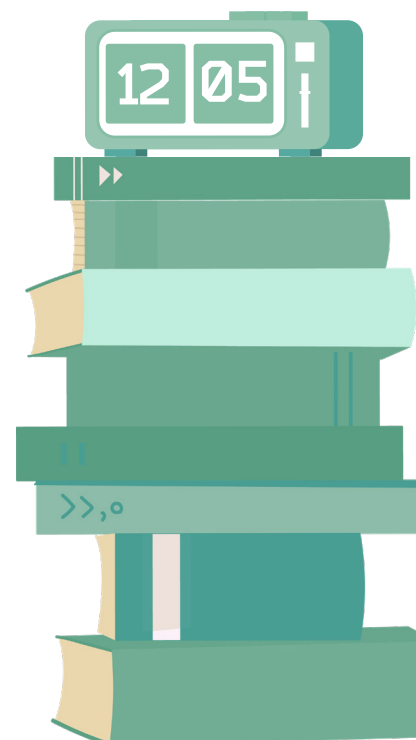
Think about/discuss the questions below and create a PSA poster that can be displayed within our classroom and/or school community.

- What is the benefit of encouraging allyship within learning communities?
- In what ways can you promote allyship within our school and/or local community?
- What messages can you share with people to spread awareness, compassion, and inclusion?

**Option 2:** Write a letter to a person in a position of power

Powerful questions lead to powerful answers. Think about/discuss the questions below and write a letter to a teacher, staff, administrator, or leader within our school and/or local community.

- How can our community take more action to promote allyship and inclusion?
- What does allyship look, sound, and feel like?
- What does a person who is in a position of power need to know about the experiences of students in our school?





## REFLECT AND CONNECT

As a final reflection and discussion, place students into groups of 4-5 and give each group a different question from the list below. Using a WipeBook/Whiteboard, students will work together to reflect and share their thoughts about their question. If time allows, give each group the chance to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

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**Skills:** How might I describe or explain intersectionality and allyship as they relate to my experiences and my life?

**Intellectualism:** How can reading about the stories of others and their lived experiences help us develop our understanding of the people in our learning community? How does exploring the theme of allyship help us intentionally build inclusive communities?

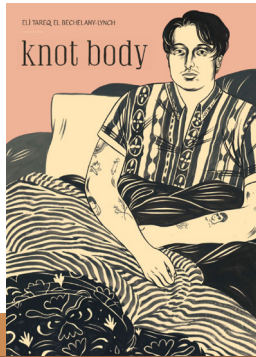
**Criticality:** Why is it important to discuss and ask questions about our identity and how it connects to others? How does our identity connect to allyship?

**Joy:** How does talking about my identity and my connections to others bring me joy? How might I share my joy with others through creating or making?





## ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME



*Knot Body* by Eli Tareq  
El Bechelany-Lynch  
(Metatron Press, 2020)



*Stone Fruit* by Lee Lai  
(Fantagraphics, 2021)



*What If We Were...* by Axelle Lenoir  
(Top Shelf Productions, 2020)  
Also available in FR: *Si on était par*  
Axelle Lenoir (Front Froid, 2019)

## MORE RESOURCES FOR ALL GRADE LEVELS

- [The Anti-Oppression Network](#): Use this website to learn the roles and responsibilities of allyship.
- [Everyone's a Helper](#): A lesson plan for Grades K-5 by Learning for Justice that supports the themes and ideas connected to identity and allyship.
- [gegi.ca](#): Advocate at school for yourself or someone you love with this resource hub for students, parents, and educators.
- [How to be an ally to Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#): A video from CBC Kids News to help connect the learning in these lessons to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Calls to Action.
- [OK2BME](#): A thorough resource and overview of support services, provided by KW Counselling Services.
- [SOGI 123](#): Sexual orientation and gender identity resources, videos, and lessons.
- [The World's Largest Lesson](#): A valuable resource with lessons, videos, articles, and more to support social justice and action-oriented learning in the K-12 classroom.

