SEATTLE – A project almost two decades in the making is now a reality at Seattle Public Schools, with the release of the book “Our Students, Their Stories.”

The book features photos and stories that celebrate queer and gender expansive students, their families and LGBTQ+ staff who support youth.

“We are really proud of this project – it’s one of the best things about 2020 for us,” said Lisa Love, SPS Manager of Health Education, who co-authored the project with photographer Nate Gowdy. Ms. Love said the project was about capturing “student and family experiences and to share them in a useful, meaningful way.”

The book will support educational efforts through use in staff trainings, use by classroom teachers, community engagement and parent education.

The stories of LGBTQ+ people and their families are featured in the book, including the stories of 27 students and 17 staff members.

In addition to the important educational use of the book, it is also designed to be a celebration of the individual journeys of many SPS students.

“It’s so important that our students can be their true, authentic selves so that we can celebrate each of them individually,” said SPS Superintendent Denise Juneau. “This book reflects that our district sees LGBTQ+ students and that they are an integral part of our classrooms and schools. As a Native, gay, woman superintendent, I am proud to be part of an organization that prioritizes the core, meaningful issues that are vital to all of us.”
Because of a generous grant from Seattle PRIDE, “Our Students, Their Stories” will be available in every SPS school library, counseling office and in school-based health centers.

“Educators can read personal stories and lead students in a conversation, or implement a brief lesson plan designed for grade bands,” said Lisa Love. “Students will learn about the importance of allyship, friendship, family, and community support.”

Ms. Love began the project 20 years ago when she began videotaping the life experiences shared by many attendees at the annual SPS Families Dinner event. In early 2020, she collaborated with Mr. Gowdy and Christie Skoorsmith, a mother of three SPS students, and work on the project was completed.

The book can be purchased by educators, or anyone, on the SPS Health Education web page.

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