

Starter Kit

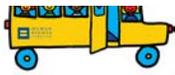


welcoming schools

An Inclusive Approach to
Addressing Family Diversity,
Gender Stereotyping
and Name-Calling in K-5
Learning Environments



A PROJECT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION



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LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO *WELCOMING SCHOOLS*

The headline in the *New Bedford Standard-Times* on Feb. 2, 2006, was only the beginning: “New Bedford Gay Bar Attack Wounds 3.” The evening before, an 18-year-old man walked into a local lounge and, after confirming that it was a gay bar, began striking patrons with a hatchet and firing a gun, leaving three wounded. At that time, I was the assistant superintendent for special services in the public school system for New Bedford, Mass. Several weeks after the incident, I attended a public forum on homophobia, hate speech and violence, and heard speaker after speaker tell moving stories about growing up “different” from others in our community. Many mentioned having experienced name-calling, bullying, threats and physical violence.

The common theme in all of their stories was that schools were not welcoming places for them.

The forum was a personal wake-up call for me because I had never known about the pain and feelings of isolation experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. **As an educator, I knew that our school system had an obligation to ensure that students were prepared to acknowledge and respect the diverse world in which they lived.**

An anti-bullying program would not be enough. The young man who entered the local lounge — a former student in our school system — did not ask if he had walked into a sports bar or an Internet bar, he asked if it was a gay bar. I knew that to keep students safe in school, the program would have to address all aspects of difference by acknowledging all types of student and family diversity.

The forum inspired the genesis of a youth and schools subcommittee to continue working on these issues. I volunteered to represent the public schools because I felt strongly that we had an obligation to take well-planned steps to ensure that all students would be safe in our schools. The subcommittee met monthly, set goals and searched for school intervention programs that would address bullying, name-calling, gender stereotyping and violence — for all students, but with specific attention paid to LGBT students and LGBT-headed families.

After several months of trial and error in our search, Kim Westheimer, a senior consultant for the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s *Welcoming Schools* program, came to one of our meetings and explained to us the core elements of the new initiative. The anti-bullying program



specifically mentioned gay and lesbian parents when addressing aspects of family diversity. The program acknowledged single-parent families, foster families and children being raised by grandparents. We saw that the program was a perfect fit for our district, and three New Bedford principals volunteered their elementary schools for the pilot program.

The schools joined sites in urban centers in the Midwest and on the West Coast to implement the pilot. Since May 2007, each school has formed a task force of parents and staff to inform the careful implementation of the program. The program has evolved as a meaningful attempt to make sure that, from the earliest ages, all students feel welcomed in school. To expect that students will know how to handle issues related to teasing, gender stereotyping and bullying without specific, well-informed instruction is folly.

Welcoming Schools has made great inroads in the entire New Bedford public school system, not just the three elementary school pilot sites. Because of open discussions at district administrative meetings, other principals are better prepared to address the full range of student and family diversity at their schools. The *Welcoming Schools* Program and its *Guide* specifically address all aspects of student and family diversity. All benefit when students see that their families are acknowledged and respected within the school environment. It is only when some students and families are left out that problems develop and marginalization occurs.

As a former assistant superintendent, I strongly recommend, from the earliest grade levels, the *Welcoming Schools* program and *Guide* as an effective intervention to establish and maintain a safe school environment for each student. The New Bedford Public Schools needed to take more specific steps to keep all students safe, and *Welcoming Schools* provided the way.

Sincerely,



Lawrence J. Finnerty, Ed.D.
Retired Assistant Superintendent
New Bedford Public Schools



Welcoming Schools

THE *WELCOMING SCHOOLS* APPROACH

Welcoming Schools is a comprehensive, LGBT-inclusive approach to creating respectful and supportive elementary schools for all students and their families.

Welcoming Schools is one of the few resources for elementary schools that addresses the problems of anti-gay slurs, gender stereotyping and is inclusive of LGBT-headed families while at the same time it is inclusive of all kinds of bias based name-calling and a diverse range of families.

The approach is grounded in research that links improved academic achievement and social-emotional well-being with an inclusive school climate.

Focuses on Three Areas Key to Developing a Welcoming School:

- Embracing Family Diversity
- Creating Gender Inclusive Environments
- Preventing Bias-based Bullying and Name Calling

***Welcoming Schools* Reflects a Commitment to These Basic Premises:**

- Elementary school students' families are central to their understanding of who they are. Therefore, a range of family structures is represented throughout the materials – to help ensure that no student feels either left out or singled out, and that all students feel welcome.
- Name-calling and bullying have a negative impact on the social and academic development of all involved: students who are targeted, student who bully and bystanders.
- Hurtful, bias-based name-calling and bullying occur in elementary schools. This includes words and actions based on skin color, religion, gender, appearance, perceived sexual orientation, ethnicity and abilities. Effective intervention requires both naming and understanding these biases.
- Pressure to conform to gender roles can limit academic and social development. Interrupting negative stereotyping and affirming gender expansiveness allows students to reach their full potential.
- Adults in a school community set the tone for school climate through values and actions. Therefore, leadership, professional development, and family involvement are key.
- Long-term sustainable institutional change occurs when all members of the school community have a shared understanding and commitment to create a school where all students feel welcome.

***Welcoming Schools* Provides Tools and Resources Including:**

- Educational materials for school leaders, educators, parents/guardians to make teachable moments and intervention more effective.
- Professional development training for administrators, educators and all adults in the school community.
- Engaging short films that feature students and teachers highlighting what they hear in school, what they need, and what can be done to create a more welcoming school environment.
- Lesson plans aligned to Common Core State Standards.
- Guides for school community and family engagement sessions.



WHY DISCUSS FAMILY DIVERSITY, TEASING, NAME-CALLING AND GENDER IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

FAMILIES ARE IMPORTANT TO ALL CHILDREN

Families are children's first place from which they view their world. Children in elementary school still strongly identify with their families. They need to know that their families matter. Students perform better academically and socially when there is a positive relationship between families and schools.¹ Families are often discussed as part of the curriculum in elementary school. It is important for students from every kind of family to see their lives reflected in the classroom or the school.

SCHOOLS SHOULD BE PLACES WHERE ALL CHILDREN FEEL SAFE AND SECURE.

Schools should be places where children can learn and thrive without fear of hurtful teasing and name-calling of any kind. To help all children feel safe and welcome, schools must pro-actively address all name-calling and hurtful teasing. Anti-gay and gender-based teasing begins in elementary school and can become pervasive at this age. It is important to think about the impact on children who are targets of this teasing and the feelings of the perpetrators and bystanders. All are harmed when their schools are not keeping everyone safe.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO DISPEL HARMFUL STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES.

Learning in the context of the classroom what a word such as "gay" means clarifies students' understanding. Instead of only hearing these words on the playground as put-downs, students can ask questions and get information to help dispel stereotypes that can lead to insults and physical harassment. In the 28 random shootings in U.S. schools between 1982 and 2001, nearly all the boys who committed the violence had stories of being constantly bullied, teased and "gay-baited" – not because they were gay, but because they were different from the other boys: shy, artistic, theatrical, musical, non-athletic or "geekish."²

GENDER-EXPANSIVE MESSAGES EMPOWER CHILDREN RATHER THAN LIMIT THEM.

Develop messages that help all children achieve, whether it is academically, athletically, artistically or socially. Rather than messages that communicate "Boys don't..., Girls don't...", messages should be "Boys can..., Girls can..., Children can..."

WELCOMING SCHOOLS PROVIDE STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND SUCCEED.

Students who experience acceptance [at school] are more highly motivated, engaged in learning and committed to school.³ Also, students in schools with a greater sense of community are more academically motivated and have higher educational aspirations.⁴ They are also more likely to develop social and emotional competencies and enjoy school more.⁵

¹ C.J. Pyszowski (1987), cited in C. Patterson (1992), "Children of Lesbian and Gay Parents," *Child Development*, 63 (pp. 1021-1042).

² Michael S. Kimmel & Matthew Mahler, "Adolescent Masculinity, Homophobia and Violence: Random School Shootings, 1982-2001," *American Behavioral Scientist*, June 2003 (pp. 1439-1458).

³ K. Osterman (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(3), 323-367.

⁴ A. Bryk & M. Driscoll, "The High School as Community: Contextual Influences and Consequences for Students and Teachers," National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, 1988. D. Solomon, V. Battistich, M. Watson, E. Schaps, & C. Lewis, "A Six-District Study of Educational Change: Direct and Mediated Effects of the Child Development Project," *Social Psychology of Education*, 2000 (pp. 3–51). As cited in: Eric Schaps, National Association of Elementary School Principals, "Building Community: The Neglected Element in School Renewal," September 2000.

⁵ Eric Schaps, V. Battistich & D. Solomon, "School as a Caring Community: A Key to Character Education," in A. Molnar (Editor), *The Construction of Children's Character*, Part II, 96th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 1997. D. Solomon, V. Battistich, M. Watson, E. Schaps, & C. Lewis, "A Six-District Study of Educational Change: Direct and Mediated Effects of the Child Development Project," *Social Psychology of Education*, 2000 (pp. 3–51). As cited in: Eric Schaps, Educational Leadership, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, *The Heart of a Caring School*, March 2003 (pp. 31–33).



RESPONDING TO SOME CONCERNS ABOUT BEING LGBT INCLUSIVE

When you try to be inclusive of lesbian, gay, and transgender people and topics, questions and concerns may arise in conversations with parents, guardians, administrators or school boards. This section provides ideas on how to discuss concerns or questions.

While conversations about race, ethnicity, class and religion remain difficult for many people, our society generally shares the value of respect – or at least tolerance – for people who are of a different religious, racial, cultural or ethnic background than our own. We can largely agree that certain race-based or religious-based slurs are unacceptable, and we expect educators and all school related personnel to intervene when they see or hear name-calling or harassment based on characteristics associated with these categories.

However, anti-gay attitudes or behavior are often tolerated, and many students still “get away” with using slurs or words that are very hurtful to LGBT people and their families. Because LGBT people and topics are often not included in anti-bias work or conversations about diversity, it may be that educators and parents/guardians in your school community have less knowledge of or comfort with these conversations.

It is always helpful to emphasize your values instead of dwelling on the fears. Move the conversation from focusing on the myths and stereotypes about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and families, to emphasizing what this work is really about – supporting all students. If conversations are framed by myths and stereotypes, the dialogue is more likely to linger on negativity and fear, rather than focusing on positive aspects of welcoming schools.

Listen carefully to the concerns that are expressed. This will help you find points of agreement. For example, we all share values of family and respect. What follows are some examples of specific language that might be helpful.

WE ARE TALKING ABOUT FAMILY.

Families of all kinds are essential to students' well-being. When any parents or guardians are discussed, whether they are heterosexual, gay, adoptive, kinship, single or married, educators are simply discussing family.

- Roberto is talking about his family when he talks about visiting his grandparents with his two moms and younger brother, just as Sasha is talking about her family when she describes her vacation with her mommy, daddy and sister.
- Showing a book that has two dads cooking dinner for their child shows two parents caring for their son.
- Seeing a film with children talking about the many kinds of families that they are growing up in, shows many ways that caring adults are raising children.

The resources from *Welcoming Schools* help students see love and concern for children as the common threads that run through caring families.

WE ARE TALKING ABOUT RESPECT.

In elementary school, the word “gay” is used widely as a put-down; often to mean that something is stupid. Students use the phrase “That’s so gay” long before they know what the word “gay” means. Anti-gay or gender-related put-downs are among the most commonly heard slurs in school

environments.¹ When educators address the use of the word “gay,” they are not introducing either the topic or the vocabulary.

When name-calling and put-downs are discussed it is important for educators to explicitly discuss the kinds of words that students are using. Words like gay or queer or sissy are words that hurt their classmates and friends. In these discussions on name-calling it is respect that is being discussed.

SCHOOLS STRIVE TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING AND CONNECTIONS ACROSS DIVERSITY OR DIFFERENCE.

Schools are places where many diverse people come together – many kinds of families, many races, many ethnicities and many faiths. Students and communities are best served when their members learn to get along with one another, understand one another and respect one another. Part of learning for students is to see and appreciate the diversity that exists in their classroom, their school, and the wider community. While there are differences, people also share much in common.

As our world and our interactions with people grow increasingly diverse, students benefit from developing the skills to live and work with many different kinds of people.

CHILDREN WITH SAME-SEX PARENTS ARE A RACIALLY, CULTURALLY, AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE GROUP.

Across America in suburban, rural and urban schools there are children with LGBT parents, grandparents or guardians.

- Households headed by same-sex couples are reported in virtually every U.S. county according to the U.S. Census.²
- In rural states, such as Wyoming and Alaska, and in southern states households headed by same-sex couples are more likely to have children than same-sex households in other states.³
- Hispanic and African-American same-sex couples are about twice as likely to be raising children as white non-Hispanic same-sex couples.⁴



IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL CHILDREN TO BE A PART OF DISCUSSIONS OF FAMILIES, NAME-CALLING AND CURRENT EVENTS.

As our world becomes increasingly diverse, students will meet people – classmates, teammates, friends – with many kinds of families. Some will have parents, grandparents, guardians or other relatives who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. It is inevitable that discussions will and already do come up about what it means to be LGBT.

In today’s environment the words “gay,” “lesbian,” or “transgender” come up in the context of current events. Students hear them in the news, in other media, and in many aspects of their lives. It can only be expected that when they come to school conversations and questions may arise the classroom or in the hallways.

When students are not allowed to discuss LGBT-related topics, it heightens the mystery and potentially divisiveness of the topic. All students benefit from discussions about family diversity, stopping put-downs and bullying and exploring their curiosity and questions about current events.

In many states there are specific regulations for parental notification when the school curriculum addresses sexuality. However, when educators discuss family diversity, it is family – children’s families – that is being discussed. In the lessons on name-calling, educators are discussing understanding and respect.

COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR BUILDING TRUST BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME.

It is important for parents/guardians to know what is going on in their child's classroom – whether it is about academics, such as the math unit they are covering, or about discussion of different kinds of families or hurtful LGBT-related or any other name-calling.

Some parents may feel more comfortable talking about their child's math lesson than talking about families with two moms or dads or about what "gay" or "lesbian" means. Parents may not know how to approach the topic with children. They may feel caught off-guard when a child asks about it. Knowing how these conversations happen at school can be helpful.

Schools have successfully held evening forums that discuss families or that talk about how to handle hurtful teasing and bullying. Information for and communication with families is essential to building trust between school and home.

FAMILY RESPECT INCLUDES RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.

Public schools include people with many different religious beliefs. The role of schools is not to get everyone to agree but to foster a climate where there is respect for the diversity of beliefs and families within a community. Respect is built by acknowledging the diversity in the community, promoting opportunities for community dialogue and allowing the diversity of families to be visible within the school. Most people can agree that it is appropriate for schools to teach kindness and mutual respect for others' beliefs.

SCHOOLS ARE A PLACE FOR INFORMED AND OPEN DISCUSSIONS.

Information and discussion will not make anyone gay or straight. As students grow older, some will identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Most LGBT people grew up in households headed by heterosexual parents. On the other hand, knowing or learning about gay people might make someone less likely to insult or threaten someone he or she thinks is gay. Or, it might help someone not allow a friend to be ostracized for having a LGBT parent.

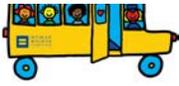


¹ Harris Interactive & GLSEN, "From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America, A Survey of Students and Teachers," 2005 (retrieved April 5, 2007), (p. 7). Available at: <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1859.html>.

² Movement Advancement Project, Family Equality Council & Center for American Progress, "LGBT Families: Facts at a Glance," October 2011 (p. 2). Available at: <http://www.lgbtmap.org/lgbt-families-facts-at-a-glance>

³ Movement Advancement Project (2012) Percent of Same-Sex Couples Raising Children. Available at: http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/same_sex_couples_raising_children

⁴ Gates, Gary J. (2012) Same-sex Couples in Census 2010: Race and Ethnicity. The Williams Institute. Available at: <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/census-lgbt-demographics-studies/same-sex-couples-census-2010-race-ethnicity/>



SIX KEY POINTS ON BULLYING, BIAS AND SCHOOLS

1) **Safe students are more successful students.**

Research clearly shows that there is a connection between social and emotional well-being, school connectedness and improved academic achievement.

2) **Some words DO hurt more than others.**

Bullying and hurtful name-calling based on identity has more severe effects than other kinds of bullying.

3) **It takes more than a few good lesson plans to create safe schools.** Programs that involve the entire school community including administrators, teachers, other school staff, parents and guardians, and students are most effective in creating a school environment that reduces hurtful, mean behavior and allows students to thrive.

4) **Young students see and know more than we think.** Most educators underestimate the amount of bullying and name-calling that students experience. Students are counting on the adults in the school community to help them figure out what to do about it.

When students report a more severe bullying climate, school-wide passing rates on standardized tests are up to 5% lower.

Virginia High School Safety Study, 2008

Compared with students harassed for other reasons, students who report being harassed for their race, religion, ability, perceived sexual orientation, or gender:

- are twice as likely to have their personal belongings stolen or deliberately damaged at school;
- are more likely to report being depressed and attempting suicide;
- are more likely to skip school and have lower grades;
- and are up to 4 times as likely to have been threatened with a weapon at school.

Stephen Russell et al. 2012
American Journal of Public Health.

Key strategies to change the school climate and norms of behavior include:

- the whole school working together,
- establishing school wide rules and consequences for bullying,
- educator training,
- parent engagement,
- classroom management,
- playground supervision,
- and cooperative group work.

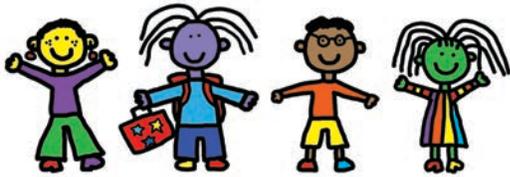
Maria Ttofi and David Farrington, 2011
Journal of Experimental Criminology

Elementary school staff often underestimates the number of students involved in frequent bullying. While the majority of the school staff estimated that less than 10% of their students were bullied in the past month, over 30% of the students actually said they were frequently bullied.

Catherine Bradshaw et al. 2007
School Psychology Review

5) There are many ways to be an ally.

Students can learn to support someone who is hurt by bullying behaviors by speaking out, seeking support from an adult, listening to someone who has been hurt, talking to those involved, and learning about and appreciating differences.



6) Noticing differences is natural.

We can learn not to make negative judgments on the basis of difference. When a student notices differences, adults' responses can set in motion that student's understanding and acceptance of difference – or the opposite. Use these times as “teachable-moments.”

**BE WHO
YOU ARE!**

According to the 5th graders included in a study of over 13,000 students in grades 5-12:

Peer actions that make things better are:

- spending time or talking with them at school,
- helping them get away from the situation,
- making a distraction,
- and helping them tell an adult at the school.

Peer actions that make things worse are:

- blaming them for what happened,
- making fun of them for being teased or for asking for help,
- and ignoring the situation.

Adult actions that make things better are:

- listening, giving advice and encouragement,
- checking in over time to see if things got better,
- increasing adult supervision,
- and disciplining the student who was mean.

Adult actions that make things worse are:

- telling them to stop tattling,
- telling them to solve it themselves,
- telling the student that they should have acted differently,
- and ignoring the situation.

Stan Davis and Charisse Nixon, 2010
Youth Voice Research Project

- Babies and children are driven to make sense of their world. One way they do this is to sort things and people by categories.
- Infants as young as 6 months of age notice skin color differences.
- By age 2-3, toddlers pick up the implicit and explicit messages about categories of people including stereotypes.

Meagan Patterson & Rebecca Bigler, 2006, *Child Development*;
Phyllis Katz, 1997, *Race, gender, and young children*
Lawrence Hirschfeld, 2008, *In the Handbook of race, racism, and the developing child*

Conversations about racial differences and inequities are associated with lower levels of bias in young children.

Phyllis Katz, 2003
American Psychologist



Welcoming Schools

BULLYING PREVENTION BEST PRACTICES AND *WELCOMING SCHOOLS*

The *Welcoming Schools* approach is comprehensive and has tools to engage parents, administrators, educators, staff and students. While *Welcoming Schools* is not solely a bullying prevention program, the guide consistently focuses on improving the social environment of schools, making it a useful stand-alone tool as well as a supplement to other research-based bullying prevention programs. The *Welcoming Schools* model mirrors the best practices in bullying prevention and intervention identified by the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) This document lists HRSA's best practices and ways that *Welcoming Schools* provides tools for schools to implement those strategies.

1) Focus on the social environment of the school.

To reduce bullying, it is important to change the climate of the school and the social norms with regard to bullying. This requires the efforts of everyone in the school environment – teachers, administrators, counselors, other non-teaching staff (such as bus drivers, nurses, school resource officers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and school librarians), parents, and students.

All of the Professional Development and Family Education activities in the guide are designed to build an inclusive community and increase the capacity of adults to create a more welcoming environment. Relevant components in the guide are:

- *Connecting with Colleagues: Educator Training*
- *Family Education and Community Building Activities*
- *Teachable Moments*
- *Lesson plans such as Creating Classroom Community*

2) Assess bullying at your school.

Intuitively adults are not always very good at estimating the nature and extent of bullying at their school. Frequently we are quite surprised by the amount of bullying that students experience, the types of bullying that are most common, or the "hot spots" where bullying happens. As a result, it is often quite useful to assess bullying by administering an anonymous questionnaire to students about bullying.

Welcoming Schools includes surveys that can be filled out by adults in the school as well as by students in the upper elementary school grades. When there are disparities between adult and student perspectives, adults are often moved to action. For survey information see:

- *School Climate Assessment*
- *Student Survey*

3) Garner staff and parent support for bullying prevention.

Bullying prevention should not be the sole responsibility of an administrator, counselor, teacher or any single individual at a school. To be most effective, bullying prevention efforts require buy-in from the majority of the staff and from parents.

Staff and parent involvement are critical to the Welcoming Schools approach. Schools are encouraged to develop teams of Welcoming Schools leaders: educators who provided direction and education for their peers. The Welcoming Schools approach also fosters parent involvement through Welcoming Schools Task Forces as well as parent events. For more information related to staff and parent buy-in, see:

- *Creating Welcoming Schools: Getting Started*
 - *Connecting with Colleagues: Learning Together*
 - *Family Education and Community Building*
 - *Developing a School Climate Task Force*
-

4) Coordinate and Integrate Prevention Efforts

Bullying prevention efforts seem to work best if they are coordinated by a representative group from the school. This coordinating team (which might include an administrator, a teacher from each grade, a member of the non-teaching staff, a school counselor or other school-based mental health professional, a school nurse, and a parent) should meet regularly to digest data from the school survey described in Strategy 2; plan bullying prevention rules, policies, and activities; motivate staff, students, and parents; and ensure that the efforts continue over time.

An advisory group comprised of representatives from the groups identified above is a key component to successful implementation of Welcoming Schools. These are the people who can best identify strategies for doing community outreach and tailoring Welcoming Schools to community needs. This type of group can be developed specifically for the purpose of implementing Welcoming Schools, or can be derived from an existing committee. For more information about setting up a Welcoming Schools Advisory group see:

- *Creating Welcoming Schools: Getting Started*
- *Developing a School Climate Task Force*

5) Provide Training in Bullying Prevention and Response for School Staff

All administrators, faculty and staff at a school should be trained in bullying prevention and intervention. In-service training can help staff members to better understand the nature of bullying and its effects, how to respond if they observe bullying, and how to work with others at the school to help prevent bullying.

Adults in the school community generally welcome professional development that makes them partners to prevent bullying. When bullying is related to the composition of a child's family, such as same-sex parents, grandparent headed families, or immigrant parents, adults sometimes need tools to not only interrupt the bullying behavior, but to provide education to counter stereotypes and bias. Tools in the Welcoming Schools that help staff and educators address these issues are:

- *Connecting with Colleagues: Educator Training*
- *Responding to Some Concerns about being LGBT Inclusive*
- *Teachable Moments*
- *What Can We Do? Bias, Bullying and Bystanders Film*

6) Establish and enforce school rules and policies related to bullying.

Although many school behavior codes implicitly forbid bullying, many codes do not use the term or make explicit our expectations for student behavior. It is important to make clear that the school not only expects students not to bully, but that it also expects them to be good citizens, not passive bystanders, if they are aware of bullying or students who appear troubled, possibly from bullying. Developing simple, clear rules about bullying can help to ensure that students are aware of adults' expectations that they refrain from bullying and help students who are bullied. School rules and policies should be posted and discussed with students and parents. Appropriate positive and negative consequences also should be developed for following or not following the school's rules.

Links to states' anti-bullying statutes can be found on the Stopbullying.gov website:

<http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html>

Relevant materials in Welcoming Schools include:

- *A Look at Laws & Policies that Support Welcoming Schools*
 - *Supportive Resolutions*
-

7) Increase adult supervision in hot spots where bullying occurs.

Bullying tends to thrive in locations where adults are not present or are not vigilant. Once school personnel have identified hot spots for bullying from the student questionnaires, look for creative ways to increase adults' presence in these locations.

Students are most likely to be able to identify the "hot spots" for adults. A lesson plan in the Welcoming Schools Guide has students identify these hot spots and the student survey helps identify ways in which students are targeted. These resources can be found at:

- *Lesson Plan: Name Calling and Feeling Safe in School*
- *Student Survey*



8) Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations.

All staff should be able to intervene effectively on the spot to stop bullying (i.e., in the 12 minutes that one frequently has to deal with bullying). Designated staff should also hold sensitive follow-up meetings with children who are bullied and (separately) with children who bully. Staff should involve parents of affected students whenever possible.

In order to successfully intervene, adults need to recognize student language that is sometimes at the root of bullying: For example, when students are targeted because they are not acting in traditionally feminine or masculine ways or when students are put down because they live with a grandparent, two dads, or in foster care. Welcoming Schools provides tools to intervene when these comments are made. Resources in Welcoming Schools include:

- *Connecting with Colleagues: Have You Ever Thought about How You Might Respond?*
- *What Do You Say to 'That's So Gay?'*
- *Bias, Bullying and Bystanders: Tips for Elementary School Educators*

9) Focus some class time on bullying prevention.

It is important that bullying prevention programs include a classroom component. Teachers (with the support of administrators) should set aside 20-30 minutes each week (or every other week) to discuss bullying and peer relations with students. These meetings help teachers to keep their fingers on the pulse of students' concerns, allow time for candid discussions about bullying and the harm that it can cause, and provide tools for students to address bullying problems. Anti-bullying themes and messages also can be incorporated throughout the school curriculum.

All of the lesson plans in Welcoming Schools are key components of comprehensive bullying prevention. Some specifically address bullying behaviors and the role of bystanders, allies and targets and others address respect across differences.

10) Continue these efforts over time.

There should be no "end date" for bullying prevention activities. Bullying prevention should be woven into the entire school environment.

As new students, families, and educators cycle into a school community it is critical that professional development, family activities and lesson plans continue to be implemented every year. Research shows that changing a school culture takes time and short-term interventions do not have a lasting affect. The contents of Welcoming Schools have been designed so that they can be used proactively over time.



WELCOMING SCHOOLS: KEYS TO SUCCESS

COLLABORATE & DEVELOP SUPPORT TO CREATE A CARING COMMUNITY

Collaboration is key. Begin by finding support in your school community. As an administrator, work with key stakeholders to assess, develop and implement plans for creating a positive and welcoming school climate. As an educator, talk with your colleagues, administrators and parents. As a parent or guardian talk with other parents/guardians, with the PTO/PTA, and with teachers and administrators. Engage a diverse cross-section of stakeholders in planning and implementation. The more people who see the need for a positive and respectful school climate, the more you will be able to make improvements.

GATHER INFORMATION – WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR SCHOOL

Evaluate what is working to create a positive school climate and what can be improved. Assess the school climate with surveys of staff, students and families. See how Welcoming Schools work could be integrated into existing anti-bullying or SEL programs such as Olweus or Second Step.

Sharing real students' and families' stories from your school can be effective in explaining why addressing hurtful name-calling and bullying is important. Speak with teachers and guidance staff about what they have observed in the school related to bias-based teasing and bullying. See if there are parental concerns about children being teased because of their families' structure or children's identities.

SMART FIRST STEPS – ENGAGE ADULTS IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Provide professional development on interrupting and stopping bias-based name-calling or bullying and ways to respond to students' questions on diverse families. Most educators have little experience talking about LGBT topics or other forms of bias with students. Professional development can help answer many questions and calm the fears that typically arise.

Hold school community forums on ending hurtful teasing and bullying. Ensure that the ways in which children are actually teased are addressed by looking at bullying based on race, anti-LGBT perceptions, gender, religion, class and body size.

Help people see, understand and value the diversity of families in the school and wider community with evening events recognizing and celebrating family diversity. These events provide parents/guardians the opportunity to learn from each other and understand the importance of creating welcoming schools.

ENSURE A FOUNDATION FOR A RESPECTFUL AND WELCOMING SCHOOL

Link Welcoming Schools work with your school's core values, mission statements or policies. Help people see the connections between a positive school climate and academic achievement for all students. Ensure that anti-bullying or harassment policies include the need to protect more vulnerable students by naming these categories. Develop positive supports for good behavior and consistent discipline policies for handling hurtful teasing and bullying behavior.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Plan how you will communicate with parents/guardians about lessons or discussions that arise regarding family diversity. Help families think about ways to have more informed conversations at home. Help people understand that when you are talking with elementary school students about LGBT people, you are talking about families, name-calling, discrimination or current events. Listen carefully to the questions, doubts and fears of the people within the school or the larger community. Look for opportunities to foster dialogue in respectful and inclusive ways.



Welcoming Schools

A PROJECT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

Bias, Bullying, and Bystanders

Over three-quarters of middle school students who are harassed say that the **harassment is related to bias** about their race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, actual, perceived sexual orientation, religion, or disability.¹

Children who experience **discrimination based on their race or ethnicity** are more likely to report **depression and difficulty paying attention in school**.

Students **targeted with anti-gay put-downs** are more likely to report higher levels of depression and anxiety and a **lower sense of school belonging regardless of their sexual orientation**.

Students in classrooms where teachers establish classroom norms that **explicitly value diversity** are less likely to be **teased** based on ethnicity and are more likely to value school, feel like they belong, and get better grades.

Student and adults who **perceive that others in their school would jump in to stop bullying** are **more likely to intervene** when they witnessing bullying.

“A team of educators and parents in my school chose books that included three themes – race, economic status, and families with same-sex parents – to include in their language arts curriculum. We hosted a meeting for families to review the books, ask questions, and to learn how this initiative tied into bullying prevention and academic achievement. Many parents said they were uncertain about how to have these conversations with their children and they thanked us for providing a chance to think about these topics.”

– Elementary School Principal

¹ See www.welcomingschools.org for research citations.

Tips for K - 8 School Educators

Be an upstander. You are a role model for your students. They watch what you do and will follow your lead. They notice whether you stop hurtful name-calling or comments based on bias: skin color, gender, religion, weight, ability, family structure. They worry if they might be the next target of a mean remark.

Practice. Practice. Practice. Improving your skills at anything takes practice – including stopping hurtful bullying and teasing. Practice with colleagues what you could say to students to stop harassment, to educate, to let all students know that you expect respect and accept diversity. Practice responding to students' questions about differences.

Teach your students how to be an ally. Work with your students so they know what they can do if they witness bullying – including talking with or befriending the targeted student, confiding in an adult, talking with the student who is being mean, causing a distraction to help stop the harassment, or speaking up in the moment.

Involve families. Host a family night with a panel of diverse families from your school community. Hold a book night with students or teachers reading from books that show a range of diversity – including racial, ethnic, religious, economic status or family structure.

Use books to engage students

Read books featuring diverse families such as *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman or *The Family Book* by Todd Parr. Create hallway displays with students' drawings of their families or important adults/relatives in their lives.

Read books such as *One* by Kathryn Otoshi or *Benjamin and the Word / Benjamin y La Palabra* by Daniel Olivas to spark discussion of hurtful teasing and ways to be an ally to classmates. Discuss with students the real put-downs they hear, paying close attention to ones that target a child's or their family's identity.

“I choose books to read to my students as a way to hear from them what they experience in school. When I used the book, *One*, students came up to me afterwards to tell me ways that they had been hurt and seen others hurt. I let them know that it's not tattling to try to get someone out of trouble. That's different than coming to me just to get someone in trouble!”

– Elementary School Educator

What You Can Say to Stop Hurtful Language and Educate

- That was a stereotype. Stereotypes are a kind of lie and they hurt people's feelings. Everybody is different with their own strengths and own way of being.
- In this classroom, I want everyone to be respected. Making negative comments about a person's skin color is very disrespectful and will not be accepted. It's what inside that is important.
- Do you know what that word means? It's a put down for someone's religion. There are many different religions in this world and in this school we respect all religions.
- It's unacceptable to say that to a classmate. All students are welcome here at (name of school).
- You may not have meant to hurt anyone, but saying "That's gay" can hurt those around you. Do you know what gay means?

If no, a simple response could be – the word gay is used to describe a man and a man or a woman and a woman, who love each other and want to be family to each other.

In the future I expect you to use that word respectfully and not in a hurtful way.

- That is not okay. I will not allow someone to be left out in this classroom because of where they come from or how they talk.
- It is not ok to call someone a "girl" to insult them. When you call someone a girl as a putdown, you are insulting ALL girls.
- It's true that some boys don't like to play with dolls but some boys do! Just like some of you like to draw and some of you don't and some of you like to play kickball and others don't. No one should have to pick and choose what they do just because they are a boy or a girl.

“When my son was five years old, he went to a party with his classmate wearing a pink shirt and sparkly blue sneakers. An adult mistakenly referred to him as a girl in front of the whole group. One child in the room said, “He's not a boy. He's a boy who dresses like a girl.” Most of the children in the room began laughing. Then one child said loudly, “He's my friend, stop laughing at him!” The laughter stopped immediately. If this young child could speak up and make a difference, then surely we can too.”

– Mother of a 3rd grader

Engage Students in Teachable Moments

When elementary school students use language based on bias about another child's identity, they may just be repeating what they have heard. They may have no idea how hurtful that language is.

Instead of just, “Don't say this,” follow-up with open ended questions like “Why do you think that?” and “Do you know what that means?”

Questions that lead to deeper conversations:

- Why do you think it's wrong for boys to wear pink?
- Has anyone called you a name that made you feel bad?
- Why did you think it was okay to make fun of the way someone looks?
- Do you know what the word faggot means?
- Where have you heard that kind of language before?

“In my classroom when students would use the word gay in a negative way I would always tell them to not say that. One day I overheard a student talking to friends about a gay relative in a respectful way. One of the students saw me nearby and whispered, “Shhh, stop! Mr. B doesn't like gay people.” That was an aha moment for me. I learned that stopping negative language is not enough. We need to educate students about why language is hurtful and help them appreciate the diversity in our schools and in the world.”

– 2nd Grade Teacher



GENDER & CHILDREN: A PLACE TO BEGIN

Creating schools that nurture academic achievement, provide physical and emotional safety and welcome all students are common goals for all educators. As educators, one can create gender-expansive environments that affirm all children and allow them to express their interests and find confidence in their strengths.

IDEAS FOR EDUCATORS IN THE CLASSROOM

- Help students expand their possibilities – academically, artistically, emotionally – and see that there are many ways to be a boy or a girl.
- Use inclusive phrases to address your class as a whole like “Good morning, everyone” or “Good morning, scholars” instead of “Good morning, boys and girls.” You could also choose and use a name for your class that brings to mind positive attributes – like the Dolphins or the Owls.
- Group students in ways that do not rely on gender such as: students whose last names begin with A-H or I-Z, or students who are sitting in a particular part of the room, etc. Avoid situations that force children to make gendered choices, such as boys line up here and girls line up there.
- Develop classroom messages that emphasize “All children can...” rather than “Boys don’t..., Girls don’t...” Increasingly put more emphasis on the inclusive term “children.”
- Provide role models for all children that show a wide range of achievements and emotions for all people. Review the books in your classroom to ensure inclusion of good role models. Read books that encourage discussion of gender assumptions. Have students write biographies or create posters for hallway displays featuring people who have moved beyond traditional roles and have excelled in their chosen fields.
- Be a role model! When possible, give examples of how you or people you know like to do things outside of gender stereotypes. For example, if you’re a woman who likes carpentry, do a math problems related to woodworking. If you’re a man who likes to cook, create a math problem measuring recipe ingredients.
- Use lesson plans designed to expand understanding of gender. Provide opportunities for students to look at the qualities all children share. Help them to become see the limitations of stereotyping.
- Work with the students in your classroom to help them think of ways to be allies when someone is teased or bullied for any reason. Can they try to stop it directly? Should they talk with an adult? Can they talk with the student who has been harassed? Explore with students different options and actions.
- Be an upstander yourself. Stop hurtful teasing or name-calling based on gender and other bias. Interrupt student comments based on gender stereotypes. Engage in discussion with students. Use these times as teachable moments.
- Encourage students to find activities that they enjoy and that respect their interests. This will help them connect to other students with similar interests and fit in socially.



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- Be aware of whether your students feel safe both inside and outside of the classroom. In the lunchroom? Recess? P.E? Special education classes? In the bathroom? On the school bus? Use the *Name-calling and Feeling Safe at School* lesson to engage students on where they feel safe and what makes them feel safe.
 - Be ready to support families whose children expand gender norms. Help parents/guardians see their child's strengths – academic, artistic, athletic, dramatic or interpersonal.

STEPS FOR SCHOOL-WIDE ACTION

- Professional development is key. Provide training for all school personnel—from teachers, aides and counselors to administrative staff, bus drivers, recess aides, and cafeteria workers. Adults in the school need time to practice and be prepared with simple phrases to stop gendered teasing and bullying; they need practice intervening when students are limiting each other based on gender; and they need to be ready to educate students on why it is wrong or hurtful.
- Form a committee of staff or staff and parents/caregivers to oversee development of a caring, respectful community in your school. This group could assess your school's current climate and practices, arrange for professional development, organize family education events, or develop affirming hallway displays.
- Work to ensure that educators feel supported by the administration and others in the school in their efforts to help create welcoming learning environments.
- Agree on professional and developmentally appropriate language when discussing children's gender expression. Model inclusive, expansive language for other parents who comment about a particular child.
- Hold an evening event for parents and caregivers in your school community to help people understand the importance and complexity of gender for children. Share with families how to talk about this topic in ways that are affirming, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate.
- Ensure good supervision of hallways, playgrounds, and cafeterias to increase safety and reduce name-calling and bullying. Provide some structured or adult coached activities during recess to engage more students. Encourage and teach inclusive and cooperative games. Develop a playground norm of "You can't say, you can't play."
- Reframe dress codes to describe what the school considers appropriate clothing without assigning clothing options to particular genders. For example, for a chorus concert, you could ask students to wear a white top and dark or black on the bottom.
- Ensure anti-bullying policies specifically name groups more frequently targeted for harassment. Include actual or perceived gender identity and sexual orientation. Naming it, helps stop it.



BE WHO YOU ARE!



DEVELOPING A WELCOMING CLASSROOM

Educators working to develop a classroom that is welcoming of all students and their families may find it helpful to ask these questions. If visitors came to your classroom, would they know that diversity is valued as a resource in this classroom?

- Do you explicitly try to build a community within your classroom where students respect one another, help each other, know one another and work together?
- Are there signs about respect or caring on your classroom walls?
- Do you develop, with your students, classroom agreements and rules regarding teasing, name-calling and respect for differences and then keep them posted on your classroom walls?
- Would children from many diverse families feel welcomed? Would children with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents/caring adults feel welcome in your class?
- Would gender creative children feel welcome? Do you address the class as a whole with inclusive terms such as children, students, scholars, or a classroom name like Owls? Do you avoid separating students by gender for activities?
- Are there posters about intervening in bullying or ways to be an ally to your friends and classmates?
- Do students hear you interrupting mean teasing and name-calling?
- Are there diverse images on the classroom walls including diverse family structures and individuals in non-traditional careers? Do the images include racial, ethnic or cultural diversity?
- Does your classroom library have books with diverse family structures and books with characters in expansive gender roles?
- Do you use inclusive language when you mention students' families? Can forms and permission slips be signed by parents or guardians? Do you address class letters to families or parents/guardians? Do you ask students to show things to a parent or other adult at home?
- Are resources or materials visible so that LGBT parents/guardians can identify you as an ally even if they do not choose to come out?
- Do you have resources on LGBT topics and gender available and do parents/guardians and other staff know that you have them?



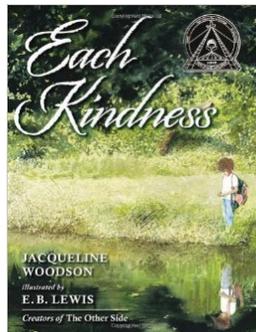


Welcoming Schools

4 SIMPLE WAYS TO START THE YEAR WITH A WELCOMING CLASSROOM

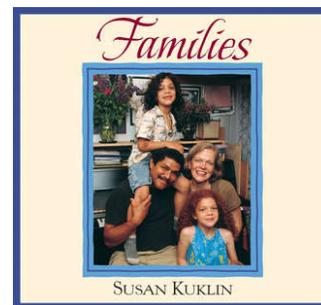
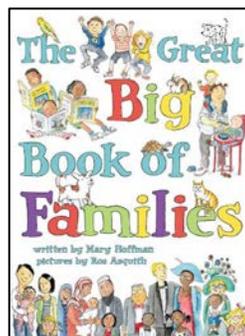
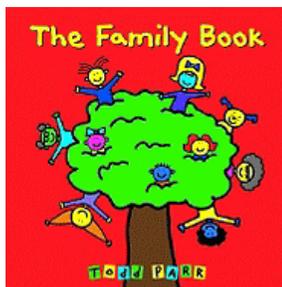
1) Develop expectations for respect and kindness in your classroom.

- Read books such as *One* by Kathryn Otoshi, *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson, or *The New Girl... and Me* by Jacqui Robbins. For more ideas, see: Books to Engage Elementary Students on Bullying and Diversity.
- Develop class rules/norms together that help create a welcoming classroom. Talk about including others or sticking up for each other.
- As a class brainstorm ideas for posters or signs for your classroom and school hallways about welcoming all and respect. In small groups, have students make the posters.



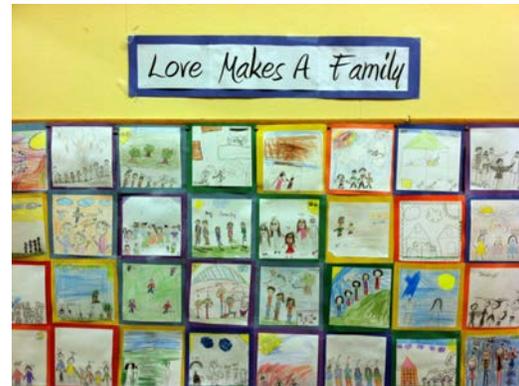
2) Create a display of books featuring all kinds of families.

- Include books that reflect the lives of the students in your school.
- Include books that offer perspectives on families not found in your school.
- For more ideas, check out Welcoming Schools' All Kinds of Families bibliography



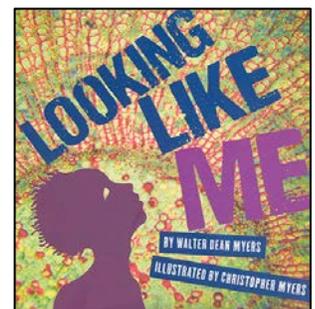
3) Celebrate your students' lives with hallway displays.

- Work with students to create hallway displays about themselves or their families.
- With puzzle piece shaped paper, have students draw and write about what they feel makes them special and proud about themselves. Fit them together in a school hallway display.
- Have students draw pictures of their families and create a Love Makes a Family display.



4) Build community with simple beginning of the year poetry lessons.

- With templates and step-by-step lesson plans, help your students get to know each other.
- Post the poems around your classroom or along the school hallway.
- Feature your students' poems at a Back to School night.
- Lesson Plans from Welcoming Schools:
 - Creating Community in Your Classroom Through Poetry: I Am Poems along with the Book *Looking Like Me* (Grades 2 – 5)
 - Learning About Each Other Through Poetry: BioPoems (Grades 3 – 6)
 - Where I'm From: Family, Community and Poetry (Grades 4 – 6)



For additional resources, download the complete, **Welcoming Schools Starter Kit** with over 70 pages of resources to help get the year off to a great start.



FAMILY EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING FOR YOUR SCHOOL

A critical aspect to creating a welcoming school for all children is the involvement and understanding of the parents and guardians in the school community.

Sometimes the concern about discussing different kinds of families in school, in particular families with LGBT parents, is that parents/guardians don't know how these topics are being addressed in school and they don't know what to say when their children start asking questions. Evening programs give parents/guardians a chance to discuss their concerns, while at the same time see how families with LGBT parents/caring adults can be explained in a child-friendly way.

Family programs can also be a great way to open dialogue and discussion between parents/guardians and their children. Contact a *Welcoming Schools* regional trainer for advice on holding an evening event at your school.

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL EVENT:

- The more people you work with to organize these events, the more people will come.
- If you are an educator, involve the parents and guardians in your school.
- If you are a parent/guardian, involve the educators and administrators in your school.
- Reach out to all kinds of families in your school to organize the event and attend it.
- Make sure it is well publicized, have childcare available, and serve food!

***WHAT DO YOU KNOW? SIX TO TWELVE YEAR-OLDS TALK ABOUT GAYS AND LESBIANS,* A FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION**

Use a screening of *Welcoming Schools* award winning short film to bring your school community together. Discuss how educators and families can work together to stop hurtful teasing and gay putdowns and how your school can be welcoming to all students and their families. The film helps parents and educators see the level of knowledge that students already. At the same time, it helps people feel more comfortable answering children's questions about gay men and lesbians.

"IS YOUR FAMILY LIKE MINE?" PANEL DISCUSSION

With a panel of parents and guardians from your school community, help people learn more about each other – to see what makes families unique, as well as what they have in common and what values they share. It helps people see the realities of the diversity within their own community.

Arrange for a panel that represents all kinds of diversity, including race, family structure, class, etc. A good first question is, "How do you talk about your family with your children?" Make sure people describe their families, otherwise, they may forget or assume people know. Ask people to speak in their own voices and make sure they don't feel like they have to represent all families like them.

ANSWERING YOUR CHILDREN'S TOUGH QUESTIONS: AN EVENING WORKSHOP

Do your children ask questions about other kinds of families that you are not sure how to answer? Children are curious and often ask questions when they come into contact with families different from their own - Why doesn't she live with her dad/mom? Why does he have two moms? Who are her real parents? Why doesn't he look like his parents? Talking with others helps parents and educators become more comfortable approaching these topics. Generate questions from the participants, making sure many topics are covered. A facilitator can then ask the whole group questions one at a time, and smaller groups can discuss possible ways to answer them. Share insights with the whole group.

FAMILY BOOK BAGS: A SCHOOL-WIDE LITERATURE & DIVERSITY PROJECT

Family Books Bags involves organizing grade-level book bags to be sent home with each child on a rotating basis throughout the school year. Each book bag includes books that can be read with family members, audiotapes of books, activities and games to play and recipes from various cultures. The project engages both students and parents/guardians, providing them with opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse backgrounds of the families in the school community and the community at large.

A FILM SHOWING OF *THAT'S A FAMILY!*

A screening of *That's a Family!* can be a way to open discussion about diverse families including multi-racial, adoptive, single-parent, and same-sex-parents. The children in this film speak for themselves. An evening event can be held either only for adults or for families. This film can help address parental concerns and help them answer their children's questions. At a family forum you can generate a rich discussion using the simple prompt: "As you watch the film, choose one family that has something in common with your family, that in some way mirrors your family, and choose a family that is very different from your family, that in some way provides a window into another experience." After the movie is over, people can share in small or large groups.

FAMILY FORUM AT A CALIFORNIA SCHOOL

At a family forum at one of the California Welcoming Schools pilot sites, 45 parents attended a pasta dinner. To prepare kids for the family forum, the school made a Family Diversity Tree. Each child made a leaf of his/her family, and the leaf was placed on the tree in the auditorium where the family forum was held. For the main event of the evening, the principal pre-selected several families to talk about their family and "how it is unique."

A multiracial family discussed the role culture plays in their family, and how they made sure their children were connected to the cultures of both parents. They discussed their different religions and ways that they expose children to both religions. The next family was parented by two mothers. Their daughter spoke about her feelings on having two moms. She discussed how "we are no different than other families". The daughter in the last pre-selected family was in a wheelchair. Her mother, who is single, shared how important her daughter is to her. The daughter talked about how her mother takes care of her and is "the best mom".

Afterward, other children briefly discussed their families. These students came from African-American families, Indian families, Caucasian families, religiously diverse families, and grandparent-headed households. The overarching themes from all the children were: "my parents care for me," "we have lots of fun together" and "they love me."





Welcoming Schools

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE AS SCHOOL COUNSELOR TO DEVELOP A WELCOMING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Find ways for all children to feel respected, seen and understood. Work towards all children having a connection with an adult at school. Create a school climate in which all students feel safe enough and brave enough to explore and develop a healthy personal identity.
- Identify allies in your school community. Working with others will strengthen your ability to develop a cultural norm of respect, welcoming and standing up for each other.
- Ensure administrators and families in your school community see the important link between acceptance at school and academic success.
- Assess the level and types of hurtful teasing and bullying that occur in your school by using a student and staff survey. Talk with others about what they hear and see at your school. Ask specifically about identity based put downs – gender, race, class, or religious teasing or slurs. Students and adults may be hesitant to bring these up unless you provide an opening.
- Ensure that your social emotional learning curriculum looks at and works to solve real ways that students bully and harass each other. Notice underlying reasons why some students are targeted in your school. Is a boy called a loser because he's not athletic or boy "enough"? Is a girl teased because her clothes aren't new and fashionable or she isn't feminine "enough"?
- Work with the administration to find time for staff development on family diversity and ending bullying. Ensure bias-based teasing and name-calling are specifically addressed. Include all school personnel in anti-bullying training – teachers, support staff, administrators.
- Work towards all adults in the school knowing ways to respond to mean teasing and bullying and responding when they see it.
- Model inclusive language for students, for staff and educators, and for parents and guardians.
- Books and curricula provide an important mirror for children to see themselves and their families reflected in the world around them. They also provide a window into the lives of others and expand students' personal experience. Work with your school librarian and classroom teachers to have books with diverse family structures, including two-mom and two-dad families, and characters in expansive gender roles on their bookshelves. Provide positive role models for all children in your school.
- Develop hallway displays that highlight diversity, inclusion, achievement, and inspiration for all. Use student work to highlight their unique qualities, make connections between students, and ways they can be allies to each other.
- Often filling out forms is a family's first encounter with a school. Look at student forms, handbooks, and school/home communications to ensure connections with all of your students' families. Use inclusive language such as parent and/or guardian. Have multiple lines for parent's living in different locations.
- Have resources or materials visible so that LGBT parents/guardians can identify you as an ally even if they do not choose to come out.



CREATING A WELCOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

A feeling of belonging is critical to every child's well-being. This is illustrated starting in infancy and throughout early childhood with the drive to attach and form bonds. These bonds help children fulfill their potential in all areas of development—physical, social, emotional and cognitive. Quality early childhood education expands children's experiences as the core of the curriculum and makes relationships to family and community central themes.

GETTING STARTED!

One of the first steps to creating a Welcoming School is to assess your school's areas for growth. This checklist can be used for a self-assessment by teachers and administrators or to begin conversations with staff, parents and guardians.



CENTER AND CLASSROOM FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS

- Are forms that families complete for application as well as other center record-keeping family-friendly to diverse families? Do they use language such as parent/parent or parent/guardian rather than mother/father? For example, "Please bring this letter home to your family" (rather than to your "mommy and daddy") or "Dear Families, welcome to our new program year..."
- Do forms allow parents/guardians to define their family relationships in ways that are authentic to them?
- Do all children and families see themselves represented in letters and announcements?
- Are communications translated into other languages when appropriate?

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND FAMILY VISIBILITY

- Are there photos in common areas and in classrooms of families at work and at play that depict many ways that children and families interact and engage in the world?
- Do images show diversity of race, economic status, physical ability?
- Do posters, children's art, children's literature displays, photos of your real center families (including staff) depict the many ways that people work, play and live in families?
- Is there a place to house a "Families Gallery" that includes every family (including staff) in your center? Are these photos eye-level to children and part of ongoing day-to-day conversation?
- Are children and adults depicted playing, working, dressing and engaging in activities that are not limited by their gender or that do not conform to stereotypical gender roles?

CURRICULUM – DAILY CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

IN THE BLOCK AREA:

- Do family and people figures represent different cultures, families, and gender roles and activities?
 - Are there multiple sets of "family" figures so that children can select the grouping that most looks like their own families?
 - Are figures stored in ways that welcome each child's individual selection rather than on a shelf and in a way that represents one kind of family or narrow definitions of gender?
-

IN THE DRAMATIC PLAY AREA:

- Are there props that encourage multiple ways of playing family or any other imaginative play?
- Are children invited to engage in play that explores diverse occupations, roles and activities?
- Do children feel comfortable using all of the different props and dress-up materials?

IN CIRCLE OR GROUP TIMES:

- Do you matter of factly talk about and recognize a diversity of families, occupations, and recreation?
- Do you address name-calling and hurtful behaviors and teach pro-social interactions?
- Do staff members communicate with children about commonalities and differences?

IN THE WRITING AREA:

- Are there photos and prompts that encourage children to write (or dictate) stories about all kinds of people and families?
- Are children's stories shared with other children in ways that encourage respectful exploration of each other's experiences and ideas?

IN THE ART AREA:

- Are there materials and opportunities for children to express their ideas about themselves, their families and experiences?
- Are children encouraged to share their work and ideas with others in ways that invite conversation and exploration?

**IN MUSIC ACTIVITIES:**

- Is there a thoughtful selection of songs that represent diversity and broaden their experiences?
- Can children identify with the people and experiences that they sing about? Can they comfortably discover and discuss differences?
- Can lyrics to common children's songs be adjusted to be more inclusive?

IN THE LIBRARY:

- Does the children's literature that you display and read represent all different kinds of families?
- Do books represent children and grown-ups in ways that expand stereotypical notions of gender?
- Are books used for discussions with children that allow them to share their own experiences, ask questions and explore the many ways of being?
- Do you have bilingual children's literature and literature that portrays diverse cultures?
- Are children engaged in making their own books, especially "My Family" books? Are these displayed with the other literature in the library and sturdy enough to be handled regularly by children?

Comprehensive bibliographies can be found on the *Welcoming Schools* website.

**DAY-TO-DAY CONVERSATIONS AND STORYTELLING**

In all that we do with young children, we have opportunities to explore ideas and ask questions. Children have stories to tell every day. Seeing the world through their own lens and through the experiences of others prepares them to live in a diverse world and see themselves – and everyone else - as belonging. This is the gift of creating Welcoming Schools.



WELCOMING SCHOOLS FILMS

WHAT CAN WE DO? BIAS, BULLYING, AND BYSTANDERS

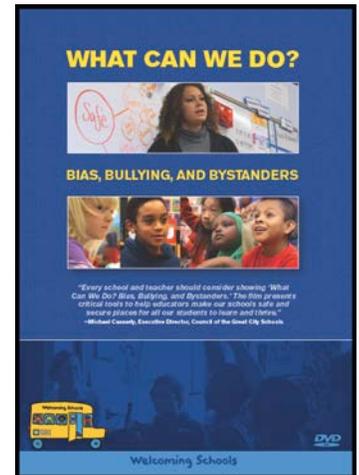
"Every school and teacher should consider showing *What Can We Do? Bias, Bullying, and Bystanders*. The film presents critical tools to help educators make our schools safe and secure places for all our students to learn and thrive."

– Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools

See teachers in elementary classrooms eliciting real conversations with their students about the impact of bullying and the power of students standing up for each other.

"You're Gay." "Your skin is too brown." "Fatty." "Your religion is fake." "Estúpido." These are the actual words of students in the film. These are the kinds of hurtful words and statements that elementary school students really experience. Students want adults in the school community to help them out. Educators want to know what they can do.

A 12-minute professional development film. The DVD includes a User Guide, classroom lesson plans, and training materials.

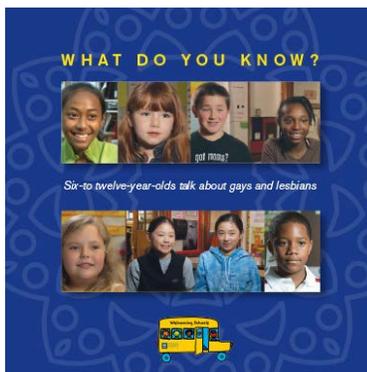


WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

SIX TO TWELVE YEAR-OLDS TALK ABOUT GAYS AND LESBIANS

"You cannot watch the film *What Do You Know?* without being impressed with, and sometimes surprised by, the knowledge and wisdom of the students featured in the film."

– Bill Kowba, Superintendent, San Diego Unified School District



An award winning 13-minute film produced by *Welcoming Schools* for elementary school staff and parents. The film features students from Alabama and Massachusetts discussing what they know about gay men and lesbians, what they hear at school, and what they would like teachers to do.

Showing this film as part of a training, helps people understand the need for addressing gay put downs or family diversity in elementary school. Students are having these conversations regardless of whether adults help with the conversation or not. They need and ask for adults to mediate these conversations for their safety (emotional and physical) in order to get to learning.





CONNECTING WITH COLLEAGUES: EQUITY, SCHOOL CLIMATE AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

SUGGESTED LEVEL: Educators or Parents/Guardians

LENGTH OF TIME: 15 - 20 minutes

This activity is best used at the beginning of a training as a frame for why we are doing this work in schools—because of learning and academic achievement. People often think of equity and/or diversity work that fosters a more inclusive and safe learning environment for students as “soft” topics that are not as important to learning as workshops focused on core academic subjects. Yet, the reality is that students cannot get to the learning of core academic areas until they feel safe to learn in their environment. These topics are central to academic achievement.

After facilitating the activity, leave the chart paper up on the wall to remind people of the connection to academic achievement as you continue with the training or meeting.

ACTIVITY

Begin with explaining the importance of doing this activity.

As one *Welcoming Schools* trainer says, “There are often two silos in our schools today related to professional development. On one hand, there is the silo that is about academic achievement and is focused on core subject areas such as reading and writing strategies or STEM. On the other hand there is the silo with the “soft stuff” – addressing topics such as bullying or race or LGBT-inclusive classrooms. These are often not given as much importance. But, I believe I am here today to work with you on academic achievement as I share information with you about LGBT topics, gender, race and other diversity topics. Let’s explore the two silos because I believe that they are actually one silo focused on learning and academic achievement.”

Ask: What is the relationship between educational equity (or diversity—use whatever word is being used in the school district to reflect inclusive learning) and academic achievement?

Have people form small groups for discussion. (2-3 people)

Report out and record on large paper.

Time for full group dialogue.

During the dialogue, share some of the research on the connections between academic achievement and equity.

KEY POINTS:

Students cannot get to learning if they are not feeling safe, seen, and valued.

Learning is diminished and/or does not occur without addressing equity and diversity topics.

Equity and diversity topics ARE about academic achievement.

RESEARCH CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND EQUITY

Students who experience acceptance at school are more highly motivated, engaged in learning and committed to school.¹

Both children who are targeted and children who exhibit bullying behavior have lower academic achievement in school.²

School-wide passing rates on standardized tests are up to 5% lower in schools where students report a more severe bullying climate.³

School belonging—students' emotional connection with their school and the people at their school—is consistently associated with positive academic outcomes for students of all ages and backgrounds.⁴

Elementary students who report perceived racial/ethnic discrimination are more likely to have symptoms of ADHD, conduct disorder, and ODD symptoms.⁵

Students in classrooms where teachers establish classroom norms that explicitly value diversity are less likely to be teased based on ethnicity and are more likely to value school and get better grades.⁶

A supportive adult presence is associated with less school burnout, lower aggression levels, and better academic performance.⁷

Compared with students harassed for other reasons, students who feel harassed for their race, religion, ability, perceived sexual orientation, or gender are more likely to have lower grades and skip school.⁸

There are higher dropout rates when students perceive higher rates of bullying and teasing in a school.⁹

References:

¹ K. F. Osterman (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research* 70(3), (pp. 323-367)

² Joseph A. Dake, James H. Price & Susan K. Telljohann, "The Nature and Extent of Bullying at School," *Journal of School Health*, May 2003 (pp. 173 – 180).

³ Issue 5: Does School Safety Influence Standards of Learning Achievement? Virginia High School Safety Study. <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>.

⁴ Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Close & Solberg, 2008. As cited in Cari Gillen-O'Neel, Diane N. Ruble, and Andrew J. Fuligni (2011) Ethnic Stigma, Academic Anxiety, and Intrinsic Motivation in Middle Childhood, *Child Development* 82(5): 1470–1485. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01621.x.

⁵ Coker, T.R. et al (2009) Perceived Racial/Ethnic Discrimination Among Fifth-Grade Students and Its Association With Mental Health. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2009 May; 99(5): 878–884. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2008.144329.

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⁸ Russell, S. T., Sinclair, K. O., Poteat, P. V., Koenig, B. W. (2012) Adolescent health and harassment based on discriminatory bias. *American Journal of Public Health* 102(3) 493-95. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2011.300430.

⁹ Cornell, D., Gregory, A., Huang, F., & Fan, X. (2012). Perceived prevalence of bullying and teasing predicts high school dropout rates. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. DOI: 10.1037/a0030416.



MAKING DECISIONS – ALLY OR BYSTANDER: SHORT ACTIVITY

LEVEL: Educators or Parents/Guardians

LENGTH OF TIME: 10-15 minutes

The *Making Decisions: Ally or Bystander* classroom lesson explores with students what they may do when they witness name-calling, bullying or harassment of a friend or someone they don't know. They'll soon see that different situations call for different responses.

During a professional development training or an evening gathering of parents/guardians, this lesson can adapted as a short activity to get participants thinking concretely about actions that bystanders can take and all the thoughts that quickly go through one's mind as they decide what to do in the moment. It can also get people to see how difficult it is to speak up when they witness bullying and can lay the groundwork for realizing that practicing responses would be a good idea.

MATERIALS

The lesson plan, *Making Decisions: Ally or Bystander*, "4 Corners" placards posted in four corners of the room (see below), room arrangement suitable for activity and movement. In a professional development session – a copy of the lesson for students for each participant.

BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

- Review the list of scenarios and pick out ones that you think will generate discussion or that you would like people to consider – gender, race, ability... Include some that are only slight variations so that people have to think about how things would be different if the scenario involves friends or not, students who are older or younger, students who are more popular or not. Include different topics in your set of questions. Depending on the amount of time you have, choose 2-3 scenarios geared towards students and 2-3 geared towards adults.
- Print or write out and post the "4 corner" placards in the area of the room where you will do the activity. People need to be able to move around to each "corner".

INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY

- Explain that this activity looks at situations where you must decide, in the moment, how to react if you see someone being teased or bullied. Sometimes you may do something. Sometimes you may not. It often depends on the situation, how well you know someone, if they are older or younger, etc.
- **Point out the four possibilities and the four placards in the room:**
 - Ignore the situation or walk away.
 - Attempt to negotiate or stop the situation. Intervene myself.
 - Talk to the person privately later.
 - Seek help from an adult or someone older.

-
- As you begin, ask participants to either think about how they would respond if they were a student in the 4th or 5th grade – either one they know or how they would have responded when they were that age.
 - Read out loud a scenario that you have chosen to use. Make sure people are clear about the scenario, especially if it is a variation of one you just read. Ask them first to think which of the four corners they would go to. Then, have them move. You could point out that asking students to think, before they move, keeps students from just following the crowd.
 - With each scenario, invite a couple of people from the different corners to say why they chose to stand in a certain corner. If they moved to the tell an adult corner, ask them if they would know how to handle the situation now, if a student asked for their help.
 - When the lesson is done in a classroom, having them turn and talk before the sharing is a way to ensure more students are engaged in talking and therefore thinking about their actions.
 - Often a participant will bring up a scenario they have encountered in their school, as an adult. This is a good time to transition to these kinds of scenarios. Having participants think about what they themselves would do in a scenario, helps give them perspective on what we are asking students to do.
 - If no one has brought it up, after you have completed a few scenarios with participants thinking as students, switch to having them be themselves.
 - Ask, “What are situations that you run in to at school, as an adult, where you have to make a decision on what to do?” You could ask people to think about ones about gender or race or families depending on what you are focusing on in the training. It is good to get ideas for scenarios from the participants or you could use ideas from the list below.
 - Do a few rounds with scenarios that may occur for an adult in the school.
 - In these scenarios, the corner that says “seek assistance from an adult” could mean talking with the principal, another colleague, or another parent to figure out what steps they could take.

SAMPLE SCENARIOS FOR EDUCATORS OR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

ADULT → ADULT

1. You are talking with a group of colleagues and one comments about a boy with two moms, “Daniel just keeps acting out. He really needs a father figure at home.”
2. A colleague or parent comments, “It’s no wonder he gets bullied, he wears pink nail polish to school.”
3. A colleague says, “No wonder she’s not doing well in school. Just look at her family.”
4. A parent comments, “Roberto is always playing with the girls, his parents should sign him up for football so he does more things with boys.”

ADULT → STUDENT

1. You overhear a group of students talking and one says, "Oh, that assignment was so gay."
2. A child says, "Ask Xiao Ming for the answer, all Asians are good at math."
3. You overhear your child say something bad about another child because of their skin color.
4. You overhear another child say something bad about a child because of their skin color.
5. You overhear your child say something bad about another child because of their religion.
6. You overhear a child say something bad about another child because of their religion.

STUDENT → STUDENT (FROM THE LESSON PLAN)

1. A classmate or friend constantly makes fun of a another student because they are small for their age.
2. An older student makes fun of a younger student because they are small for their age
3. When you are with a group of friends, one of them makes fun of a younger student because of the way they dress.
4. A new kid at school calls your friend a bad name because of their skin color.
5. A friend of yours calls a new kid at school a bad name because of their skin color.
6. A kid you don't know calls another kid you don't know a bad name because of their skin color.
7. Someone in your class says something mean to another student in your school because of their religion.
8. A new kid at school calls your friend "gay"
9. A group of students your age keeps saying, "That's gay" to mean they don't like something.
10. A group of students your age keeps saying, "That's gay" to mean they don't like something and you know that your friend's dads are gay.
11. A friend of yours keeps saying to other boys, "Hey stop acting like a girl."
12. A boy in your school that you don't know very well keeps saying to other boys, "Hey stop acting like a girl."
13. A friend in your class teases a younger boy for having a teddy bear or a doll.
14. A student in your class teases a boy for wearing a pink T-shirt and nail polish.
15. A girl in your class teases another girl for always dressing like a boy.

Include any others that might apply to your school or community.

RELEVANT RESEARCH ON ALLY AND BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR

- According to 5th graders included in a study of over 13,000 students in grades 5-12:¹

Peer actions that make things better are:

- spending time or talking with them at school,
- helping them get away from the situation,
- making a distraction,
- and helping them tell an adult at the school.

Peer actions that make things worse are:

- blaming them for what happened,
- making fun of them for being teased or for asking for help,
- and ignoring the situation.

Adult actions that make things better are:

- listening, giving advice and encouragement,
- checking in over time to see if things got better,
- increasing adult supervision,
- and disciplining the student who was mean.

Adult actions that make things worse are:

- telling them to stop tattling,
- telling them to solve it themselves,
- telling the student that they should have acted differently,
- and ignoring the situation.

- A consistent message about intervention and support from adults and administrators helps shift bystander attitudes towards a willingness to intervene in a bullying situation based on analysis of evidence from 11 school-based programs.²
- Perceiving that others in a school are also likely to intervene correlates with greater comfort intervening in bullying situations for both educators and staff, and students in a school.^{3,4}

¹ Charisse Nixon and Stan Davis (2010). The Youth Voice Research Project. 2010 International Bullying Prevention Association. Seattle, WA.

² Joshua R. Polanin, Dorothy L. Espelage, and Therese D. Pigott (2012). A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Bullying Prevention Programs' Effects on Bystander Intervention Behavior, *School Psychology Review* 41:1.

³ Catherine P. Bradshaw, Tracy Evian Waasdorp, Lindsey M. O'Brennan, Michaela Gulemetova (2011). Findings from the National Education Association's Nationwide Study of Bullying: Teachers' and Education Support Professionals' Perspectives. National Education Association.

⁴ Frances Aboud and Anna Joong (2008). Intergroup name-calling and conditions for creating assertive bystanders. In S. Levy & M. Killen (Eds.), *Intergroup attitudes and relations in childhood through adulthood* (pp. 249-260). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

**IGNORE THE SITUATION
OR WALK AWAY**

INTERVENE MYSELF

**TALK TO THE PERSON
IN PRIVATE**

**SEEK HELP FROM AN ADULT
OR SOMEONE OLDER**



RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ABOUT LGBT TOPICS: AN INTERACTIVE SKILL-BUILDING EXERCISE

LEVEL: Educators. **LENGTH OF TIME:** 30 – 60 minutes.

This is an interactive exercise to help participants develop language to respond to questions from students and adults that may feel challenging. Most of the things we teach about are topics that we have had practice talking about in school. However, most of us did not grow up talking about LGBT topics and did not discuss them as part of our professional training as educators.

It is difficult to be articulate about topics that we've never discussed before, and even more so to be articulate about topics that are often considered controversial and about which many have strong feelings. Therefore, it is important to *practice, practice, practice* formulating and articulating answers and letting thoughts evolve based on current experience and conversations.

Participants will have a wide variety of responses to these questions, including not being able to find words. It is important that participants feel comfortable enough to try out new vocabulary and language that initially may feel awkward and uncomfortable. Focus them by starting out talking about goals. If the process unfolds in the way we want it to, then the less comfortable folks learn from their more comfortable colleagues and everyone moves forward in their skills and comfort.

MATERIALS: Handout with questions and possible responses. Large paper or a white board and markers.

ACTIVITY

- Introduce the activity by saying that this activity gives participants a chance to practice answering students' questions about LGBT topics. It provides participants an opportunity to reflect on their own level of comfort and familiarity with various questions that elementary school students might ask. Most of the schools that we attended did not address how to have these conversations with students. So we thought we'd take some time to practice how to respond. This is really a chance to practice. There is no pressure to get it right!
 - First, focus the group by talking about the goals of answering these kinds of questions from students. Ask people to toss out a few ideas. (For example, stopping hurtful behavior, ensuring all students' families are respected, ensuring students feel included or safe.)
 - Have participants count off by twos. Have all the "ones" form a circle facing out, and have all of the "twos" form a circle outside the "ones" facing in. (This can also be done in two lines facing each other.)
 - Practice one question and response together as a large group. Then, tell the group they will have 1 to 2 minutes to respond to the next question. Read a question and all the "ones" have one minute to share their answer with the "twos." You can choose at this point to give the twos a chance to respond to the same question or ask for a few examples of answers that were generated in the pairs.
 - Before reading the next question, the people in the outside circle, the "twos," move one person to the right. The facilitator then reads a new question. This time the "twos" share their answer with their partner. (Lines can rotate so that one person goes from the end of the line to the beginning of the line.)
 - Continue shifting the circle/lines and answering questions in this way.
 - Close the activity by asking the group to reflect on all of the response they have offered and heard. Ask them if there are any overall lessons or strategies that stand out to them. Record these strategies on large paper or a white board.
-

SAMPLE QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

Choose 4-6 questions for this activity, depending on the topic of the training or topics that you think the educators may encounter in their schools.

- What does 'gay' mean?" (When talking with a first-grader? When talking with a fifth-grader?)
- You overhear a student say, "That's gay."
- I didn't mean anything when I called him gay. We all use that word just to tease each other.
- Can two boys or two girls get married?
- You overhear a child say, "Gay people are bad."

ABOUT FAMILIES WITH GAY OR LESBIAN PARENTS

- How can she have two moms? Which one is the real one?
- She has two dads? How is that possible? Don't you need a man and a woman to have a baby?
- My grandma says it's wrong for two men to get married.

ABOUT GENDER

- Michael plays with dolls and is always hanging out with girls. That's weird.
- He's a boy, why does he dress like a girl? Or, if she isn't a boy, why does she look and act like one?

QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM PARENTS/GUARDIANS OR COLLEAGUES

- Aren't the students too young to talk about gay topics?" (from a colleague or parent/guardian)
- I don't want my child to think that being gay is an OK option for them.
- My religion teaches that it is wrong to be gay.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS

- What Do You Say to That's So Gay (a one-page handout)
- What Does 'Gay' Mean? (a one-page handout)
- Be Prepare for Questions and Put-downs on Gender
- Yes, They are a Family.
- Can Two Women or Two Men Get Married?
- Definitions for Students on LGBT Topics

PRACTICING RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT LGBT TOPICS

(Sample responses are in italics)

“What does ‘gay’ mean?” (When talking with a first-grader? When talking with a fifth-grader?)

Clarifying the context of the question will help frame your answer. Is the student asking because they heard it as a putdown or are they asking because they heard someone’s dad is gay? A discussion with elementary-age students about the meanings of “gay” or “lesbian” is a discussion about love and relationships. If a student heard it as a put-down, be clear that it is a mean or hurtful thing to say.

- *The word gay is used to describe a man and a man or a woman and a woman, who love each other and want to be family to each other.*
- *The word “gay” refers to a man who falls in love with another man in a romantic way or a woman who falls in love with another woman in a romantic way. Sometimes people use the word just to refer to a man who loves another man in a romantic way. “Gay,” however, can refer to both men and women.*

You overhear a student say, “That’s Gay” or “Fag!” Or, I didn’t mean anything when I called him gay. We all use that word just to tease each other.

It’s not OK to use “gay” or “fag” as put-downs or in a negative way. Don’t ignore it. Many children use the word “gay” to mean “stupid” or “weird” because that is the only way they have heard it used. Often students don’t know what it really means. This is a good time to take the opportunity to explore that.

- *You may not have meant to hurt anyone, but saying “That’s gay” can hurt those around you. Do you know what gay means?*
- *It’s not ok to use that word/phrase as a put-down in our school.*
- *Do you know what gay means?*
- *In the future I expect you to use that word respectfully and not in a hurtful way.*

“Can two boys or two girls get married?”

- *In some places women can marry women and men can marry men. In some places, they can’t. Whether they are married or not, two people who love each other can live together, take care of one another and be a family.*
- *No, children can’t get married! Grown-ups, on the other hand, create families in many ways. Many grown-ups live their lives in couples and take care of one another. Being married is one way to do this.*

“How can she have two moms? Which one is the real one?”

If you have a child with two dads or two moms in your classroom, it is helpful to know how his or her parents talk about their family. This information will help you respond to other students’ questions. Don’t offer up information about adoption or children born in previous relationships unless you know that the child and family readily offer up that information. Be careful about making assumptions about a student’s family.

- *They both are. Both moms take care of her and love her. There are all kinds of families. Some have two moms, some have two dads, some have one mom or dad and some have a mom and a dad. Some children are raised by other caring adults such as grandparents, other relatives or guardians. What’s important is to have adults who love and care for you.*
-

“How can he have two dads? Don’t you need a mom and a dad to make a baby?”

In most elementary grades you can steer the answer to a discussion of family and say something like:

- *Children come into families in many different ways – sometimes through birth, sometimes through adoption. Children are raised in many different ways. Some have two dads, some a mom and a dad. What’s important is to have adults who love and care for you.*

In older elementary grades, a question like this may come up in a health lesson as it could also refer to how babies are made. It is better not to avoid the question. However, you can answer it simply that you do need an egg and a sperm to make a baby but biological parents don’t always raise children. However, children come in to families in different ways such as adoption. Then, you could move on to children being raised in different kinds of families.

“My grandma says it’s wrong for two women to have children.”

The goal in answering this question is not to put-down a student’s grandmother. At the same time, you might want to imagine how your response will sound to a student in earshot who has two moms.

- *People have lots of different ideas about families. Your grandma is not the only one who thinks that but in this school we respect all families*
- *There are many kinds of families. Some have a mom and a dad. Some have two moms. Some have one mom or one dad.*
- *There are many different opinions about families. In this school we respect all families that love and care for their children. Making sure children are well-cared-for is what is important. I have met all kinds of healthy, happy families.*

“Michael plays with dolls and is always hanging out with girls. That’s weird.”

- *I encourage all boys and girls to play together.*
- *Michael hangs out with friends who he likes to spend time with, just like you do.*
- *I don’t believe there are girls toys or boys toys. Everyone should play with the toys they like to play with.*
- *It’s true that some boys don’t like to play with dolls but some boys do! Just like some of you like to draw and some of you don’t and some of you like to play kickball and others don’t. No one should have to pick and choose what they do just because they are a boy or a girl.*

“But he’s a boy, why does he dress like a girl?” Or “If she isn’t a boy, why does she look and act like one all the time?”

If you know that a student entering your class presents as a different gender than the student’s biological sex, check out some of the additional resources on the *Welcoming Schools* website to help give you the background to work with the student and family.

- *Because that is what (he or she) likes to wear? Why do you have on the clothes that you have on?*
 - *There are lots of different ways that boys can dress and lots of different ways that girls can dress.*
 - *Some boys like to wear pink or to have long hair. All of these things are OK in our school.*
 - *There are many ways of being a boy (girl), and all are okay ways of being a boy (girl).*
 - *Those are the kinds of clothes that he likes to wear? Why do you like to wear what you’re wearing?*
 - *Sandy has always felt like a girl deep down inside. So that is just the way she likes to dress.*
-

“You overhear a student say, “Gay people are bad.”

You could ask that student why he or she thinks that. You also could check to see if the student knows what gay means. Depending on the response, you may first have to define what gay or lesbian means. This could also be an opportunity to dispel stereotypes and the notion of a category of people being all bad or all good.

It is also an opportunity to reaffirm that we respect all people in our classroom. Saying that a group of people are bad is hurtful not only to people who are gay and to students who may have relatives or friends who are gay, but also to anyone who cares about not hurting other people's feelings.

TALKING WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Thank them for coming to talk with you. Ask questions about their concerns and what they heard.

“What did Louis tell you we talked about in class? Why do you think children are too young to talk about gay people?” Don't engage in religious debates.

“Aren't the students too young to talk about gay topics?”

- *In elementary school, learning the meaning of “gay” or “lesbian” can come up in a couple of contexts – families, name-calling and current events.*
- *Students often use the word “gay” to mean that something is stupid, or they use it as a put-down for a boy whom they think is not acting masculine enough. However, they often don't know what “gay” actually means. We are teaching the students to understand the words they are using or hearing. We are talking about not hurting classmates and others with our words.*
- *For example, we may be talking about the mothers or fathers of one of our students or we may be looking at a book that shows a child with two moms or two dads. If we are defining the word for students, we are talking about adult relationships.*
- *Students also see the words like gay or lesbian in headlines at the grocery store checkout counter. They overhear them in the news. Then they come into class and ask what they mean.*
- *Talking about families and caring adults that love each other is appropriate.*

“I don't want my child to think that being gay is an OK option for them.”

- *Information and discussion about gay and lesbian people will not make anyone gay or straight. Knowing or learning about gay people, however, might make someone less likely to insult or threaten someone he or she thinks is gay. Hopefully it will help our students not allow a friend to be bullied or ostracized for having a gay or lesbian parent.*
- *Knowing someone who is gay will not make you gay. People who are gay or lesbian know a lot of people who are not gay or lesbian but that hasn't changed who they are.*

“My religion teaches that it is wrong to be gay.”

Schools include people with many different religious beliefs. Some religious organizations support inclusion of LGBT people, and some don't. The role of schools is not to get everyone to agree but to foster a climate where there is respect for the diversity of beliefs and families within a community.

Respect is built by acknowledging the diversity in the community, promoting opportunities for community dialogue and allowing the diversity of families to be visible within the school. Most people can agree that it is appropriate for schools to teach kindness and mutual respect for everyone's beliefs.



CULTIVATING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DIFFERENCES

LEVEL: Educators

LENGTH OF TIME: 30-60 minutes

INTRODUCTION

This activity will help colleagues practice ways of meeting students where they are and talking about differences – not in reaction to harassment or name-calling – but in reaction to honest questions and possible misconceptions.

In schools, conversations about differences based on family diversity, race, gender or class often center on what *not* to say and how to make sure people are not offended by comments made by students or adults. While these conversations can be necessary, they don't increase students' understanding about cultural, family or individual differences.

This is like the following classic example that takes place while in line at a grocery store:

A child sees a person in a wheelchair and asks loudly, "Why is that man in that chair?"

The child's mother responds, "Shush, don't be rude."

While the mother may be genuinely concerned that her child not be impolite, the child may be learning that it's not OK to ask questions about people who are different and that differences cannot be spoken about.

In fact, children notice physical differences at a very young age and often have a lot of questions about these differences. By the time children are in elementary school they may have already developed some negative attitudes about differences. They are beginning to notice social and cultural expectations, and they may have their first overt encounters with bigotry, whether directed at themselves or at others. Students who belong to cultural minorities or who have same-sex parents may have more language to talk about their culture and their families than other students.

Research shows that even infants notice differences in skin color. When 6 month old babies were shown pictures of people with skin colors that were markedly different than their own family, the babies looked at these pictures longer than when they were shown pictures of people whose skin color were more reflective of their own families.¹

Without guidance, young children will categorize and make their own sense of differences, with a tendency to favor groups to which they belong. Researcher Rebecca Bigler did an experiment in a pre-school; 3-5 year olds were randomly given either a red or blue shirt – with no explanation. They were told to wear this color shirt for 3 weeks.

In some classrooms, teachers used the colors to organize and label the children. In others, the teachers ignored the shirt colors. Even in those classrooms where teachers never referred to the red or the blue groups, the students said the group wearing the same color shirt they were wearing was the smarter group. Of course, in the classrooms where teachers did label and highlight the groups, students in-group preference became even stronger.²

¹ Katz, P. A. (2003) Racists or tolerant multiculturalists? How do they begin? *American Psychologist*, 58(11), 897–909.

² Patterson, M.M. and R.S. Bigler (2006) Preschool Children's Attention to Environmental Messages About Groups: Social Categorization and the Origins of Intergroup Bias, *Child Development*, 77(4)847–860. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2006.00906.x.

INTRODUCE THE ACTIVITY AND PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK

- Introduce the activity as a chance to practice responding to students' questions about differences based on such things as gender, sexual orientation, race and religion.
- You may want to share some of the research mentioned in the introduction to this activity.
- Explain that you won't be focusing on name-calling and harassment but on generating conversation in response to questions and misconceptions that students might have. These are not situations where a student is targeting a specific student directly, but going to an adult with a question or concern.
- Give the group a few examples of these kinds of situations, such as:
 - Why does Carolina sound so funny when she talks?
 - Derek plays with dolls. That's weird.
 - Ming eats seaweed. That's not food.
 - A group of kids was saying that Ms. Johnson is a lesbian. They were being mean, but what if she is?
 - How can Alex have two fathers? I don't get it.
 - How come Alyssa's skin is so dark?
 - If someone is Muslim does that mean that they hate the United States?
 - How come Morgan dresses like that and is always playing with boys? I heard someone say she wants to be a boy. I think she looks and acts like one.
- Introduce the following five strategies as ways to respond to statements like these:
 - **Acknowledge Difference**
 - **Ask Questions (to get more information, to understand the context, to elicit empathy)**
 - **Explain Facts (use concrete examples if possible)**
 - **Remove Negative Judgment/Affirm the Positive**
 - **Problem-Solve**
 - **Transition/Normalize the Conversation**
- Stress that this is not an exhaustive list but a jumping-off point – they may have other strategies that work well.
- Choose one or two scripts that are at the end of the activity as a way to illustrate each of the above strategies.

ROLE-PLAY/SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

- Explain to the group that you are going to do some role-plays. You can come up with your own examples, use some of the examples provided in this activity or solicit examples from the group
 - Have the 5 possible strategies for responding to statements displayed so everyone can see them or have them on a handout for everyone.
 - Read one example aloud to the whole group. Ask them to brainstorm what their goals might be in responding to the student's statement or question. Acknowledge that the goals may be different in each situation. Goals might include:
 - To educate;
 - To avoid hurt feelings;
 - To change behavior;
 - To let students know that you respect all kinds of differences; or
 - To make all students feel welcome.
-

-
- Ask participants to get together in pairs and role-play responses to the situation you read aloud to the group. Stress that they do not need to use all of the strategies that you gave them. Encourage them to have a conversation that meets their goals and gives a message that it's OK to have respectful conversations about differences. Give them a few minutes where one plays the student and the other is in their role at the school. Then ask them to switch roles.
 - Ask for some volunteers to share with the full group the responses that they decided to use. Ask them to reflect upon how it felt to hear the responses when they were in the role of the student. What did the adult do in those role-plays that was particularly helpful? Ask how responses would be different if someone was having a one-on-one conversation or was in a group.
 - Role-play a few other scenarios to provide further opportunity for practice and to ensure that multiple issues are addressed.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY

- Have the case studies listed so everyone can see or on a handout. Have participants form small groups and ask each group to choose one of the case studies to discuss and develop possible responses. Ask groups to share their responses with the full group.

CLOSING

- Ask participants to think about and share some thoughts, such as:
- Which scenarios were easier or harder to respond to?
- What stood out from these role-plays/conversations?
- Do you have strategies or approaches to add to the original list?

EARLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXAMPLES

1. Derek plays with dolls. That's weird.
 - **Acknowledge Difference:** It's true that in our class most of the boys don't play with dolls.
 - **Ask Questions:** Why do you think it's weird?
 - **Explain Differences, Use Concrete Examples:** Not all boys play with the same things. You and your friend Jake like to do different things.
 - **Remove Negative Judgment/Affirm the Positive:** I want all children in this class to play with the toys they like. Derek is really creative.
 - **Transition:** What's your favorite thing to play with?
 2. Why does Carolina sound so funny when she talks?
 - **Acknowledge Difference:** I am sure the way she speaks sounds different to you.
 - **Explain Facts:** She was born in a country called Brazil. You know how you learned English when you were little? Well she learned a different language called Portuguese when she was little because that's the language most people speak in Brazil. She just started learning English last year. People who learn another language before speaking English often say words differently than those who learn English first.
 - **Remove Negative Judgment/Affirm the Positive:** I think it's great that she knows more than one language. If you have a hard time understanding her you can ask her to repeat what she said. I wouldn't say she speaks funny. She just does not speak in the same way that you do.
 - **Transition:** Do you want to learn how to say some words in a different language?
-

UPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXAMPLES

1. Ming eats seaweed. That's not food.

- **Acknowledge Difference:** You've never eaten seaweed have you?
- **Explain Differences:** In some families and some countries seaweed is a really common food. I've eaten it and really like it. (Or I tried it once and didn't like it but I know lots of people who really do like it.)
- **Use Questions to Elicit Empathy:** How would you feel if someone said your food was gross? How do you think Ming feels if other people say that her food is gross?
- **Problem-Solve:** What can you and other kids do to make sure that Ming doesn't feel bad about what she brings for lunch?
- **Transition:** What's your favorite thing to have for lunch?

2. A group of kids was saying that Ms. Johnson is a lesbian. They were being mean but what if what they're saying is true?

- **Acknowledge Feelings:** Sounds like you were pretty uncomfortable in this situation.
- **Elicit More Information:** Why do you think they were saying what they were saying? What would it mean if she were a lesbian?
- **If Necessary, Clarify and/or Define Words and Concepts:** A lesbian is a woman who loves other women in a romantic way. So when a woman who is a lesbian falls in love it is with another woman.
- **Ask More Questions:** You've told me that Ms. Johnson is one of your favorite teachers. If she were a lesbian would that change how you feel about her?
- **Problem-Solve:** If you were around this group and they started talking this way again, what would you want to do? Do you want to talk about it? Let's think of some things you could say this time or next time.
- **Transition:** Didn't Ms. Johnson just teach you a new song? What was it?





Welcoming Schools

A PROJECT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION

What Do You Say to ‘That’s So Gay’?

STOP IT:

Keep it simple with quick responses. You could say:

- “Remember, we don’t use put-downs in this class.”
- “It’s not OK to say ‘That’s so gay.’”
- “It is not appropriate at this school to use ‘gay’ disrespectfully or mean something is bad.”
- “What did you mean by that?”
- “Do you know what ‘gay’ means?”
- “You may not have meant to be hurtful, but when you use the word ‘gay’ to mean something is bad or stupid, it is hurtful.”
- “Do you know why it is hurtful?”

EDUCATE:

If you have the time and opportunity to educate on the spot, do it. If you don’t, make time later.

- If you have been hearing the phrase “That’s gay” used to mean that something is bad or stupid, take the time during a class meeting to make sure that your students know what “gay” means and know why it is hurtful to use as an insult.
- Be clear with students that when they use the word “gay” in a negative way they are being disrespectful. Be clear that using the phrase “That’s so gay” is hurtful to other students who may have family members and friends who are gay.
- Provide accurate information. For the youngest students, keep it simple. For example, “the word ‘gay’ describes a man and a man who love each other, or a woman and a woman who love each other.”

BE PROACTIVE:

- Develop an environment of respect and caring for all students in your class and school by using inclusive language, books and other materials.
- Establish clear schoolwide and classroom policies against hurtful teasing and bullying.
- In lessons on respect, stereotypes or prejudice include information about discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people.
- If you have been hearing the phrase “That’s so gay” in school, be explicit that rules against name-calling include that phrase and other anti-gay put-downs.

WHY STOP ANTI-GAY COMMENTS?

“In a nationwide survey, children feared anti-gay harassment more than any other kind of name-calling.”

— J.A. Drake, J.H. Price and S.K. Telljohann, 2003

“Both children who are targeted and children who exhibit bullying behavior have lower academic achievement in school.”

— J. Juvonen, Y. Wang and G. Espinoza, 2011

“The pervasiveness of anti-gay language in schools suggests that most school environments are hostile for LGBT students and create negative environments for their heterosexual peers as well.”

— D. Espelage and V.P. Poteat, 2012





Welcoming Schools

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DON'T IGNORE IT:

- Ignoring name-calling and hurtful teasing allows it to continue and possibly get worse.
- If other students do not see action, they get the message that there is nothing wrong with it.
- Harassment does not go away on its own.
- Don't be afraid of making the situation worse. Almost any response is better than ignoring the situation. You may not know exactly what to say, but you must stop the harassment.
- Taking action reaffirms limits. Interrupting name-calling isn't always easy. With experience, you will become more comfortable handling it.
- You can always go back to the student and say or do something else if you feel you did not respond well.



DON'T EXCUSE THE BEHAVIOR:

- Saying, "Josh doesn't really know what it means," or "Maria was only joking," excuses hurtful behavior.
- If you think that a student didn't mean to be hurtful, you might say, "I know you didn't say that statement to be hurtful, but those words can really hurt. Here is why. . ."

DON'T TRY TO JUDGE HOW UPSET THE TARGET IS:

- We have no way of knowing how a student is really feeling. Often, students who are targeted are embarrassed and pretend that they were not offended or hurt.
- Saying "Jorge didn't seem upset by Lily's remark" trivializes the student's feelings. It tells the harasser that it is OK to make hurtful comments. It teaches not only the student targeted, but also anyone in hearing range that they will not be protected from harassment.

WHAT IS WELCOMING SCHOOLS?

A comprehensive guide for elementary schools with tools, lessons and resources to:

- Embrace family diversity
- Create gender-inclusive environments
- Prevent bias-based bullying & name-calling

"Welcoming Schools helps schools move toward equity and excellence."

— Maureen Costello, Director of Teaching Tolerance

To find out what students really know about gay men and lesbians, what they hear at school and what they would like teachers to do, view *Welcoming Schools* short award-winning film, *What Do You Know? Six to twelve year-olds talk about gays and lesbians.*

[welcomingschools.org/
whatdoyouknow](http://welcomingschools.org/whatdoyouknow)



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN

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feedback.com/welcomingschools





Welcoming Schools

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO 'THAT'S SO GAY'?

STOP IT

Keep it simple with quick responses. You could say:

- "Remember, we don't use put-downs in this class."
- "It's not OK at this school to use 'gay' disrespectfully or mean something is bad."
- "It's not OK to say 'That's so gay.'"
- "What did you mean by that?"
- "Do you know what 'gay' means?"
- "You may not have meant to be hurtful, but when you use the word 'gay' to mean something is bad or stupid, it is hurtful."
- "Do you know why it is hurtful?"

EDUCATE

If you have the time and opportunity to educate on the spot, do it. If you don't, make time later.

- If you have been hearing the phrase "That's gay" used to mean that something is bad or stupid, take the time during a class meeting or group time to make sure that your students know what "gay" means and know why it is hurtful to use as an insult.
- Be clear with students that when they use the word 'gay' in a negative way they are being disrespectful. Be clear that using the phrase "That's so gay" is hurtful to other students who may have family members or friends who are gay.
- Provide accurate information. For the youngest students, keep it simple. For example, "the word gay describes a man and a man or a woman and a woman who love each other."

BE PROACTIVE

- Develop an environment of respect and caring for all students in your class and school by using inclusive language, books and other materials.
- Establish clear schoolwide and classroom policies against hurtful teasing and bullying.
- In lessons on respect, stereotypes or prejudice include information about discrimination against gay, lesbian, and transgender people. Use materials inclusive of LGBT people.

- If you have been hearing the phrase, "That's so gay in school, be explicit that rules against name-calling include that phrase and other anti-gay put-downs.

DON'T IGNORE IT

- Ignoring name-calling and hurtful teasing allows it to continue and possibly get worse.
- If other students do not see action, they get the message there is nothing wrong with it.
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BE PREPARED FOR QUESTIONS AND PUT-DOWNS ON GENDER

Practicing answering questions related to gender or interrupting hurtful teasing based on gender will help you respond more easily when the situation arises. As educators, take the time to practice simple phrases. As teachers, work with your students so that they also have simple responses to gender exclusion or put-downs.

“Why does Martin like pink?”

- There doesn't have to be boy colors or girl colors. Colors are colors. All people like different colors.
- Do you think it's wrong for boys to wear pink? Why's that?
- Why do you like blue, or green, (or whatever color that child likes)? Why don't you like pink?
- Did you know that pink used to be considered a boys color and blue was the girl's color?

“Why is her hair so short? She looks like a boy.”

- Girls and women can have hair in many different styles and so can boys or men.
- Hair is hair. That is how she likes it.
- Why does it matter if a girl's hair is short or a boy's hair is long?

“Juan plays with dolls. That's weird.”

- It's true that some boys don't like to play with dolls but some boys do! Just like some of you like to draw and some of you don't. Some of you like to play kickball and others don't. No one should have to pick and choose what they do just because they are a boy or a girl.
- The dolls are for all children in this classroom.
- Sometimes this is confusing. We get messages about some things being for boys and some things being for girls. They are just for kids!

You overhear a student say to another student who identifies as a girl, “You look like a boy.”

- Why do you say that?
- There is no one way for girls or boys to act or look.
- Girls and women can have short hair. That's just how she likes it.
- Those are the kinds of clothes that she likes to wear. Why do you like to wear what you're wearing?

“But he's a boy, why does he dress like a girl?”

- There are lots of different ways that boys can dress and lots of different ways that girls can dress.
- Some boys like to wear pink or to have long hair. All of these things are OK in our school.
- There are many ways of being a boy (girl), and all are okay ways of being a boy (girl).
- Those are the kinds of clothes that he likes to wear? Why do you like to wear what you're wearing?

“Dominic is always hanging out with girls. Why?”

- I encourage all boys and girls to play together.
- Dominic hangs out with friends who he likes to spend time with, just like you do with your friends.
- Some boys like the activities that more of the girls are doing and therefore like to play with girls.

You overhear a student call another student who identifies as a boy, a “girl” in an insulting way.

- That's not OK at our school to call someone a “girl” to insult them or make them feel bad.
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- Student: “But he is always playing with the girls and with girl toys!”
 - At this school all children can play and do things together. He’s a boy who likes to play with girls and that’s OK. All kinds of toys and games are for all children.

“Why does she always play with the boys?”

- Those are the activities that she likes to do just as there are different activities that you like to do.
- There are many different ways of being a girl (boy), and that’s great!

You overhear a student say, “Boys are better at math than girls.”

- Some boys are good at math and some are not, and some girls are good at math and some are not. All kids have different things that they are good at.

Sample language when a biological boy socially transitions to a girl.

- Although Angela was born a boy, she has always felt like a girl inside She wants everyone to call her Angela now and she wants to be able to wear the types of clothes that she likes the most and do the activities that she enjoys.
- Sandy has always felt like a girl deep down inside. That is the way Sandy likes to dress now.

Simple phrases students could say to each other.

- “There’s no such thing as boys’(girls’) clothes (haircuts, toys, colors.)”
- “You can’t say, ‘Girls (boys) can’t play.’”
- If someone says, “Boys are better at sports.”
A student could say, “No group is best. Some are good. Some are not.”
- If someone says, “Girls are better at art.”
A student could say, “No group is best. Some are good. Some are not.”

Ideas for talking with a student’s parents or guardians.

- Educator: There was an incident at school today in which your child called a boy, a “girl” to intentionally hurt him. At our school we are working on not using gender in a negative way to limit our students. It is important to us that all of our students are physically and emotionally safe to learn here everyday.
- Parent/Guardian: “But my son told me that Bobby wears girls’ clothing, paints his nails, and mostly plays with the girls.”
- Educator: Some boys prefer typical boy activities, some do not. We affirm all of the interests of our students and work hard to not limit children based upon gender. It’s important for children to learn not to tease someone in a hurtful way because of how they dress or who they play with.

When you overhear a colleague make a gender stereotypical remark about a student

- Remark: “Andre’s parents should really try to get him to do some more sports with boys like baseball.”

Sample responses:

- Why do you say that? And then engage in conversation.
- Andre’s parents are trying to do what is best for him. He has always loved gymnastics.

When my son was five years old, he went to a party wearing a pink shirt and sparkly blue sneakers. An adult referred to him as a girl in front of the whole group. A child in the room said, "He's not a boy. He's a boy who dresses like a girl." Most of the children in the room began laughing. Then one child said loudly, "He's my friend, stop laughing at him!" The laughter stopped immediately. If this young child could speak up and make a difference, then surely we can too.
– Mother of a 3rd grader.



YES, THEY ARE A FAMILY: KIDS QUESTIONS WITH SAMPLE RESPONSES ABOUT FAMILY

They don't match. His parents are white and he's brown. How come?

There are many reasons that children might have a skin color that is different from their parents. If you know the circumstances, you can say something simple such as, "Tony was adopted. He got his skin color from his birth parents." Or, "Tony's dad is African-American and his mom is white but his mom is now married to someone who is white."

Why is she adopted? Didn't her parents want her anymore?

There are many reasons why her birth mother, the woman who gave birth to her, wasn't able to raise her and take care of her. She wanted to make sure she would have parents who could take good care of her and love her. Her parents (the ones who adopted her) wanted a child so now they are her parents and her family.

Why doesn't he live with his Mom or Dad anymore?

If you know why he is in foster care and you are free to say something about the reason, then say something "Sometimes birth parents have problems that make it difficult to take care of their children. There are other adults – foster parents – who help out in times like this to take care of children and provide a family. Keep it simple depending upon the age of the student

Why does she live with her Grandma?

If you don't know the answer, you could make a general statement such as there are many reasons why kids live with their grandparents – some parents are in the military or have jobs in other places; some times parents have health problems and are unable to take care of their children.

Why can't his Mom speak English?

His mom was born in a different country where they speak (Spanish, Chinese, Russian...) She knows some English but it is harder to learn a new language as an adult. Would you like to learn some words in (Spanish, Chinese, Russian...)?

How can a family have two moms? Which one is the real mom?

They both are. Both moms take care of the children and love them. There are all kinds of families. Some have two moms or two dads, some have one mom or dad and some have a mom and a dad.

Don't you need a woman and a man to have a baby?

Children come into families in many different ways – sometimes through birth, sometimes through adoption. Children are raised in many different ways. Some children have a mom and a dad, some a mom, some a dad and some have two moms or two dads. What's important is to have a parent or parents who love and care for you. (Note: If you have a child with two dads or two moms in your classroom, it can be helpful to know how their parents talk about their family. This will help you respond to other students' questions.)

For children with two moms or two dads another student may ask: Are their parents married?

Depending on where you live the answer would be different. In some places, the answer could be, "Yes." In other states, students may be answered in different ways, such as: "It is like they are married. They love each other and are raising their children together. They are a family."





THE GREAT BIG BOOK OF FAMILIES: DISCUSSION GUIDE

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: K – 2

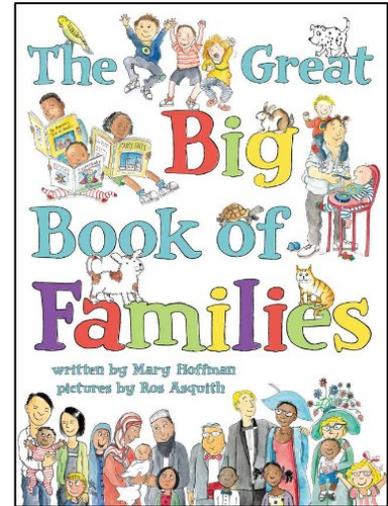
LENGTH OF TIME: 30-35 minutes

GOALS

- To use literature to explore family diversity and increase the sense of inclusiveness in the classroom.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to define what makes a family and describe a variety of families.
- Students will learn that families have similarities and differences.
- Students will be able to identify common characteristics within all families.



ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS RL 1.1: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text. Also RL K.1 and RL 2.1.
- CCSS SL K.1, 1.1, 2.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten, grade 1 or grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- CCSS SL 1.2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. Also SL K.2 and SL 2.2.

EDUCATORS' NOTES

“When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing.” – *Adrienne Rich*

Written by Mary Hoffman, author of the well-known children’s book, *Amazing Grace*, *The Great Big Book of Families* showcases diverse families and their lives together. When students do not see their reality reflected in any of the materials used in school, it is like having no mirror or relevance. This book provides mirrors for many students while providing a window for others into many kinds of families expanding their understanding of the world. *The Great Big Book of Families* provides a rich tool to include and celebrate the broad scope of human experience with family across differences including race, ethnicity, economic class and family structure.

REQUIRED BOOK: *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman.

ACTIVITY

- Before reading the book, encourage students to pay attention to the different kinds of families that they see in the book.
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- Encourage students to describe the family, home and setting in the first 2 page illustration.
 - On the next few pages ask students to notice to the all the families that are different from the first illustration. Discuss the different kinds of families illustrated.
 - As you continue to read the book, pause and take a closer look at some of the two page spreads that feature different aspects of families and their lives. Some of the topics to feature include homes, jobs, clothes, feelings, and family trees. (See the *Tree of Caring* lesson for alternative activities for family trees.) Ask your students:
 - What do you see in the picture?
 - Do you see a family or home that looks like yours?
 - How are the families or the way they live different from your family?
 - How are they the same?
 - After reading the book, ask students to review or name the different kinds of families they saw in the book.
 - Lead a discussion about families, and then let students pair up and talk about;
 - What are some important things in all families?
 - What makes a family?
 - Invite students to share comments from their discussions.

EXTENSIONS

- Ask students to draw pictures of their families. If they have grandparents or cousins that live with them, encourage students to be inclusive of the important people they live with or have in their lives. Of course, many children may also want to include their pets! Ask your students to dictate or write one or two lines about why family is important to them or what makes a family.
- Use the drawings to create a classroom Great Big Book of Families.
- Create a Great Big Book of Families hallway display with the student drawings and writing.
- Feature the display for a back to school night or for an evening event that highlights family diversity.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Are all students participating in the discussion?
- Do they understand what some significant components of a family are?
- Can students name two things that they think are important about caring families?

ADDITIONAL BOOKS

The Family Book, Todd Parr. (Pre-K – K)

Dear Child, John Farrel (Pre-K – K)

Who's in My Family?: All About Our Families, Robie Harris. (Pre-K – 1)

Who's in a Family? Robert Skutch. (Pre-K – K)

Families, Susan Kuklin. (3 – 5)



TREES OF CARING AND CIRCLES OF CARING COMMUNITY: “FAMILY TREE” ACTIVITIES SHOWING SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN ALL FAMILIES

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: K – 3

LENGTH OF TIME: 40- to 60-minutes (depending on choice of activity)

GOAL

- To help students think about the many ways families are formed and the many ways family members care for each other.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will list all the things families do to support and care for each other.
- Students will create an authentic definition of their family or caring community.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS SL 1.4 Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly. Also SL K.4, 2.4, 3.4.
- CCSS SL 2.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Also K.5, 1.5, 3.5.
- Social Studies Strand 4: Individual Development and Identity – examine the factors that influence an individual’s personal identity, development, and actions including family, peers, culture, and institutional influences.

EDUCATORS’ NOTES

Creating a family tree can be a powerful, reassuring activity for students who can graphically show how they are connected to the people in their world who care for them or who they care about. It often enables some students to discover where their families are from.

For some children, the traditional family tree format can be threatening. For a child whose parents are absent or unknown, the family tree can be a source of shame. For children who have more than two parents or same-sex parents, it can be a source of uncomfortable questions. For children who were adopted in can be a source of confusion.

Family tree activities and graphic depictions of families should be empowering activities for all children, not activities that create comfort and pride for some and confusion, shame or isolation for others.

Since it is likely that there will be students with different family configurations in your class or school, such as families with gay or lesbian parents; adoptive parents; or foster parents, it can be helpful to find out the language they use to refer to their families to help answer questions that may arise. If there is only one such student in your class, be careful not to continually single him or her out as an example.

Begin the lesson by spending some time clarifying ideas about what a family is. It is important to emphasize that families can be made up of different adults and children but what is most significant are the ways they take care of each other, work and play together. For some children

important caregivers and support extends beyond what we may usually think of as “family.”

Then, choose one of the following projects to do with your class:

- *Tree of Caring Family and Friends*: Create a tree with the student in the middle of the trunk receiving strength from adults side-by-side with the child. The trunk is drawing strength through the roots – elders who have come before – and the trunk is drawing energy from the sun through branches and leaves reaching upward.
- *Circle of Caring Community*: This activity allows children to define their families or caring communities for themselves and explain it to their peers, if they choose to, in an environment supported by a caring adult.
- *Clothespin Family*: A tangible project to show a student’s family or community of caring.
- *Natural Tree of Caring*: Combine natural branches and sticks to create a “family tree.”
- *Family Mobile*: A simple visual depiction of a student with a caring community surrounding the child.

MATERIALS For all activities: Chart paper or white board and markers.

- *Tree of Caring Family and Friends*: Strips of paper or popsicle sticks, paper, pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, chart paper.
- *Circle of Caring Community*: Lined paper, unlined paper (up to 11 by 17 inches if available), pencils or crayons, markers.
- *Clothespin Family*: Clothespins, markers, paper, glue. Optional: Buttons, yarn, cloth.
- *Natural Tree of Caring*: Branches that the students collect, strips of paper and glue or tape, markers or pencils, string.
- *Family Mobile*: Wire hangers, paper markers or colored pencils, string.

SUGGESTED BOOKS

The Great Big Book of Families, Mary Hoffman. (K – 3)

The Family Book, Todd Parr. (Pre-K – K)

Dear Child, John Farrel (Pre-K – K)

Who's In My Family?: All About Our Families, Robie Harris. (Pre-K – 1)

Families, Susan Kuklin. (3 – 5)

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

- Tell students they are each going to make a graphic representation of their family and/or caring community. Explain that this is an opportunity for each student to show who the most important people are in his or her life.
 - Ask students to think about who cares for them and who raises them.
 - Talk about the many ways families care for children.
 - Make a list on chart paper.
 - The list might include feeding, clothing, loving, disciplining and teaching right from wrong. Many kinds of nurturing, caring behaviors could be on the list.
 - On another chart list all the adults who might be in a family: grandparents, foster parents, moms, dads, stepdads, stepmoms, godparents, aunts, uncles, great-
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- grandparents, great uncles, great aunts, cousins, stepsiblings, half-siblings, foster siblings, neighbors.
 - Remember to let students identify for themselves who is in their family. They may include a pet or a church member, for example.

TREE OF CARING FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Give each student two to five popsicle sticks or strips of colored paper one-quarter- to three-quarter-inches by four inches and a thin marker or No. 2 pencil.

Instruct students to write on their sticks or paper strips their own name, siblings' names and the name of the person(s) who is raising them (or is closest to them). These names may be their parents, grandparents, foster parents or guardians. These sticks/paper strips will be the trunk of the "tree." Place adults on the outside, children on the inside.

On other sticks or strips, write the names of extended family members. Grandparents, great aunts and great uncles will be the roots feeding into the adult(s) in the trunk. Other extended family members, aunts, uncles or godparents can be written on sticks or strips which will sprout out of the adults in the trunk. Leaves can be drawn around the tops of the branches containing cousins, foster siblings, mentors other special adults.

CIRCLE OF CARING COMMUNITY

Begin by instructing students to think about their extended families and to write down who they believe belongs in their extended family and the caring community around them. They should write this list on a sheet of lined paper.

Then, give each student a large piece of unlined paper (at least 11 inches by 17 inches). Instruct students to write their own names in the middle of the unlined paper/spiral and draw a loose spiral with their name at the center. Spiraling out from their name they should write the names of people they feel closest to or who support and care for them the most. They should continue writing the names of people in their "caring community." In classes with very diverse family situations this can be a liberating activity. Students can include all the people who truly contribute to their well-being.

After all the spirals are complete, ask for volunteers to share their spirals. Encourage students to listen respectfully to their peers as they explain how they are raised and who is important to them.

MODIFICATION: Younger children (grades 1 – 2) can make a story web instead of a spiral to show their "Caring Community."

CLOTHESPIN FAMILIES

Ask students to decorate clothespins as people in their family or caring community. This can be done simply with paper, markers and glue. Students could also use yarn, string, buttons and any other available materials. These can be attached to ribbon or long strips of paper and stood on a table. This way they can create a spiral of clothespin people standing on a table to depict their families with themselves in the middle and other members situated in the proximity that feels accurate for each individual child.

EXTENSION: Children can use their "clothespin families" as characters (like puppets) in creative dramatization to act out different family scenes such as dinnertime, a walk to the park, a family gathering, a special day, going to church, getting ready for school, etc.

A NATURAL TREE OF CARING

Take a walk with your students and encourage them to gather branches and sticks from the outdoors. Then wrap strips of paper or tape with the names of different family members written on them around the branches. Students could also use strings with “tags” to write names on.

A FAMILY MOBILE

Children can use circles of paper to draw the faces or bodies of members of their family. Then, using string, attach these to wire hangers. These can be made simply – perhaps with the child in the center and family members surrounding him or her.

MODIFICATIONS:

- Use different lengths of string to indicate different segments of the family, such as parents/guardians and siblings on one level and extended family members on another. In this way, children can illustrate their sense of closeness or proximity to family members or extensions through the lengths of string.
- Use more than one wire hanger. The one in the center can be the child with adult guardians and siblings. Another one can depict the “roots” such as aunts, uncles, godparents and others. Additional hangers can include pets, neighbors, cousins and anyone to whom the child feels connected.

ADDITIONAL EXTENSIONS FOR ALL ACTIVITIES

- Have students write a poem about an important caring adult in their lives.
- Use writing prompts to have students write about families.
- Create a hallway display highlighting love and caring makes a family.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Each student will present their family and/or caring community to the class. Students should be able to describe some of the ways members of their family work and play together. Students should be able to name one or more ways people in their family or community show caring.

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

The Family Book, Todd Parr. (Pre-K – K)

The Great Big Book of Families, Mary Hoffman. (Pre-K – 2)

Dear Child, John Farrel (Pre-K – K)

Who's in My Family?: All About Our Families, Robie Harris. (Pre-K – 1)

Who's in a Family? Robert Skutch. (Pre-K – K)

Families, Susan Kuklin. (3 – 5)



BE WHO YOU ARE: I AM ME POEMS

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 1 – 5

LENGTH OF TIME: 2 periods of 35 to 40 minutes

GOALS

- To help students share and explore their identity through poetry.
- To have students' identities be seen by classmates and teachers.

OBJECTIVES

- To write a poem and create a visually appealing display.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS: SL 4.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. Also SL 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 5.1.
- Social Studies Strand 4: Individual Development and Identity – Examine the factors that influence an individual's personal identity, development, and actions including family, peers, culture, and institutional influences.

EDUCATORS' NOTES

This lesson involves reading the book *Looking Like Me* by Walter Dean Myers and then having students write short poems, modeled after the ideas in the book. *Looking Like Me* is a great read aloud as it looks at the many ways a boy is seen in his world. He's a brother, son, writer, city kid, artist, dancer, talker, runner, and dreamer. This activity allows students to express who they are to everyone in your class and to have them be seen for the many ways that they are. It also provides opportunities for students to make connections.

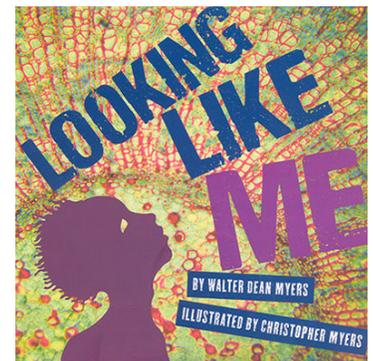
MATERIALS NEEDED: *Looking Like Me* by Walter Dean Meyers. Either colored pencils/markers and paper or computers/iPads and a printer.

READ AND DISCUSS THE BOOK

- What are some of the ways that Jeremy sees himself?
- What are some of the ways that others see Jeremy?
- How's Jeremy feeling when people give him a "bam"?

PRE-WRITING

- Have students write at the top of a piece of paper, "I Am Me" with their full name written just below.
- Ask students, what are some of the ways that you see your selves or how other people in their lives might view you. Remind them to think of ways that they are seen that they feel good about.



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- Have them make a list of all the “titles” or “people” they are from family relationships to interests to everyday titles such as student or neighbor. Prompt them by asking about things they like to do such as draw, play basketball, dance, read, or play video games. Ask them about how they might be seen by family members, by people in school or by friends.
 - After they have an initial list, have them turn and talk with a partner to look over their lists. See if they can help each other expand on their list. Remind them of the book and how the boy came across to different people who all saw him in different ways.
 - Ask them to come up with a list of 10 – 15 different ways of how they think of themselves or different ways that people might see them.

CREATIVE PRESENTATION ACTIVITY / PUBLISHING

- Look at the book again with your students. Discuss the way the book looks. Notice the way the words are written in different fonts, some are grouped together in different ways, and some are at different angles.
- Working with a computer:
 - Have students create a final version of their poem using different types of fonts, different sizes of fonts, or different colors (if you have the capacity to print it out in color.)
 - Students could add an image that represents something about them in the background of their poem. (Insert image and choose to wrap/layout behind text.) Or they could add images around the text.
- Working with Colored Pencils or Markers:
 - Have students write a final version of their poem using different colors and different sizes of writing for each word. They could decorate the paper with drawings or

SHARING THEIR POEMS

- Sharing the poems with other students in the class will help build community in your classroom. Options for sharing include:
 - Read aloud to the whole class. After each student reads their poem, have some way for the rest of the class to give appreciation to that student.
 - Post the poems around the walls of your classroom. Have students walk around in groups of 2-3 to read each other’s poems and discuss.
- While they are sharing their poems, ask them to look for connections with other students.

EXTENSIONS

- Mount on construction paper and post on wall of your classroom or in the hallway near your classroom.
- Watch the music video, *I Am Me* by Willow Smith before writing the poems. (Available on YouTube)

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Use an exit card for students to write down a new connection with a classmate that they made from reading or hearing the poems.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Amazing Faces, Lee Bennett Hopkins.

The Best Part of Me, Wendy Ewald.

I Like Myself, Karen Beaumont.

It's OK to Be Different, Todd Parr.

SAMPLE "I AM ME" POEM





BE WHO YOU ARE!





WORDS THAT HURT AND WORDS THAT HEAL

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: K – 4

LENGTH OF TIME: One 45 – 60 minute session.

GOALS

- For students to consider the importance of words and actions.
- For students to see themselves as allies standing up for each other in a caring community.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will apply literature to real life experiences.
- Students will share their understanding of the harmful nature of words or actions to make others feel “less than” or unwelcome.
- Students will strategize effective ways to welcome and stand up for someone who has been treated unkindly.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS: SL 1.2: Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.. Also SL K.2, 2.2, 3.2, 4.2
- CCSS: RL 2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges. Also RL K.3, 1.3, 3.3, 4.3
- CCSS: RL 1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events. Also RL K.7, 2.7, 3.7, 4.7

EDUCATORS’ NOTES

This lesson illustrates how words or actions can hurt – or heal. After reading the book, *One* by Kathryn Otoshi, the teacher leads students in a discussion of words or actions that have hurt them or other students in your school. Then students discuss what they can do to help each other and stand up for each other. If you don’t have a copy of the book, the activity and discussion can be done as a stand alone lesson.



It is important to caution students not to use people’s names or identify anyone when sharing. The intent is to ensure that students change hurtful practices without bringing attention to individual students who have bullied others or who have been targeted. Special thought and care will need to be taken if certain students are vulnerable due to differences or recent incidences in order to avoid unwanted attention or discomfort for that student. Following up with such students after the activity, in a discreet manner, may be necessary as well.

As the lesson proceeds, try to ensure that the different kinds of name-calling you have heard in your school are mentioned. If you have heard students at your grade level using “gay” as a put-down, raise that as a discussion topic, as students may think it is taboo to mention. If you have heard students being teased or excluded for not meeting cultural norms of femininity or masculinity, raise those points. If you have heard teasing about economic differences, race, or ethnicity, ensure those are brought up.

MATERIALS A large piece of paper cut into the shape of a heart

BOOK *One* by Kathryn Otoshi. (If you don't have a copy, see the modified lesson plan below.)

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Listen to and monitor ways that students or others in the school put each other down or exclude each other. Listen for put-downs related to gender, race, class, family structure or personal appearance. Notice who gets excluded and why.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON TO YOUR CLASS

- Gather students in a group and say, "Today, we are going to talk about and explore our classroom paying attention to how we treat each other—what makes us feel welcome, happy, and important and what makes us feel lonely, sad and unimportant." Explain that students often have difficulty fitting in because they are in a situation where groups of students have already formed bonds of friendship or because they are different in some way. Point out that some people will automatically put up barriers to another student, deciding quickly that they dislike the student, without even trying to get to know him or her. State, "In our class and school we want everyone to be treated kindly, to belong and to do their very best."

LESSON INCLUDING READING THE BOOK, *ONE* BY KATHRYN OTOSHI

Before you begin reading:

- Ask your students to pay attention to the colors that are in the book and what the colors mean. Also, ask them to think about the word count. Count refers to two different things in the story—something that matters and numbers.
- As you read, pause to ask the students questions and reflect on the book.
 - After Red says, "Red is hot. Blue is not," you could ask how they think Blue feels?
 - After Red picked on all of the colors and got bigger and BIGGER, you could ask your students, if they were one of these colors how would they feel at this point?

Crumpling up a heart activity:

- After reading the book, ask your students if they have ever noticed in your school or classroom, people acting like "Red" or people feeling sad or unimportant because of things that were said that might have hurt their feelings.
- Ask them to take a minute to think about these things.
- Say that you have a heart that you are going to crumple up a bit each time someone says one of these things that hurt. The heart represents student's hearts and when something is said to us that feels unkind it makes our hearts hurt.
- To start things off, ask again: have you heard anybody say unkind things or do mean things in our classroom or our school?
- Interact with students as they bring things up. Ask them follow-up questions for clarification or to see how it felt to either hear the unkind words directed at them or to hear the unkind words directed at someone else. Appreciate them if they have said something that may have been difficult.

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- Are there any words that they have heard other students say that are hurtful?
 - Each time another student says something that they've seen or heard that is hurtful, crumple of a part of the heart.
 - After students have had a chance to say a number of things about what has been or could be hurtful and after you have had a chance to interact with students on these experiences, turn to what could make things better.
 - Ask the students, what are some things that they could do to help when they have heard or seen something mean. How would they make someone feel more welcomed again? How would they help stop the hurtful teasing or bullying?
 - Say that each time someone comes up with an idea you will smooth out the heart a little while they are talking.
 - If somebody was being mean to you and making you feel unimportant, what would you hope someone would do?

Optional: Mini role-play with the students:

- After students have had a chance to name ways that they could help a person who is being teased or bullied, have students think about the end of the book.
- Ask: who was it that stood up to red? What did One do to let Red know that picking on the other colors was not okay behavior? (Answer: He stood up straight and tall like an arrow. If students don't come up with that answer, prompt them or turn back to that page in the book to remind them.)
- What number do you think you would be in the book? (Someone will probably say the number one.)
- Ask who else would want to be number one? Raise your hand. Who would want to be number two? How about number three or four?
- If you raised your hand, stand up.
- Look at all the people standing up. If all of these people stood straight up like an arrow and said, "No." (Have kids say, "No.") Do you think it would help stop someone from getting teased or hurt?
- How do you think it would feel to see people standing up for you if you were the one being teased or hurt?
- What would you think if you saw someone else standing up for someone?

Going back to the book:

- After One stood up and said, "This is not okay" and the other colors did the same, did you notice how that word count was used? The book says, "Blue saw the colors change. He wanted to count." What does Blue mean? Discuss how it feels good to count.
- At the very end of the book red blew a fuse and then got smaller and smaller and smaller. Did red disappear? Did you notice, what happened to red at the end? He turned another color, right. And then it says, "Then red laughed and joined the fun." What do you think about that ending? Were the colors just standing up to red and saying, "Stop it. Go away."

We don't want to see you ever again" or were the other colors saying, "Hey, you stop. You don't have to be mean. We know you can be nice"? Even though somebody is mean to us they can still be nice if we help them and they listen.

Going back to the heart:

- Ask: Why did I crumple up the heart? Why did I smooth it out? What do you notice about the heart? Does it look the same as when I started? How is it different?
- This is the same as when somebody is bullied. If someone is bullied and told they're not important, and *even if* someone says, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that," the person's heart can never be the same.
- Discuss how this is true for anyone who is targeted –called names or bullied for being different. So that's why it is important to not be mean to other people and to help to be a kind and welcoming person.

LESSON PLAN WITHOUT READING THE BOOK

- Ask students to think for a minute about ways they have heard kids tease others, or words that they have heard kids use to put someone down that made them feel lonely or unhappy. Our words and actions are important and have outcomes. Ask, "Have you ever felt that you hurt in your heart when you hear or witness sadness?" (Educator might give personal example.) Our words and actions matter. In this activity we'll show that discomfort or sadness by crumpling a paper heart when we share a hurtful word or experience. Invite students to share the kinds of teasing, hurtful acts, or bad words that they have heard at your school. Each time a mean thing is said, scrunch up a piece of the heart to make it wrinkly.
- After everyone has had a chance to share, ask the students how they think they would feel after hearing these kinds of words. Would they want to come to school? Would they feel like doing their best work? Do hurtful words and actions help each other?
- Ask the students some ways that they could help each other feel better. What could they do to help each other feel included and do their best? A variety of ways to reach out to a peer should be discussed. Examples might be inviting the child to play ball or draw together or sit together at lunch.
- Say that each time someone comes up with an idea you will smooth out the heart a little while they are talking. Even when the paper heart is as flat as you can get it, the heart will not look the same as before it was crumpled.
- Ask questions to lead students to the understanding that, although some of the damage has been repaired, when we hurt someone, they will never be exactly the same; when your heart or feelings are deeply hurt, the scars remain, just like the wrinkles remain. Chances are those scars will never go away. Discuss how this is true for any people who are targeted—called names or bullied for being different.
- Ask the children to name reasons or differences for which children are excluded, teased or bullied.
- Ask the children if they know anyone whose feelings have ever been hurt in this way and invite them to share about it. This invites children to speak about things that may have

happened to them or their family members but does not put them on the spot or force them to identify themselves as a target.

Going back to the heart:

- Ask: Why did I crumple up the heart? Why did I smooth it out? What do you notice about the heart? Does it look the same as when I started? How is it different?
- This is the same as when somebody is bullied. If someone is bullied and told they're not important, and *even if* someone says, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that," the person's heart can never be the same.
- Discuss how this is true for any people who are targeted –called names or bullied for being different. So that's why it is important to not be mean to other people and to be a kind and welcoming person.

EXTENSIONS

- Post the heart on a wall as a reminder of the power that words can have to hurt and heal. The heart will serve as constant reinforcement of a vivid lesson in kindness.
- Have students write a letter to their family about words and actions that heal activity and suggest thoughtful actions that they will use at school and at home.
- Encourage students to practice kind words and actions and record on the classroom heart.
- Include words like ally, bystander and upstander on a word wall.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Work with your students to create a list of guidelines for making the classroom feel safe and affirming for everyone. Ask them to say what they think the goals should be in order to be a welcoming community where everyone feels safe and like they belong. Ask them to think of ways they can all participate in making these guidelines work and create strategies for intervening, requesting the assistance of an adult or joining with others to make someone feel better, safer and more welcome. Educators will monitor and encourage engagement and empathy.

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

Benjamin and the Word / Benjamin y la palabra, Daniel Olivas.

Confessions of a Former Bully,
Trudy Ludwig.

Each Kindness, Jacqueline Woodson.

Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match / Marisol McDonald no combina, Monica Brown.

Muskrat Will Be Swimming,
Cheryl Savageau.

Pinky and Rex and the Bully,
James Howe.

Say Something, Peggy Moss.

Teammates, Peter Golenbock.

Wings, Christopher A. Myers.

Adapted by Rhonda Thomason, M.A. NBCT from a lesson by Gary Hopkins, Education World, and Kevin Gogin, San Francisco Unified School District.



MAKING DECISIONS: ALLY OR BYSTANDER

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: 4 – 6

LENGTH OF TIME: One or two class periods of 45 minutes

GOALS

- For students to explore their own roles in incidences of bullying, harassment and name-calling.
- To explore and practice possible interventions.
- To define what it means to take action/be an ally.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will talk about bullying, harassment and name-calling.
- Students will consider different responses to bullying and how that might change depending on the situation.
- Students will discuss alternatives to ignoring bullying, harassment and name-calling.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS: SL 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4/5/6 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Social Studies Strand 4: Individual Development and Identity – Exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals and groups are alike and how they are unique, as well as how they relate to each other in supportive and collaborative ways.

EDUCATORS' NOTES

This discussion with students will explore how all of us, at one time or another, have had to make a decision about whether or not we will intervene or take a stand when we witness name-calling, bullying or harassment of a friend or a stranger. Often we make these decisions in the moment, reacting to situations as they come up. In this lesson students take the time to explore many different situations that could be seen at school and think about how they make decisions such as intervening, getting help, participating or walking away.

MATERIALS “4 Corners” placards (included in lesson) hung in the four corners of the room, Ally or Bystander: Situation Sheet (included in lesson), room arrangement suitable for activity and movement, chart paper or whiteboard, markers.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Review the list of scenarios and pick out ones that you think will generate discussion in your class or that you would like your students to consider. You could also develop your own to cover topics that may be issues in your school. Start with some scenarios that may be easier for your students to consider. Include some that are only slight variations so that students have to think about how things would be different if the scenario involves friends or not, students who are older or younger, students who are more popular or not. Include different topics in your set of questions. You probably will have time for 6 to 8 scenarios in one class period.
 - Print out or write out and post the “4 corner” placards in the area of your classroom where you will do the lesson. Students need to be able to move around to each “corner”.
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ACTIVITY

- Explain to the students that this activity looks at situations where you must decide, in that moment, how to react if you see someone being teased or bullied. Sometimes you may do something. Sometimes you may not. It often depends on the situation, how well you know someone, if they are older or younger, etc. This activity involves movement and action.
- For each situation, students will make a decision regarding how they will respond using the following four choices. Briefly discuss each to ensure that your students understand each one.
 - Ignore the situation or walk away.
 - Attempt to negotiate or stop the situation.
 - Talk to the person privately later.
 - Seek assistance from an adult or someone older.
- Read the scenarios that you have chosen, out loud to the class. Make sure your students understand the scenario, especially if it is a variation of one you just read. Ask them first to think for themselves which of the four corners they would go to. Then, have them move to the corner of the room that represents how they would act in response to that particular scenario.
- Before you hear from students, you could have them turn and talk to another person in their group about why they chose to go to that corner.
- With each scenario, invite a couple of students from the different corners to say why they chose to stand in a certain corner. Follow-up on their answers as appropriate. You could ask them to give an example of what they could say to the person being teased or bullied and what they could say to the person doing the hurtful teasing or bullying. Make sure to hear from students in all 4 corners during the lesson. As your students say why they have chosen a particular action/corner, acknowledge their reasoning.
- To generate further discussion after you have presented the scenarios, ask some open-ended questions:
 - Did you respond differently to the different scenarios?
 - What are some of the reasons you chose one corner versus another for different scenarios?
 - With whom did you feel most comfortable intervening?
 - When were you more likely to ignore the situation? Why?
 - Would you respond in some other way not represented by the four corners?
- Discuss what it means to be a bystander.
 - How do you think the person being teased feels if people are listening or watching and don't do anything?
 - How do you feel when you don't do something?
- Talk about what it means to be an ally. Using chart paper or a whiteboard, brainstorm ways to be an ally. (If you use chart paper you can keep it hanging on your classroom wall.)
- Acknowledge that there are many ways to be an ally depending on the situation. The important message is that if students witness bullying behavior, that they take some kind of action. If they are not sure whether to do something, this means it is a good time to talk with someone about it. Ask students to also think about if there are times they feel unsafe being an ally. What could they do in those situations?
- In closing, ask students to think of how they could be a better ally to the other students in your class or school.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Can students define what it means to be an ally or bystander?
- Do you observe students sticking up for each other more?
- Can students identify ways to be an ally?

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

Benjamin and the Word / Benjamin y La Palabra, Daniel Olivas.

Crow Boy, Taro Yashima.

Each Kindness, Jacqueline Woodson.

One, Kathryn Otoshi.

Say Something, Peggy Moss.

Teammates, Peter Golenbock,

Wings, Christopher A. Myers.

CHAPTER BOOKS:

The Liberation of Gabriel King, K. L. Going.

No Castles Here, A.C.E. Bauer.

Playground: A Mostly True Story of a Former Bully, Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, Laura Moser.

The Popularity Papers: Book Two: The Long-Distance Dispatch Between Lydia Goldblatt and Julie Graham-Chang, Amy Ignatow.

The Revealers, Doug Wilhelm.

Wonder, R.J. Palacio.

ALLY OR BYSTANDER – SITUATION SHEET

This activity takes two 45-minute periods to complete all 15. If you only have 45 minutes to spend on this activity, pick 6-8 situations. Start with an easier one. Use ones with slight variations to make students think about how they might handle each situation differently.

1. A classmate or friend constantly makes fun of a another student because they are small for their age
2. An older student makes fun of a younger student because they are small for their age
3. When you are with a group of friends, one of them makes fun of a younger student because of the way they dress.
4. A new kid at school calls your friend a bad name because of their skin color.
5. A friend of yours calls a new kid at school a bad name because of their skin color.
6. A kid you don't know calls another kid you don't know a bad name because of their skin color.
7. Someone in your class says something mean to another student in your school because of their religion.
8. A new kid at school calls your friend "gay"
9. A group of students your age keeps saying, "That's gay" to mean they don't like something.
10. A group of students your age keeps saying, "That's gay" to mean they don't like something and you know that your friend's dads are gay.
11. A friend of yours keeps saying to other boys, "Hey stop acting like a girl."
12. A boy in your school that you don't know very well keeps saying to other boys, "Hey stop acting like a girl."
13. A friend in your class teases a younger boy for having a teddy bear or a doll.
14. A student in your class teases a boy for wearing a pink T-shirt and nail polish.
15. A girl in your class teases another girl for always dressing like a boy.

Include any others that might apply to your school or community.

**IGNORE THE SITUATION
OR *WALK AWAY***

INTERVENE MYSELF

**TALK TO THE PERSON
IN PRIVATE**

**SEEK HELP FROM AN ADULT
OR SOMEONE OLDER**



Welcoming Schools

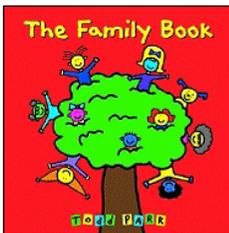
A SAMPLING FROM THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS AND ADULTS FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS

- Books provide an important mirror for students to see themselves and their families reflected in the world around them. They also provide a window into the lives of others and expand students' personal experience.
- A simple way to make students feel welcome in your classroom and school is to ensure that all kinds of families are portrayed in the books available in the classroom and in the library.
- Prepare yourself to answer students' questions. Children have a natural curiosity about things that they are not familiar with. Check out the *Welcoming Schools* professional development activities, *Responding to Questions About LGBT Topics: An Interactive Skill-Building Exercise* or review some of the book recommendations for adults.
- Discuss the range of family diversity that exists in our schools and communities—adoptive families, families with LGBT parents, single parents, grandparent headed households, multi-racial families...
- When reading a book on a particular topic, be careful not to continually single out an individual student as an example – such as the one student who is adopted, the one who has two moms...
- Avoid books that highlight having lesbian or gay parents as an issue or a problem unless that is already an issue in your class and you are looking for a way to discuss the topic.
- Look for books where peers or adults take active roles in stopping and preventing bullying and that help students see the many ways they can be an ally in bullying situations.
- Use books that show verbal and relational bullying in addition to physical bullying.

For the full listings, go to: www.welcomingschools.org/pages/bibliographies-books-to-engage-students

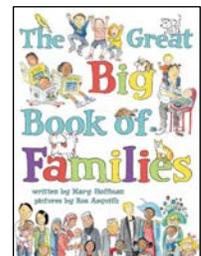
All Kinds of Families: Picture Books

Dear Child. John Farrell. (Pre-K – K) Features three families, a two-mom adoptive family, a single father and a mom and dad family expressing their wonder and joy of having a young child.



Families. Susan Kuklin. (4 – 5) With interviews and engaging color photos, this shows the diversity of families in America. Includes mixed-race, immigrant, two-dad, two-mom and single-parent families and families for whom religion is a focal point.

The Family Book. Todd Parr. (Pre-K – K) All kinds of families are celebrated in a funny, silly and reassuring way. Includes adoptive families, stepfamilies, single-parent families, two-mom and two-dad families and families with a mom and a dad.



The Great Big Book of Families. Mary Hoffman. (Pre-K – 3) Features all kinds of families and their lives together. Each spread showcases one aspect of home life - from houses and holidays, to schools and pets, to feelings and family trees.

Who's In My Family?: All About Our Families. Robie Harris. (Pre-K – 1) Nellie and Gus, multi-racial siblings, head off to the zoo for the day. Interweaves conversations between the siblings and a matter-of-fact text, making it clear to every child that whoever makes up your family, it is perfectly normal – and totally wonderful.

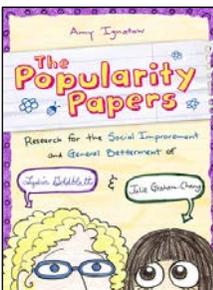
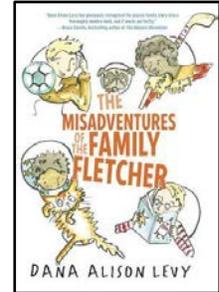
Books For Students Inclusive of Gay Family Members and Characters

And Tango Makes Three. Justin Richardson & Peter Parnell. (K – 2) Penguins Roy and Silo at New York's Central Park Zoo, keep putting a rock in their nest and try to hatch it. The zookeeper gives them a real egg that needs care. The penguins take turns sitting on it until it hatches, and Tango is born.

Antonio's Card / La Tarjeta de Antonio. Rigoberto Gonzales. (1 – 4) As Mother's Day approaches, Antonio must choose whether – or how – to express his connection and love for his mother and her partner, Leslie.

The Different Dragon. Jennifer Bryan. (K – 1) Shows how the wonderful curiosity and care of a little boy, with some help from his two moms, can lead to magical places with a dragon who is tired of being tough.

The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher. Dana Alison Levy (3 – 5) From camping trips to scary tales told in the dark, from new schools to old friends, from imaginary cheetahs to very real skunks, the Fletchers' school year is anything but boring with four brothers, two dads, and one new neighbor who just might ruin everything.

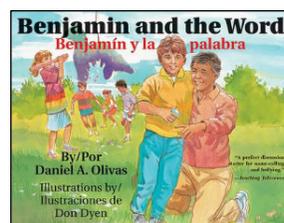


The Popularity Papers: Research for the Social Improvement and General Betterment of Lydia Goldblatt and Julie Graham-Chang. Amy Ignatow. (4 – 6) Two fifth-grade best friends are determined to uncover the secrets of popularity by observing, recording, discussing, and replicating the behaviors of the “cool” girls. Notebook format with a lot of illustrations. Julie has two dads. First in a series of seven books.

A Tale of Two Daddies. Vanita Oelschlager. (Pre-K – 1) A young girl answers a friend's straightforward questions about having two fathers. The story ends with simply, “Who is your dad when you're sad and need some love?” Both, of course.

Uncle Bobby's Wedding. Sarah S. Brannen. (Pre-K – 2) Looks at the fears that a young girl has of losing her favorite uncle when he plans to get married. Everyone in the family is happy, but her. Finally, she sees that she is not losing an uncle but gaining another uncle. The characters are depicted with animals.

Books to Engage Students on Bullying and Diversity

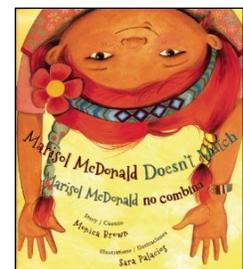


Benjamin and the Word / Benjamin y La Palabra. Daniel Olivas. (K – 2) Benjamin beat his friend James while playing handball, and James retaliated by calling Benjamin "the word." Bilingual.

Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match / Marisol McDonald No Combina. Monica Brown. (K – 2) Marisol, a multiracial girl, loves to be creative, eating peanut butter and jelly burritos, for example. But at times she is misunderstood and teased by peers. Bilingual.

Muskrat Will Be Swimming. Cheryl Savageau. (2 – 4) A Native American girl's feelings are hurt when classmates make fun of the children who live at the lake, but then her grampa tells her a Seneca folktale that reminds her how much she appreciates her home and her place in the world.

The New Girl ... and Me. Jacqui Rob bins. (K – 2) Mia is intrigued by the new girl, Shakeeta, but shyness holds her back. When a bully bars them both from playing soccer, the pair strike up a conversation and become friends.





One. Kathryn Otoshi. (Pre-K – 1) Red picks on Blue. The other colors don't know what to do until One shows them how to stand up, stand together, and count. Also see her new book, **Zero**, that combines learning about numbers with valuing one's self.

The Sissy Duckling. Harvey Fierstein. (1 – 2) While other boys like to play baseball, Elmer wants to put on the halftime show. But when his father is wounded by a hunter, Elmer proves that the biggest sissy can also be a hero.

The Sneetches and Other Stories. Dr. Seuss. (Pre-K – 3) The Sneetches are bamboozled by Sylvester McMonkey McBean, who teaches them that pointless prejudice can be costly.

Teammates. Peter Golenbock. (1 – 3) The moving story of how Jackie Robinson became the first black player on a major league baseball team and how, on a fateful day, PeeWee Reese took a stand and declared Jackie his teammate.

Thank You, Mr. Falker / Gracias, Sr. Falker. Patricia Polacco. (1 – 3) Fifth-grader Trisha can't read, and a bully who ridicules her magnifies her shame, until a new teacher helps Trisha understand and overcome her problem. English and Spanish editions.

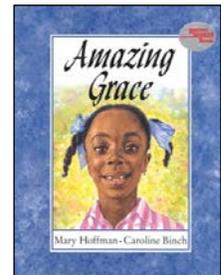
The Liberation of Gabriel King. K. L. Going. (4 – 5) In Georgia in 1976, Gabriel, a white boy, and Frita, an African American girl, overcome their fears of bullying and prejudice together as they enter 5th grade.



Wonder / La Lección de August. R.J. Palacio. (5 – 7) Auggie was born with a facial deformity that prevented him from going to a mainstream school until 5th grade. Told from multiple perspectives that highlight different struggles with empathy and acceptance. English and Spanish editions.

Looking at Gender Through Books

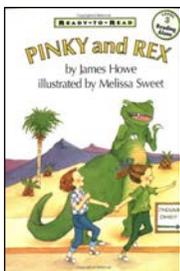
Amazing Grace. Mary Hoffman. (Pre-K – 1) Although classmates say that she cannot play Peter Pan in the school play because she's black and a girl, Grace discovers that she can do anything she sets her mind to.



Don't Kiss the Frog: Princess Stories with Attitude, Fiona Waters. (Pre-K – 2). An anthology of stories that will make kids laugh as they encounter a bevy of sleepy, sporty, clumsy, brave, resourceful, and curious princesses.

Looking Like Me. Walter Dean Myers. (K – 2) An African American boy celebrates all of who he is, including a dancer, an artist and a writer. Colorful collage illustrations and catchy rhymes.

It's OK to be Different. Todd Parr. (Pre-K – K) Delivers the important messages of acceptance, understanding, and confidence in a child-friendly format with bold, bright colors and silly scenes.



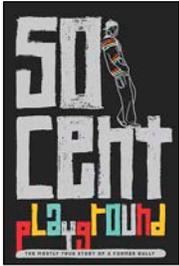
Pinky and Rex. James Howe. (1 – 2) The adventures of two best friends: a boy who loves the color pink and a girl who loves dinosaurs.

Riding Freedom. Pam Muñoz Ryan. (4 – 6) A fictionalized account of the true story of Charley (Charlotte) Parkhurst who ran away from an orphanage, posed as a boy, moved to California, drove stagecoaches and continued to pass as a man her whole life.

Wings. Christopher Myers. (1 – 2) Take flight with Ikarus Jackson, the boy whose wings set him apart. He remains true to his dreams despite taunts. A girl realizes he must be lonely and begins to stop the hurtful words coming his way.

Books for Students Inclusive of Gay Topics and Bullying

Confessions of a Former Bully. Trudy Ludwig. (2 – 5) Told from the unusual point of view of someone who bullied rather than the target. Highlights bullying with words. Provides kids with real life tools they can use to identify and stop relational aggression. Mentions taunting for being perceived as gay.



Playground: A Mostly True Story of a Former Bully. Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson, Laura Moser. (6 – 9) A realistic look at bullying from the perspective of an urban young teen boy in middle school. Looks at the boys feelings as both a target of bullying and as perpetrator of bullying. Also touches on divorce and gay parenting. Some explicit language.

The Popularity Papers: Book Two: The Long-Distance Dispatch Between Lydia Goldblatt and Julie Graham-Chang. Amy Ignatow. (4 – 6) Julie and Lydia are ready for junior high. But then, Lydia's mom gets a job in London. They learn to keep in touch and stand on their own, assisted as always by their trusty notebook. Each girl in her own way deals with bullying behavior. (Part of a series of 7 books.)

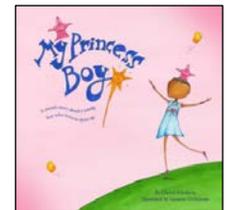
Looking at Gender Identity with Books for Students

10,000 Dresses. Marcus Ewert. (1 – 3) A modern fairy tale about becoming the person you feel you are inside. While Bailey dreams of beautiful dresses, no one wants to hear about it because he is a boy. Then an older girl comes along who is inspired by Bailey and they make beautiful dresses together.

I am Jazz. Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings. (K – 5) From the time she was two years old, Jazz knew that she had a girl's brain in a boy's body. She loved pink and dressing up as a mermaid and didn't feel like herself in boys' clothing. Based on the real-life experience of Jazz Jennings.

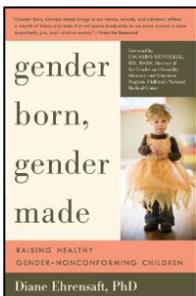
Jacob's New Dress. Sarah and Ian Hoffman. (Pre-K – 2) Jacob loves playing dress-up, when he can be anything he wants to be. Some kids at school say he can't wear "girl" clothes, but Jacob wants to wear a dress. Can he convince his parents to let him wear what he wants?

My Princess Boy. Cheryl Kilodavis. (Pre-K – 1) Dyson loves pink, sparkly things. Sometimes he wears dresses. Sometimes he wears jeans. He likes to wear his princess tiara, even when climbing trees. He's a Princess Boy.



Gender Expansive Children: Books to Help Adults Understand

Gender Born, Gender Made: Raising Healthy Gender-Nonconforming Children. Diane Ehrensaft. A guidebook for the parents and therapists of children who do not identify with or behave according to their biological gender. Encourages caregivers to support children as they explore their gender identities.



Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue. Nicholas M. Teich. A readable and thorough primer on the terminology, history, and medical and social realities of the transgender population. Written for students, professionals, friends, and family members.

The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals. Stephanie A. Brill & Rachel Pepper. A comprehensive guidebook on gender variance from birth through college. What will happen when your preschool son insists on wearing a dress to school? Is this ever just a phase? How can parents advocate for their children? What do doctors and therapists recommend?



AN OVERVIEW OF LAWS & POLICIES THAT SUPPORT SAFE AND WELCOMING SCHOOLS

FEDERAL LAWS THAT PROTECT STUDENTS FROM HARASSMENT AND BIAS

EQUAL PROTECTION CLAUSE OF THE 14TH AMENDMENT

Under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment public schools have a duty to protect all students on an equal basis.¹

TITLE IV AND TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

The Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.²

TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACTS OF 1972

Title IX prohibits discrimination based on sex and applies to all schools that receive federal financial assistance. Sexual harassment and gender harassment are both considered forms of sex discrimination.³ According to the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Education, “it can be discrimination on the basis of sex to harass a student on the basis of the victim's failure to conform to stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity.”⁴

SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973, TITLES II AND III OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA), AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

These three laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability.⁵

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

When it comes to the law, bullying and harassment have different definitions. Bullying is defined under state laws, on a state-by-state basis. Discriminatory harassment is defined by federal law. When bullying and discriminatory harassment overlap, federally-funded schools have an obligation to resolve the harassment. The Dear Colleague Letter gives specific examples of racial, religious, sexual, gender and disability harassment.⁶

JOINT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER ON THE NONDISCRIMINATORY ADMINISTRATION OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

This letter and the appendix issued in January 2014 develop guidance to assist public elementary and secondary schools in meeting their obligations under Federal law to administer student discipline without discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin.⁷

STATE ANTI-BULLYING LAWS

As of 2013, 49 states plus the District of Columbia have anti-bullying laws.⁸ The laws vary widely by state. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services through their website *Stopbullying.gov* provides

¹ Dunklee, Dennis R. (2006) *The Principal's Quick-reference Guide to School Law: Reducing Liability, Litigation and Other Potential Legal Tangles*. Corwin Press.

² Stopbullying.gov. Policies and Laws. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Available at: www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html.

³ Stopbullying.gov. Policies and Laws. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Available at: www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html.

⁴ Office for Civil Rights (2001) Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties. U.S. Department of Education. Available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/shguide.html>

⁵ Stopbullying.gov. Policies and Laws. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. <http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/index.html>.

⁶ Ali, R. (2010). *Dear colleague letter: Harassment and bullying*. U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.html>.

⁷ Lhamon, C.E. and Samuels, J. (2014). Dear colleague letter on the Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline. U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division and U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.html>.

⁸ Hinduja, Sameer and Justin Patchin (2013) A Brief Review of State Cyberbullying Laws and Policies. Cyberbullying Research Center. Available at: www.cyberbullying.us.

examples of key components for effective state anti-bullying laws or policies. Some of these recommendations include:

- Inclusion of enumeration of actual or perceived characteristics of students who have historically been targets of bullying while at the same time being clear that something can be called bullying that is not based on any particular characteristic.
- A graduated range of consequences and sanctions for bullying.
- Includes a provision for school districts to provide training for all school staff, including, but not limited to, teachers, aides, support staff, and school bus drivers, on preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying.
- Encourages school districts to implement age-appropriate school- and community-wide bullying prevention programs.⁹

ENUMERATION IN LAWS AND POLICIES

Enumerated laws specifically name actual or perceived characteristics of students who have historically been targets of bullying. Students in states with comprehensive, enumerated safe school laws report hearing fewer anti-gay remarks in school, experience lower levels of harassment based on their sexual orientation or gender expression, and report a higher frequency of staff intervention than students in states with no law or in states with a non-enumerated anti-bullying law.¹⁰

When there is a local comprehensive, enumerated policy in a school or district, LGBT students also report hearing fewer gay slurs and experience less victimization or bullying, and more teacher intervention when harassment happens.¹¹ Students in schools with comprehensive and enumerated school safety policies report fewer suicide attempts.¹²

At the elementary level, the importance of policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity is important because many students get teased for “being a sissy,” “acting gay,” “acting like a girl” or “acting like a boy.” There can be harsh social sanctions for those who look or act in ways that are not considered gender-appropriate.

The state of Vermont’s statute on harassment is unusual as it includes attributes of both the student and a student’s family.¹⁴ Some newer laws such as New Hampshire’s include not only the student’s characteristics but also the characteristics of people the student associates with.¹⁵

GENDER NON-DISCRIMINATION LAWS AND SCHOOLS

In some states actual or perceived gender identity is included in their safe schools or anti-bullying laws including Arkansas, New Hampshire, and North Carolina. Other states have specifically added gender non-discrimination to their laws, such as Connecticut, Vermont and Washington.¹⁸

Some states have developed guidelines to assist schools in implementing the gender non-discrimination laws in schools. For example:

- **Guidance for Massachusetts Public Schools: Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment: Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity.**¹⁹

⁹ Stopbullying.gov. Key Components in State Anti-Bullying Laws. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Available at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/key-components/index.html>

¹⁰ Kosciw, J. G., Diaz, E. M., & Greytak, E. A. (2008). 2007 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation’s schools. New York: GLSEN. Available at: <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/2624.html>.

¹¹ Kosciw, J. G., Diaz, E. M., & Greytak, E. A. (2008). 2007 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation’s schools. New York: GLSEN. Available at: <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/2624.html>.

¹² Goodenow, C., Szalacha, L., & Westheimer, K. (2006). School support groups, other school factors, and the safety of sexual minority adolescents. *Psychology in the Schools*, 43(5), 573-589. doi:10.1002/pits.20173.

¹⁴ 16 V.S.A. § 11(a)(26)A. Available at: www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullsection.cfm?Title=16&Chapter=001&Section=00011.

¹⁵ New Hampshire Statutes Chapter 155 Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention Act. Available at: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2010/HB1523.html>.

¹⁸ Safe School Laws, 2013, Movement Advancement Project. Available at: http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/safe_school_laws.

¹⁹ Massachusetts Public Schools: Creating a Safe and Supportive School Environment: Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity, 2013, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Available at: www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/GenderIdentity.pdf.

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- In Connecticut, the Department of Education distributes a document in a Q&A format called *Guidelines for Connecticut Schools to Comply with Gender Identity and Expression Non-Discrimination Laws*.²⁰

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICIES

While some school districts have policies that make general statements about creating a respectful learning environment for all students and all school districts have non-discrimination policies to comply with federal law, some districts go beyond this. To protect vulnerable students, they specifically list additional categories to help ensure that all students are not discriminated against or harassed. For example:

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation²²

“Prohibited harassment of a student is defined as physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct based on the student’s age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, handicap or disability, marital status, religion, veteran status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression, or any other basis prohibited by law... Examples of prohibited harassment may include offensive or derogatory language directed at another person’s religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation; threatening, intimidating, or humiliating conduct; offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; display of graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.”

CHALLENGES TO BOOKS IN SCHOOLS

After a school board removed 9 books from a school library, students and parents challenged the decision. After a lengthy court case, *Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico*, the Supreme Court held that school officials cannot remove books from a school library simply because they find the ideas in the books objectionable.²³ This case is frequently cited in challenges to books in school. In the majority opinion, Supreme Court Justice William Brennan wrote, “Local school boards may not remove books from school library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained in those books.”²⁴

The American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom outlines strategies and tips for dealing with challenges to library materials.²⁵

PARENTAL NOTIFICATION / OPT-IN & OPT-OUT LAWS

Courts have consistently ruled that school districts have the responsibility for the content of a curriculum as long as it is based on sound education rationale.²⁶ A number of states have laws regarding parental notification, the requirement that parents sign a form to allow their child to learn a particular lesson (“opt-in”) or the ability of parents to request that their child not be included in a particular lesson (“opt-out”). Generally, these laws specifically refer to sex education; human sexuality; or STD, HIV or AIDS prevention.

²⁰ *Guidelines for Connecticut Schools to Comply with Gender Identity and Expression Non-Discrimination Laws*, 2012, Connecticut Safe Schools Coalition. Available at: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2700&Q=322402>.

²² *Houston Independent School District Board Policy Manual, Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation FFFH(LOCAL)* Available at <http://pol.tasb.org/Home/Index/592>.

²³ *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982). *First Amendment Schools*. Available at: <http://www.firstamendmentschools.org/freedoms/case.aspx?id=41>

²⁴ *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853, 102 S.Ct. 2799, 73 L.Ed.2d 435 (1982). *American Library Association, Notable First Amendment Court Cases*. Available at: <http://www.ala.org/offices/oif/firstamendment/courtcases/courtcases>.

²⁵ *American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom*. Available at: <http://www.ala.org/offices/oif>.

²⁶ Dunklee, Dennis R. (2006) *The Principal’s Quick-reference Guide to School Law: Reducing Liability, Litigation and Other Potential Legal Tangles*. Corwin Press.

In elementary school classroom discussions that include the topic of lesbian or gay people generally arise in the context of talking about different kinds of families, name-calling and harassment or issues of stereotypes and discrimination. The key in many of the notification laws is the difference between teaching tolerance and respect versus teaching sex education. In elementary school, discussions that include LGBT topics are not about sex education. They are about families, name-calling and respect.

STUDENT’S RIGHT TO PRIVACY

The United States Supreme Court has long recognized that the constitutional right to privacy includes the right to control the nature and extent of highly personal information released about that individual. This right to privacy extends to students in a school setting.

Students have the constitutional right to share or withhold information about their sexual orientation or gender identity from their parents, teachers, and other parties. It is against the law for school officials to disclose, or compel students to disclose, that information. Even when a student appears to be open about his or her sexual orientation or gender identity at school, it is that student’s right to limit the extent to which, and with whom, the information is shared.²⁸

School officials may think they are doing the right thing by revealing a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity to his or her parents. However, doing so not only violates the student’s privacy rights, but can negatively impact a young person’s life. Young people whose schools have “outed” them to their families often report subsequent rejection and/or abuse at home.²⁹

EXAMPLES OF CASE LAW – THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION

Many of the experiences that are highlighted in the legal cases on harassment based on either perceived or actual sexual orientation have their origins in elementary or early middle school years. These experiences point to the need for the specific inclusion of gender and gay slurs in efforts to reduce name-calling and create a safer school environment.

- The Anoka-Hennepin School District in Minnesota settled two lawsuits in 2012. The middle school students had suffered harassment made worse by a “neutrality” policy that banned school staff from mentioning LGBT topics even when dealing with anti-LGBT bullying. The plaintiffs received \$270,000 and the district will also spend \$500,000 on anti-bullying measures.³² Between 2009 and 2011, 9 students in the Anoka-Hennepin area died due to suicide.³³
- In one of the landmark cases, *Nabozny v. Podlesny*, the harassment began early in the seventh grade when Nabozny realized that he was gay. A federal appeals court held that schools can be held liable for deliberately ignoring anti-gay harassment. The case settled for close to \$1 million.³⁴
- In a 2007 ruling applying state anti-discrimination law, New Jersey’s Supreme Court noted that, “As a fourth-grader at South Toms River Elementary School, New Jersey, L.W. was taunted with homosexual epithets such as ‘gay,’ ‘homo’ and ‘fag.’ The harassment increased in regularity and severity as L.W. advanced through school. ... We require school districts to implement effective preventive and remedial measures to curb severe or pervasive discriminatory mistreatment.”³⁶ The school district was fined and required to pay both the boy and his mother a financial settlement.³⁷

Note: Nothing in these materials from Welcoming Schools is intended in any way as legal advice. If you need legal advice about any issue, please consult an attorney.

²⁸ *Nguon v. Wolf* (2007); *Sterling v. Borough of Minersville* (2000)

²⁹ Sample School Privacy Letter (2012) ACLU. Available at: <http://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights/letter-school-officials-regarding-lgbt-student-privacy>.

³² ACLU, “The Cost of Harassment: A Fact Sheet for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender High School Students,” 2012. Available at: http://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights_hiv-aids/cost-harassment-fact-sheet-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-high-school-stu.

³³ Rubin Erdely, Sabrina (2012) One Town’s War on Gay Teens, *Rolling Stone*, February 12. Available at: <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/one-towns-war-on-gay-teens-20120202#ixzz1HFIT5WB>.

³⁴ ACLU, “The Cost of Harassment: A Fact Sheet for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender High School Students,” 2012. *Nabozny v. Podlesny*, 92 F.3d 446 (C.A. 7th Cir., 1996) Available at: http://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights_hiv-aids/cost-harassment-fact-sheet-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-high-school-stu.

³⁶ *L.W. v. Toms River Regional Schools Board of Education* (A-111-05), C.J. ZAZZALI, writing for a unanimous New Jersey Supreme Court. Decided Feb. 21, 2007. Available at: <http://lawlibrary.rutgers.edu/decisions/supreme/a-111-05.doc.html>.

³⁷ ACLU, “The Cost of Harassment: A Fact Sheet for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender High School Students,” February 2007. *L.W. ex rel. L.G. v. Toms River Regional Schools Bd. of Educ.*, 886 A.2d 1090, (N.J. Super. A.D., 2005.) Available at: www.aclu.org/pdfs/lgbt/schoolsyouth/costofharassment.pdf.



RESEARCH BASIS FOR SAFE AND WELCOMING SCHOOLS

BULLYING AFFECTS MOST STUDENTS.

- When asked if they had been bullied in the past month, about 30% of elementary school students say, “Yes.” But, if asked if someone has repeatedly tried to hurt them or make them feel bad by name-calling, pushing/shoving, spreading rumors/lies or other specific actions about 70% of the children say, “Yes.”¹
- While the majority of the school staff estimated that less than 10% of their students were bullied in the past month, over 30% of the students actually said they were frequently bullied.²
- Over 30% of students who are bullied report that it happens in the classroom.⁴
- Elementary school girls who identify as African-American or Hispanic report less bullying and harassment if you ask if they have been “bullied.” BUT, if you ask specifically about name-calling, mean teasing or rumors they report higher levels of mean behaviors than girls who identify as Caucasian.⁵
- In up to 85% of bullying episodes at school, there are other students witnessing or joining in.⁶

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL CLIMATE ARE LINKED.

- Students who experience acceptance at school are more highly motivated, engaged in learning and committed to school.⁷
- When students report a more severe bullying climate in their school, up to 5% fewer students pass state mandated standardized tests.⁸
- Both children who are targeted and children who exhibit bullying behavior have lower academic achievement in school.⁹
- On average, about 6% of students skipped school at least once during the past 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to and from school. The average ranges from 1 in 25 for white boys to almost 1 in 10 for Hispanic girls.¹⁰



BULLYING HAS SERIOUS PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CONSEQUENCES.

- Both students who bully and students who are targeted are at a higher risk for suicide than students who are not involved in bullying.¹²
- Children who are bullied fare worse on an extensive list of measures: anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, poor social self-competence, depression, psychosomatic symptoms, social withdrawal, school refusal, school absenteeism, poor academic performance, physical health complaints, running away from home, alcohol and drug use, and suicide.¹³

BULLYING IS LINKED TO HURTFUL BIAS.

- Over 75% of students who are harassed are targeted because of their identity including race, national origin, gender, actual or perceived sexual orientation, religion or ability.¹⁴
 - Multiple studies indicate that students with disabilities and those who are perceived to be LGBT are most likely to experience bullying.¹⁵
 - An elementary student who is significantly overweight is over 60% more likely to be bullied and harassed than other students, regardless of race, gender, or socio-economic status.¹⁶
 - Nearly one-third of middle school students have been the object of sexual jokes, comments or gestures.¹⁷
 - In the 28 random shootings in U.S. schools between 1982 and 2001, nearly all the boys who committed the violence had stories of being constantly bullied, teased and “gay-baited” – not because they were gay, but because they were different from the other boys: shy, artistic, theatrical, musical, non-athletic or geekish.¹⁸
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BIAS BASED BULLYING HURTS MORE.

- Compared with students harassed for other reasons, students who feel harassed for their race, religion, ability, gender, or perceived sexual orientation:¹⁹
 - have higher rates of drug use;
 - are up to twice as likely to have attempted suicide;
 - are more likely to skip school; and
 - are up to 4 times as likely to have been threatened with a weapon at school.
- In a nationwide survey, children said they feared anti-gay harassment more than any other kind of name-calling.²¹
- Students targeted with anti-gay putdowns are more likely to report higher levels of depression and anxiety and a lower sense of school belonging regardless of their sexual orientation.²²

BULLYING CAN BE STOPPED.

- When bystanders intervene, they are often effective. Based on observation, 57% of the interventions stopped the bullying within 10 seconds.²³
- Student and adults who perceive that others in their school would jump in to stop bullying are more likely to intervene when they witness bullying.^{24, 25}
- The most effective strategies to stop bullying involve the whole school working together to change the school climate and norms of behavior. Based on research, key strategies include: school wide rules and consequences for bullying, educator training, parent engagement, classroom management, playground supervision, and cooperative group work.²⁶

GENDER NON-CONFORMITY AND HARASSMENT

- Almost one-quarter of students in California are harassed because they are not “as masculine as other guys” or “as feminine as other girls.”²⁸
- Parents of gender nonconforming children fear for their children’s safety because of their gender identity or expression.³⁰
- Middle school students regardless of their sexual orientation who are targeted with anti-gay slurs are more likely to report higher levels of depression and anxiety and a lower sense of school belonging.³¹
- In a study of gay and bisexual teens, over half reported that they were labeled as sissies by the time they were only 8 years old.³³



CHANGING FAMILIES → DIVERSE STUDENTS

- About 1 in 6 children in the U.S. live with a grandparent or other relative in their home.⁴⁵
 - Almost 2.5 million fathers are the primary caregivers for their children.⁴⁶
 - More than 1.8 million children are adopted and almost 40 percent of those children are of a different race, culture or ethnicity from their parents.⁴⁷
 - In nearly every U.S. County, there are gay and lesbian headed households according to the U.S. Census. In rural states, such as, Wyoming and Alaska, and in southern states households headed by same-sex couples are more likely to have children than same-sex households in other states.⁴⁹
 - Hispanic and African-American same-sex couples are about twice as likely to be raising children as white non-Hispanic same-sex couples.⁵⁰
 - 16 percent of all children live in blended families including stepparents and step- or half-siblings.⁵¹
 - Over 4 million children identify as being of more than one race.⁵²
 - As of 2012, almost 1/4 of children in the U.S., have at least one parent who was born in another country.⁵³
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A QUICK GUIDE TO *WELCOMING SCHOOLS* RESOURCES ON THE WEB

- ❖ **Conveying the Need for a Welcoming School Environment**
www.welcomingschools.org/pages/conveying-the-need-for-a-welcoming-school-environment
Advice on providing a framework for developing a welcoming school.
 - ❖ **Professional Development** www.welcomingschools.org/pages/professional-development-tools/
Working with the adults in an elementary school is a key place to start developing a more welcoming school where students can learn and thrive.
 - ❖ **Regional Consultants** www.welcomingschools.org/experts-in-your-area/
Trainers and consultants are available around the country for: Professional development workshops; Planning for film screenings; Developing initial steps for your school or district.
 - ❖ **Lesson Plans Linked with Common Core State Standards**
www.welcomingschools.org/pages/lesson-plans
A selection of lesson plans that focus on embracing family diversity, avoiding gender stereotyping, and ending bullying and name-calling.
 - ❖ **Family Diversity Resources** www.welcomingschools.org/family-diversity/
The involvement and understanding of the parents and guardians in the school community is a critical aspect to creating a welcoming school for all children.
 - ❖ **Gender Stereotyping and Identity Resources** www.welcomingschools.org/gender-stereotyping/
 - ❖ **Bullying and Name-calling Resources** www.welcomingschools.org/bullying-name-calling/
 - ❖ **Resources** www.welcomingschools.org/resources/
Many annotated bibliographies on family diversity; bullying, and gender stereotyping and identity; Linking Welcoming Schools to Academic Standards.
 - ❖ **Film: What Can We Do? Bias, Bullying, and Bystanders**
www.welcomingschools.org/what-can-we-do/
 - ❖ **Film: What Do You Know? Six to Twelve Year-olds Talk About Gays and Lesbians.**
www.welcomingschools.org/what-do-you-know-the-film/
 - ❖ **Definitions for Students & Adults** www.welcomingschools.org/pages/definitions-for-students-adults
Resources to provide a starting point for defining terms for students as well as adults.
 - ❖ **Welcoming Schools Pilot and Evaluation Results**
www.welcomingschools.org/pages/evaluation-of-welcoming-schools/
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